

2011

Feeling Bodies: Moving toward a Feminist-Contemplative Praxis of Embodied Writing

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Feeling Bodies: Moving toward a Feminist-Contemplative Praxis of Embodied
Writing

by

Christy I. Wenger

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English, Rhetoric and Composition

Lehigh University

May 2011

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Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Feeling Bodies: Moving toward a Feminist-Contemplative Praxis of Embodied Writing

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Even in favorable conditions, a person encounters struggle.” – Swami Kripalvanda

I owe a great deal to a supportive community of professors, friends and family. While I’ve certainly struggled along the way to finishing this dissertation, I was lucky to have a group of wonderfully caring people around me who ceaselessly encouraged me to keep trucking along. Thank you all for believing in me.

First, I want to thank my committee. Ed, you read more drafts of my dissertation than anyone else. It was through countless meetings with you and the endless drafting that followed that this project really took shape. I’ll always be grateful for the time you gave to me during my years at Lehigh, and I’ll always have peanut butter cups in my office for you. Barry, thanks for being the voice of reason in this project and for reading my work with a great deal of attention. You helped me to rein in my ideas and kept the project manageable. You also made me feel like the work I was doing was important to the field. Beth, my fellow yogi, I owe you a great deal for introducing me to Holly and for helping to shape my current practice and interest in yoga. You were a source of warm and friendly strength and a great resource on feminist theory. Jackie, you offered me opportunities to see my work from a new perspective and gave me feedback as only another yogi could. Finally, Holly, while you weren’t an official member of my committee, you had just as much an effect on the shape of my project. I will forever be grateful for the time and energy you generously gave to teach my students in our yoga labs. Tuesday night classes with you at Jai transformed me as a scholar and a person. I will forever be your student. *Namaste.*

Many friends and family members—too many to name here—also provided invaluable support. Perhaps most importantly, I want to acknowledge the support of my husband, Steve. Without you to take over life’s incidentals, I could have never completed this dissertation or the work preceding it. You have put my professional ambitions first, and I am grateful for your sacrifices. Most of all, this dissertation is for you. My mom deserves special recognition for her steadfast faith in me as well as for her abilities to calm me down and know just the right things to say when drama breaks out, as it inevitably does. To my mother-in-law, Nancy, I feel much gratitude for your support, of all kinds, and willingness to become my “personal assistant.” I also acknowledge the support of “my girls,” especially Jamie and Nikki. You listened to my whining, gave me feedback on my ideas, reminded me of my talents and forced me to have a little fun too. And finally, I thank God for seeing me through.

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ABSTRACT

This project is centrally interested in how writers imagine, experience and actively navigate their embodiment within and beyond the composing process. It adds to and dialogues with the burgeoning discussion in rhetoric and composition studies about how we might reclaim the body for our writing praxis. Calling on compositionists including Kristie Fleckenstein, Jane Hindman and Jane Tompkins, it explores the consequences of stepping away from pedagogies that disregard students' and teachers' embodiments and toward embodied rhetorics that view the body as a lived site of knowledge and not, primarily, as a discursive text. I specifically examine how we might address the body as a site of meaning in the pedagogical theories and practices of writing by undertaking three critical tasks: first, I propose a feminist methodology of embodied writing that accounts for the material conditions of a text's composition, the shaping powers of the writer's body, and the physicality of the writing process. To do so, I turn to feminist concepts of the imagination and the embodied subject. I concentrate on three related systems of meaning brought together under the rubric of embodiment: imagining, thinking and feeling; second, I use this methodology to investigate the pedagogical consequences of reclaiming the body in order to differentiate embodied rhetorics from other contemporary writing pedagogies and to insist on the need for new frameworks for embodied rhetorical inquiry. I specifically argue that embodied writing rhetorics should neither be collapsed into expressivist pedagogies focused on retaining essentialist notions of the personal nor constructivist pedagogies focused on the discursivity of matter and knowledge; third, I suggest that contemplative practices like yoga can support attempts to step away from pedagogies that deny or ignore students' and teachers' embodiments and

toward embodied writing pedagogies that view the body as a lived site of knowledge and not, primarily, as a discursive text. I argue that an integrated practice of yoga and writing can teach composition instructors and writing students much about how to make visible the ways our bodies are implicated in the construction of knowledge and, therefore, in the composing process itself. Embodied writing pedagogies that teach students to use yoga as a means of navigating the composing process help authors to imagine themselves as writing bodies, to reflect on the writing process as physically demanding and the writing product as materially saturated and, finally, to see knowledge as discursively and materially situated. As these three critical tasks make clear, the aim of this project is not only to theorize an embodied writing pedagogy by turning to feminist and contemplative rhetorics but also to trace the effects of such a pedagogy on students' learning and writing processes in the classroom.

PROLOGUE:

"I have got to tell you/ and I can't tell." Mina Loy

"I change myself, I change the world." Gloria Anzaldua

Embodied Exigencies

Short light brown hair, t-shirt, jeans and Starbucks coffee cup in hand was his uniform. As the semester unfolded and the weather grew colder, he layered a simple black Northface jacket over the t-shirt and jeans. This get up, the uniform of the male gender on my campus, made him entirely "average." No wonder it took me the longest time to remember his name. *Weeks*, not days. At the beginning of the semester, I guessed he'd be one of those students in my first-year writing class who remained in the middle of the pack, never falling far enough behind to warrant extra meetings and time and never excelling either, which would merit attention of a different kind. Middling students deserve attention, of course, but often do not seek us out and, buffeted by a sufficient class performance that keeps them afloat, tend not to get enough of it.

He was the hardest kind of middling student, one that keeps his distance. He was distant, that is, until some weeks into the semester when he grew antsy about plateauing in the low B, high C range. Maybe he wasn't a "middler" after all. Frustration over his grades made him more vocal and commanded my attention. Once he had it, I finally remembered his name, Timothy.¹ I re-evaluated him. I began to realize that while Timothy wasn't overly talkative in class, he often listened actively. True, he listened with

¹ All students' names throughout this project are pseudonyms. IRB approval has been requested and granted for all representations of my classrooms and my conversations with students as well as for reproductions of student writing, including the quoting, referencing and paraphrasing of student work.

a smirk on his face, making me wonder what joke I was missing out on, but he was still engaged. I began to want Timothy to succeed partly because I was afraid of him getting lost in the middle once again and partly because I was beginning to respect his quiet humor and easy-going nature.

The extra meetings Timothy began to request during my office hours brought out these traits. They also focused on a lack of risk-taking in his writing. As we talked about how he might move beyond the safety promised by the five-paragraph theme for the frightening ambiguity of the critical argument, I gave little thought about what Timothy might teach *me* about risks, only concentrating on what I needed to teach him. At this point in my story, I must qualify: this isn't a teaching fairytale of teacher meets life-changing student. Indeed, it seems I am a very slow learner if this story is to be used as a gauge for such things. As will become clear, only in retrospect do I see how Timothy encouraged me to rethink how I construct myself as a teacher as I began to see, through him, the consequences this construction had on my students' figuration of classroom-appropriate models of learning and writing.

A Turning Point:

When working on his mid-semester paper on prejudice, a paper on which he refused, this time, to earn anything less than an "A", Timothy agreed to be my final student conference for the day so that we could have longer to talk about his writing. I tend to encourage motivated yet struggling students to sign up for these later spots so we feel less rushed. To them, it means more time, security and privacy since no one is waiting outside for my attention or benignly eavesdropping on our conversation as they

wait for their turn. At best, these late conferences have provided a time during which students begin to open up about their writing insecurities because they feel supported by the one-on-one attention and the longer meeting. From there, they sometimes (it is my hope, anyway) become more willing to take a few risks in their writing in anticipation of a greater reward.

But, Timothy was late. Five, then ten, minutes went by with no sign of him. I'd had students not show up before for these extra, unassigned conferences, but I was surprised that Timothy wouldn't come to this particular meeting given the extra time and care he took to set it up. That was what the teacher side of me was thinking anyway. The other side said I should just cut my losses, pack up my stuff and go home since it was getting late and I was hungry. Indeed, my stomach was starting to growl.

While I was debating how long to wait, a female colleague of mine unexpectedly dropped by my office hoping to finalize our weekend plans. As a way to burn off some stress and remind ourselves of what life looks like outside of our offices and classrooms, a group of us were planning a night out on the town. Excited to talk about our plans, with one more glance around and no sign of Timothy, I invited my friend into my office to chat for a bit, temporarily forgetting my hunger. After reviewing our weekend plans, my friend and I discussed what we were going to wear when we went out, and, from there, we exchanged disparaging comments about our bodies. Typical—if not unfortunate—girl talk. Both of us complained about how our sedentary lives as academics had made us gain weight and how easy it was to snack while we taught, wrote and read all day, but how hard it was to find the time to exercise. While we complimented each other, we

disparaged ourselves. This spiraled into a long conversation about our hip sizes wherein we compared just how large we felt our “child-bearing” hips were.

As our conversation turned back to successfully and fashionably clothing our hips and other parts, the adjoining lobby door, which separated my office at the time from the stairwell, slowly opened and Timothy entered face first with a questioning look. Switching gears, I signaled Timothy into my office, and we sat down at my conference table. Even with dinner further delayed, I was feeling buoyant by the promise of a weekend punctuated by more than a steady stream of writing, reading and lesson-planning. I hadn’t had a night out in months.

But, of course, I hadn’t forgotten Timothy’s tardiness so I immediately reminded him that he was late. Instead of an apology, however, I got a surprise. With a lopsided grin, he explained, “Oh, I was standing outside the lobby for a while, waiting in the stairwell. I thought you were conferencing with another student so I didn’t want to come in, but then I heard you talking about your hips and realized you probably *weren’t* with another student.”

This was not the response I was expecting. My mind spun through the obvious questions. *“What did he hear—the whole conversation? I said “childbearing” didn’t I? Oh my God, what else did I say? How long was he standing outside eavesdropping? Why didn’t I go home when I had the chance?”*

And, finally, *“Respond! You’ve got to say something!”*

I have a fairly light complexion which doesn't help me in embarrassing situations such as this since my blush can be seen for miles around. There certainly was no way of controlling my body's reaction here, so I did what any good teacher would do—I covered it up with my words and turned the tables back on my student. I nervously smiled away the comment and proceeded to gently reprimand Timothy *never* to remain in the stairwell, *always* to enter the lobby to my office and to take a seat when waiting for a conference so I know he has arrived. I asked him if he had heard me say this in class from our very first meeting and always again prior to scheduled conferences. He did. Obviously, however, he just didn't *listen*. Apparently, his listening skills were deployed selectively. Despite my authoritative posing at that moment through such teacher talk, I felt marked, revealed and vulnerable for the rest of our conference. I was acutely aware that I had become “woman-body” in that eavesdropping moment, which made me hyper self-conscious of my materiality and stood in stark contrast to my typical classroom positioning as a kind of de-sexed “teacher-mind.”

I spent the remainder of the conference feeling torn between this double positionality: as a gendered woman-body, defined by her hips, and as a genderless teacher-mind, defined by a sort of disembodied authority as “knower” to students. This is the only way I knew how to locate myself after years of imbibing this model from my own teachers. It was the only position that felt safe given my female gender, my status as a PhD student and the never-quite-large-enough decade that stood between me and my students. My authority as a teacher came from distancing my self from my body, which was too young, too female and just too material. Now that I was literally revealed, I felt *all* body and powerless as a result.

Timothy wore a grin throughout the conference while I tried to ignore its source of inspiration. But I saw the laughter in his eyes and could feel the confidence the situation gave him. Maybe other students would have been just as embarrassed as I, but not Timothy. While he tempered his reaction and stayed focused on his writing concerns during our conversation, exhibiting a decent amount of control for an eighteen-year old, he didn't miss one final opportunity to remind me that he had heard more than I ever intended him to. At the end of his conference, Timothy signaled again to his interest in my materiality by stating that he would "let me get back" to my discussion about hips and by suggesting to a fellow, female classmate (who had surprised me by entering the lobby to sit and wait as Timothy's conference was ending) that she should ask me about my hips as he chuckled his way out the door.

Taking Risks, Learning Lessons:

This instance of unfortunate eavesdropping upset the means by which I found authority as a teacher. My retelling of this event can't do justice to the complexities of how my body felt to me at the time or how my and Timothy's bodies negotiated the rest of the conference thereafter in an awkward dance of hyper-awareness. What I now know is that Timothy started a process of connecting to me that made me question the way I portrayed myself as a teacher, the way I related to my students and they to me and, therefore, the kind of writing that was acceptable in my classrooms, creating a distinct hidden curriculum. But, of course, this level of reflection or questioning didn't happen right away. More immediately, I felt too embarrassed to reflect on the "hips" incident, so

I tucked it away and admonished myself for talking too loud, for putting my foot in my mouth.

But the embarrassment didn't last as long as I expected it to—although I did continue to wonder how many students in Timothy's class now knew of my self-proclaimed "child-bearing" hips. As I plunged ahead with his class that semester, I repeatedly reflected on this incident more because of what it seemed to represent than the initial embarrassment it caused. As Timothy and I worked together on papers, I noticed physical dynamics I hadn't thought much about before like how he unthinkingly pulled his chair close to mine when conferencing, or how he wrote a paper on his practice of bodybuilding and one on learning the consequences of prejudice through the fists of an attacker. As I developed an attentiveness to the ways he navigated his embodiment as a student writer, I wondered if he noticed his own focus on materiality. I was unsure how to ask him this though, so I remained quiet and observant.

And with time, I realized that my overall experiences with Timothy amounted to a greater importance than a student overhearing a teacher's private conversation. Instead, through Timothy I began to see my students' bodies as contested sites of learning in my classroom, something to which I'd not paid attention before. I began to wonder that while I was invested in teaching personal writing alongside and integrated within critical argument in the classroom, if there was something merely theoretical to the experience I said mattered in my writing classrooms. Where was the physical *matter* in the personal I pressed us to contend with? In the end, this humbling, eavesdropping experience reminded me what I had lost from years of intense schooling, and later, teaching: my

body. And in losing mine, I hadn't realized that I had denied my students theirs as well.

This project will be an attempt to address that.

INTRODUCTION:

“What we cannot imagine cannot come into being.” bell hooks, All About Love

“The intelligence of the body is a fact. It is real. The intelligence of the brain is only imagination. So the imagination has to be made real. The brain may dream of doing a difficult backbend today, but it cannot force the impossible even on to a willing body. We are always trying to progress, but inner cooperation is essential.” B.K.S. Iyengar, Light on Life

“Imagination is situated; our imaginary horizons are affected by the positioning of our gaze. But, at the same time, it is our imagination that gives our experiences their particular meanings, their categories of reference.” Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Standpoint”

“The split and contradictory self is the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history.” Donna Haraway Simians, Cyborgs and Women

From the Sticky Mat to the Classroom:

Moving Our Way Toward Contemplative-Embodied Rhetorics

I move from kneeling on all fours back into *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, or downward-facing dog, lifting and straightening my knees and elbows. I exhale along with the rest of my class and try to send this energy down into my hands, pushing each palm evenly onto my mat and pressing the tops of my thighs back in order to descend my heels as close to the floor as possible. Even as I move quietly, my thoughts create a loud frenzy inside my head, destroying the peace for which my *sadhana*, or my practice, aims. This pose frustrates me. I know I’m weak in it, so I begin to question my alignment. As I push my hips back and up, I wonder if my spine is scooping instead of creating a long line. My mind orders my spine to go long, and I think about shifting more weight into my heels.

As a result, I forget about my hands and they begin to slide forward, inching their way up

to the top of my sticky mat. I wonder with bitterness how terrible my pose looks. This is a genuine concern since with my head down and my eyes staring at my toes, I can't see myself. I begin to wish I could view myself as an outsider in order to confirm my fears that I'm doing this pose all wrong. I suppress a sigh and with no better alternative begin a silent prayer for the pose to be called to an end.

Instead, I feel hands grab my hips and pull them back. With this action, I feel my heels settle firmly onto my mat. At the same time that she moves me, my yoga instructor, Holly, enjoins me to lift my sitting bones and direct them toward the back of the room.

“Oh. Sorry. I...” Thoughts racing forward, I fumble to explain my ineptitude.

Holly cuts me off to reply, “No. You need to stop thinking and feel.”

Because Holly knows me well, she understands I need to be reminded of this. I know hers isn't a command *never* to think when doing an asana, or pose, like *Adho Mukha Svanasana*. Instead, it's a reminder to let my brain and body work *together* in the pose.

This kind of integration is frankly something to which I am not accustomed as an academic and compositionist. Jane Tompkins may have written “Me and My Shadow” decades ago, singling out the professional discourse community of composition studies and indicting its propensity to separate our personal, material realities from our professional voices, but hers is a reality I share years later. Nevertheless as a yogi and increasingly as a feminist writing teacher, claiming my body is a move I know I need to make for growth. The above example from my yoga practice makes this lesson clear. Rather than trying to force my body into confused compliance as I was in my frustration

with downward-facing dog, Holly's message was that I needed to listen to it. When I could *feel* my hips shift back and down, when I could find a balance between the agency of my body and the directives of my mind, I would have little need for my earlier out-of-body desire to see myself; instead, I could use these embodied, critical feelings to work toward a better pose and, therein, a more holistic sense of self and contemplative awareness of my subjectivity. But to achieve this end, I first must relax my habit of trying to control my body with my mind and, through awareness, learn to work with my physical body's organic intelligence and to respect it as a site of knowledge.

Setting My Intention:

I begin this introduction with a recent experience from my Iyengar yoga class in order to frame my *sankalpa*, the Sanskrit word for intention, in this project: namely, exploring the consequences of stepping away from pedagogies that deny students' and teachers' embodiments and toward embodied writing pedagogies that view the body as a lived site of knowledge and not, primarily, as a discursive text. In composition studies, critical pedagogies that have taken up postmodern theory, such as James Berlin's social epistemicism, have tended to "read away" or narratize the body inasmuch as they have understood our discursive consciousness as *the* site of struggle and agency. In contrast, by starting from the perspective of the body, embodied writing pedagogy represents a hopeful alternative to mainstream methods that deny a writer's corporeality by entextualizing it. This pedagogy captures the importance of felt knowledge as a creative force on both content and process levels without capitulating to solipsistic or essentialist notions of singular embodiment. Respecting the natural or organic body does not mean

we ignore the dynamism of nature or the shaping powers of culture. The kind of felt knowledge to which I refer certainly encompasses Sondra Perl's exploration of Eugene Gendlin's felt sense, or the "body's knowledge before it's articulated in words" (*Felt 1*), but expands beyond it too, as it doesn't preclude discursive knowingness nor need it be built entirely on intuition. In embodied writing pedagogy, the body and mind are both agentive and creative forces, companionate in relation to one another.

To some, this project's intended focus on embodiment may initially seem unnecessary or redundant since composition pedagogy has long since made the "social turn," a shift in focus that aligned the field with poststructuralist theories that break down such binaries as sex/ gender and body/ mind and explore the performance of such bodily "givens" as race and gender to reveal the power structures that construct them. The same may be said about the feminist bent of this project since feminism has for years placed women's bodies at the center of political and theoretical discussion and scholarship. Historically, women have not been able to elide their embodiment because patriarchal systems have simply reduced them to their bodies, allowing men to be associated with the transcendent mind. Gender is a central organizing metaphor in the effacement of the body. Positioned at the nexus of this tension as a female professional, it is not surprising that female compositionists like Tompkins have often been at the forefront of critiques that center on the dangers of a disembodied academe. In composition studies particularly, this critique has often been framed as the separation of the personal from the professional following interdisciplinary trends that insist on objectivity in academic scholarship as a prerequisite for responsibility and truth. Tompkins' *A Life in School* and the previously-mentioned "Me and My Shadow" both compellingly reveal the futility and costs of this

divorce, especially for female academics. As I will explain in chapter two, this framing, while pragmatic and understandable, has tended to stunt conversations about the body by simply casting it under the net of the personal, thereby entrenching it in the circular debate between expressivism and constructivism. This is a disciplinary loss I hope to recover within these pages.

While Tompkins' references to her physical body may serve as a litmus test of just how far we yet need to go, a growing number of feminist theorists have given interdisciplinary weight to such a critique, including Donna Haraway, Sidonie Smith, Alexandra Howson, Susan Bordo and Elizabeth Grosz. These scholars have pointed out that the discussions taking place within the pages of feminist scholarship too often claim a textualized body removed from the living body and free from its physicality.² Indeed, the ways feminists etherealize the body was the subject of a talk by Toril Moi who visited my university as I worked on this project in the spring of 2010. Academics in the humanities, in our acceptance of dominant epistemological methods, have attended to the body insofar as we have reinscribed it as "mind" or, rather, "text." In our own field, this tendency to submerge the physical body in language is especially evident in the writings of social pedagogues like the aforementioned Berlin and those riding different hobby horses within constructivism such as David Bartholomae. The division between body knowledge and mind knowledge is regrettably embedded in our field and our major pedagogical structures.

² In addition to these authors, a useful reader on this subject is *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, Ed. Donn Welton, 1998.

Feminist scholarship is not immune from this charge either. Howson argues that “the body appears in much feminist theory as an ethereal presence, a fetishized concept that has become detached and totalizing for the interpretive communities it serves” (3) and tasks herself the project of corporalizing gender studies and exploring the particularity of embodiment as applied to her field of sociology. The “etherealization” Howson targets remains an inherent danger of the deconstructive tendencies of poststructuralist theory which tends to overwrite feminist materialism with its will to discursivity. The ways in which the textualization of the body has shaped feminist studies is evidenced by the controversy over Judith Butler’s work, work that many feminist compositionists apply to their pedagogies, evidenced in the pages of popular field readers like *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*.³ Bordo, pithily capturing the problem of using Butler to drive our pedagogies, writes, “Butler's world is one in which language swallows everything up, voraciously, a theoretical pasta-machine through which the categories of competing frameworks are pressed and reprocessed as “tropes” (291). The abstraction of the body has left personal experiences and pragmatics of embodiment felt by individual bodies devalued for the construction and representations of corporeality as a social performance.

³ Butler dismantles both sex and gender in *Bodies That Matter* as she attempts to address critiques of her earlier work, *Undoing Gender*, in which she outlines her theory of gender performativity. A central premise of Butler’s argument of gender performativity is that sex is not “a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but... a *cultural* norm which governs the materialization of bodies” (*Bodies* 2-3, author emphasis). In chapter one and two, I will explore how Haraway complicates this easy deconstruction which arguably etherealizes the body into discourse. While it may initially seem to be liberating, dismantling the biological category of sex forces the body to be the handmaiden of culture, or worse yet, an empty puppet waiting to be controlled by cultural, historical and semiotic forces.

However, embodiment is not just a conceptual framework, even if it may be, in part, this too, but a lived, fleshy reality. To return to Tompkins' work is to see, for instance, that the split between the personal and academic is often a metonym for the hierarchical divide between the body and mind. Being schooled within a system that places value on the "life of the mind" over the supposed banality of our flesh creates tension between the particularities of embodied experience and the promise of transcendence in Tompkins' real life. Tompkins cannot reconcile her academic persona with her personal embodied reality such that she describes in *A Life in School* an inverse relation between her achievements in school and her body's physical sufferings, including wetting her bed and developing unexplainable physical ailments. In "Me and My Shadow," Tompkins turns this equation on its ear by inserting her lived body into her narrative, saying that as she writes, she is "thinking about going to the bathroom. But not going yet" (173). Such a fleshy interjection startles the typical reader by reminding us that this kind of allusion doesn't "belong" in academic writing, which is supposed to adhere to the rules of ethereal transcendence— however much we may identify with the reality of Tompkins' observations given our own lived experiences. Hers become examples of the body's refusal to be ignored despite our best attempts at theorizing it away.

The strength of feminism is its interdisciplinarity and its ability to unite a wide variety of communities under shared epistemological and methodological umbrellas. Outside of composition studies, Haraway gives us a means to reclaim our bodies as lived, fleshy presences—the kind around which Tompkins creates personal vignettes—while avoiding essentialist criticism that tends to follow claims to the organic body. Because

Haraway speaks from the point of view as a scientist, she is interested in models of subjectivity that better reflect our lived realities as biological beings living as part of and among a material world; and because she too writes from her perspective as a feminist theorist, she wants models that do not eschew the theoretical progress we have made in the name of postmodernism, which has helped us understand the social construction of many of our “givens.” Instead of seeking any sort of definitive answers by drawing new lines between nature and culture, Haraway finds promise in the indeterminacy of materiality and the way respect for our flesh necessitates a stance of openness as opposed to the false closure of other postmodern variations of the subject, which tend to espouse a thinly-veiled linguistic determinism. Haraway’s epistemology consequently offers an alternative to the etherealization of the body that Howson targets and does so by leaving the organic body as a source of necessary tension to keep our theorizing in check—a tension too often lost in the humanities. While feminists writing today have sometimes leapfrogged over her in attempt to embrace newer theories, Haraway, I believe, leads the way in our journey to rethink the body materially.

Although embodied writing remains a relatively new area of interest for our field, composition studies has produced some beginning treatises on embodied pedagogy such as Jane Hindman’s “Making Writing Matter” and Kristie Fleckenstein’s *Embodied Literacies*. In the pages that follow, I will draw from the interdisciplinary strength of feminism by both following in the footsteps of these compositionists as well as by utilizing Haraway’s generous corpus of feminist writing for its positive hermeneutic of embodiment. Haraway doesn’t just address our dangerous tendency to efface materiality, she pins hope on the body for revamping our systems of meaning-making and

epistemology in order to bring about real change in the world, converging her project with the central foci of writing studies. What's more, she corrects those who claim the body without asserting its agency by insisting that we need to be concerned not only with the materiality of subject formation but also with the agentive status of bodies themselves—bodies that shape language *as much as* language shapes them. It's not just that the body is involved in our meaning-making processes, but that it conditions our systems of knowledge from the very start.

With Haraway, I will theorize a “writing body” for composition studies to create a mode of authorship that agentizes student writing and authorizes students' experiences of embodiment. My notion of writing bodies is differentiated from other compositionists' use of the term, such as Fleckenstein's, as mine insists on a level of conscious awareness of our writing bodies; we certainly always write as bodies, but few of us are ready to claim them—especially in academic environments beholden to disembodiment. Further, a focus on writing bodies within my project indicates a concern with how writers *experience* their embodiment and *practice* it rather than on a semiotics of material placement, even if situatedness will be a key term to define this experience. And moving both with and beyond Hindman's attempts to position embodied rhetorics in our field, I endeavor to complicate the relationship between embodied writing and personal writing. In the process, I look to the capacity of feeling to develop an embodied praxis that also differentiates me from Fleckenstein's focus on the visual. In the end, I believe that teaching students to imagine writing as a bodily as well as an intellectual process may help them view their writing as “real world” writing and not just another performance in

the interest of “doing school.”⁴ Along the way, this embodied model of writing may help them find balance and compassion as writers; teaching difference as embodied may lead to stronger and more pragmatic understandings of social justice and personal transformation through the formation of an embodied, contemplative ethics. And pragmatically, embodied writing pedagogy as it interacts with a recent movement toward contemplative education may better equip our student writers to juggle the incessant distractions and demands of their fast-paced, technology-driven modern lives which implicitly ask them to self-define as brains rather than integrated wholes.

The Embodied Imagination:

I have written this project as both a feminist writing pedagogue and as a committed yogi. While I had followed a home practice of yoga for a handful of years, it was only during this project’s development from ideas to pages that I began to explore the connections between yoga and writing, between the two worlds that defined such different parts of me yet seemed somehow undeniably connected from the beginning. At first, I was drawn to the metaphoric connections between the practice of writing and the practice of yoga. Yoga, both as a philosophy and as a practice of movement and breath awareness, is highly literary and symbolic in its own right. Literal balance developed in *asanas* or poses is thought to translate to a metaphoric balance in the yogi’s life. In tree pose, for instance, you learn to find balance in the constant sway of your body by developing a mind-body awareness and strength that works *with* such movement in order

⁴ For an expansive study on the phenomenon of “doing school”, see Denise Clark Pope’s *Doing School* (2003). Also see my discussion in chapter two where I turn to an example of how writing projects that engage students in lived problems and merit a real world audience encourage students’ active interest and involvement in learning through writing.

not to dominate but to channel the sway productively. Tree pose literally trains the body to find balance, and this is understood to transfer off the sticky mat and give the yogi poise and balance amidst the undulations of life. Nothing ever simply stays on the mat. The body is the hinge for such lessons so that when we learn to work with it, we grow and advance in all aspects of our lives. Yoga's focus on balance, flexibility, consciousness, non-violence and awareness was intimately familiar since these were qualities of good writing and good writers. These were qualities I could appreciate in both forms of self-expression from the beginning.

As my fledging research grew and I began to explore my ideas in writing, out of necessity, I found myself taking breaks by practicing yoga. First, these breaks were simply geared to get me away from the computer for a time and were taken with the intent to develop my *sadhana* or practice of yoga, for which I had recently renewed my energy. As often as my schedule would allow, I'd wake up early to write and when I felt my attention wander, I would break for time on my mat. Quickly, I noticed that after such breaks, I felt revived and somehow able to transfer the clarity cultivated through my *yogasana* practice into my proceeding writing sessions. I could not as consistently say the same about breaks to watch television, take a nap or fold laundry. Yoga, true to its promise, was helping me grow a mindful awareness that I could feel seeping into my writing. The metaphoric and the literal began to bleed together through my integrated practice. Of course, this awareness remained only as strong as I was; my motivation to write still throws a fence around such attentiveness. I gradually came to see yoga not as a miracle cure to all of what ails writers, but as a helpful tool for us to transform our mental and physical writing habits and rituals.

It only seemed natural to begin integrating more yoga into my long writing sessions, leaving my mat open near my computer in order to isolate poses as needed, such as stretching my rounded “computer” shoulders with *gomukhasana* arms, hooking the hands together near the shoulder blades by sending one arm up to the sky and down the body and the other around the back body to reach up and meet the first. I didn’t see this practice in line with the commercially-popular “office yoga,” which is stretching for its own sake, but as part of a writing process that worked with the body and respected its effect on making meaning as much as that of the mind. At this time I also came in contact with Jeffery Davis’ *The Journey from the Center to the Page* which advocates infusing yoga practice into the creative writing process. Davis’ intent to use yoga to get writers to work with and through the physical body and its experiences resonated with me even if his call for “authenticity” and his concentration on fiction writing did not. In the end, his book serves more as an inspiration for what I describe here rather than a source or model.

With increased respect for the viscosity of the writing process, I too deepened my *yogasana* practice by attending yoga classes and seeking out a certified teacher. As my sustained practice of yoga converged with the process of my burgeoning research, I saw how yoga provided not only a new lens for the writing classroom but also a set of practices I could use to bring the body back into the writing classroom, hopefully teaching students to think about their bodies as generators of meaning. Just as in yoga, the lessons students could potentially learn as writing yogis could have both imaginative as well as lived consequences. These pages, in turn, contain my journey to take yoga into my writing classes and the theories and practices of an embodied writing pedagogy that were produced as a result.

And so I arrive full-circle back to my opening narrative in this introduction. My struggle in downward-facing dog highlights the potential value of yoga's insights for the writing classroom and provides the ribbon that ties together the braid of this project's chapters and interchapters. Namely, my difficulties in downward-facing dog attest to the ways yoga asks its practitioners to be embodied imaginers, realizing meaning with and through our feeling flesh, against modern impulses that deny the intelligence of the body. If I hope to improve my practice of *Adho Mukha Svanasana*, I have to learn to use my body awareness to *feel* my way toward full expression of my *asanas*. This requires me to lay aside my academic neurosis of attempting to control, ignore or transcend my body for the sake of identifying myself with my consciousness or mind. It's not that I must define myself as *only* body, but that I must begin to imagine myself as an interrelated whole, not in parts, in order to grow intellectually, spiritually⁵ and physically.

My practice of poses like downward-dog teaches me that verbal abstractions in the form of the directions my teacher gives her students must pair with our actual experiences of them. For instance, Holly's frequent injunction to push the front knee into the back knee in downward-dog means nothing to me unless I can both imagine this process and make real these imaginings through practiced embodiment and self-awareness. In my struggle recounted at the beginning of this chapter, I knew where, in theory, my body should be placed for successful execution of the pose, but I couldn't connect this with my practice because I originally assumed that the theory was what mattered most. But, as I have learned, it is only with awareness of my organic body and

⁵ I use this term in a wide sense to include secular notions of the divine which are often linked to the heart, the feeling center.

my physical and emotional feelings can I be “in” the pose as opposed to simply forcing myself through its actions.

Moving from the mat to the classroom, I correspondingly define the embodied imagination as the faculty by which body, heart and mind work together to bring meaning and understanding to writing under the praxis of embodied pedagogy. Imagining, as I see it through a feminist and yogic lens, is integrative, thoughtful and emotive. Its axis is the heart; what is felt both physiologically and psychically shapes the interrelationship between the body and the mind. I recognize the ways imagining is often limited to describing fantastical or illusory mental processes, flights of fancy. But, following feminist usage and the yogic philosophies of B.K.S. Iyengar, founder of the yoga method that I practice, I hope to extend the concept of the imagination to talk about the creative fusion of the intelligent, organic body and mind toward the construction of present realities and future possibilities in writing. These realities and possibilities are based on the knowledge we construct from our experiences (what we understand) and our affective positions toward other bodies as a result of these experiences (how we feel). The imagining process is therefore a situated and recursive one that involves our bodies and minds. Put differently, our imaginings always occur in the context of our material environments and within the frame of our flesh; similarly, our bodies must embrace and enact the dreams and ideas of our intellect for them to *mean* and to be acted upon. As bell hooks puts it in the opening quote of my epigraph, what we imagine creates our reality which shapes what we believe to be imaginable from the start. In the embrace of

imagination, the body interprets and thus structures our ideas, lending validity to the idea that responsible imaginings are those that remain accountable to our flesh.

The embodied imagination provides a new method of inquiry in composition studies, one that takes its lineage from feminism and an Eastern tradition of Iyengar yoga⁶ that challenges hierarchical dualities and seeks integration and mindfulness at its core. In their recent *College Composition and Communication* article, Gesa E. Kirsch and Jacqueline J. Royster trace contemporary feminist usage of what they coin the “critical imagination” which becomes one of the three “terms of engagement” they trace throughout their historical survey of feminist rhetorical practices (“Feminist Rhetorical” 648). Working alongside “strategic contemplation” and “social circulation”, the critical imagination is a strategy of inquiry or a tool “to engage, as it were, in hypothesizing...as a means for searching methodically, not so much for immutable truth, but instead for what is likely or possible, given the facts in hand” (“Feminist Rhetorical” 650). A look at Royster’s earlier *Traces of a Stream* gives a fuller picture of their concept.

In her book, Royster develops this conception of the imagination in order to propose how feminist reconstruction might aid in the making of historical narratives about ancestral African women’s history. Within the historical narrative, the “imagination becomes a critical skill, that is, the ability to see the possibility of certain experiences

⁶ My use of Iyengar yoga and yoga philosophy throughout this project takes a hopeful view of its usefulness for feminist writing pedagogies. While I do recognize that ancient yogic texts are steeped in the traditions of patriarchy and that some modern Western applications still reflect these traditions as well as our own, I believe there are just as many congruencies between yoga and feminism, such as a commitment to change through transformation as well as a spirit of equanimity that eschews binaries, which are ripe for consideration. While the task of delineating the ways in which yoga philosophy is reflective of the patriarchies in which it is practiced is worthwhile, that is not my aim here. Rather, I am engaged in understanding how yoga sustains the kind of feminist, embodied inquiry I am after.

even if we cannot know the specificity of them... So defined, imagination functions as a critical skill in questioning a viewpoint, an experience, an event, and so on, and in remaking interpretative frameworks based on that questioning” (*Traces* 83). The imagination so defined enables conversation and interaction between the feminist researcher and her subjects, according to Kirsch and Royster, as it connects the past and present with future “vision[s] of hope” (“Feminist Rhetorical” 652-53). Because it is grounded in the particularities of experience, the critical imagination helps facilitate an embodied practice that focuses on research as a lived process (“Feminist Rhetorical” 657).

In another permutation, feminists Nira Yuval-Davis and Marcel Stoetzler have claimed the “situated imagination” as necessary to the workings of transversal politics, which seeks to dialogue through difference without overwriting it. Yuval-Davis credits feminists in Bologna, Italy for the cultivation of this democratic, feminist political practice based on three interlocking concepts: standpoint theory’s reminder that because differing viewpoints produce varying bodies of knowledge, any one body of knowledge is essentially unfinished; that even those who are positioned similarly may not share the same values or identifications; and that notions of equality need not be replaced by respect for difference but can be used to encompass difference (Yuval-Davis “Transversal” 1-2). As I will in chapter two, Yuval-Davis uses Haraway’s notion of situatedness, which is multiple and embodied, to underscore the importance of differential positioning in knowledge-making practices. She and her co-author introduce the situated imagination as a conceptual tool that works in tandem with situated knowledge in feminist epistemology.

Working at the intersections of present reality and future hope for change, the imagination shapes experience into knowledge by helping to construct meaning as well as to stretch it in new directions. Even if situated like knowledge, the imagination which is both self- and other-directed can help to establish common ground, especially important to transversal politics (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler “Standpoint” 316). Imagining is understood within Yuval-Davis’ project to be both a social faculty as well as a bodily one, or a “gateway to the body, on the one hand, and society, on the other hand” (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler “Standpoint” 325). Imagining and thinking aren’t just bridged in the process of understanding, however, they are inseparable and contingent on each other so that, as both authors note, “intellect and imagination, these terms do not refer to clearly separate faculties or ‘spheres’, but merely to dialogical moments in a multidimensional mental process” (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler “Standpoint” 326). The circularity is key. I take this as a reminder of the companionate nature of thinking and imagining which converge in the physical body to create knowledge as well as hope.

For my conception of the embodied imagination, I chose to stitch the best together from this quilt of feminist definitions. What I like about Kirsch and Royster’s critical imagination is its focus on the *skill* of imagining; what this means for our writing classrooms is that we can teach students to deepen their imaginative embrace when constructing new ideas, filtering through their own experiences or when presented with others’. The embodied imagination I propose resembles the critical imagination in that it too works as a method of inquiry that allows us to imagine creatively that which initially may not be a reality, that which may yet be eclipsed by our personal experience or that

which we would like to change, remake or revise. But, I don't accept this term as my own because I find it engages too weak a model of embodiment, even if it does acknowledge materiality in the process of researching, reminding us of the personal bodies who conduct research as well as the particular bodies studied. And partly because I do not come at my project from a historicist perspective, I find it too limiting to talk mostly about the imagination as a frame for possibility and not also as participating in a concrete reality; I wish for a less speculative application of the imagination. Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler provide an earthier or more rooted definition for my tastes, and it is happy coincidence that they too draw from Haraway's theories, connecting, to an extent, our projects. But while Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler divide their episteme into two functions, that of imagining and knowing, I feel this is a restrictive model that eclipses the role feeling has to play in meaning-making. Consequently, I concentrate on three related processes brought together under the rubric of embodiment: imagining, thinking and feeling.

The embodied imagination, as such, can be understood as a space for negotiation between situated thinking and situated feeling toward new possibilities and a greater awareness of the present (and, therein, the future). Thinking of the imagination as the spider that spins the sticky web that helps connect our feelings and thoughts to fashion such awareness coincides with Haraway's definition of the imagination as the connective tissue between feminist networks of meaning wherein individuals are not simply involved in critiquing or distancing but are interested in establishing coalitional epistemologies and methodologies to bring individuals together. Haraway claims she "hates" the model of

negative criticality that only sees value in dismantling arguments so that you don't have to implicate yourself in the struggle, "rooted in the fear of embracing something with all its messiness and dirtiness and imperfection" (*Leaf* 111-12). Of course, the body stands as a living symbol of the "messiness" we have often locked out in fear of losing the certainty of closure. Working from a place of connection, Haraway is not simply involved in critiquing but is "involved in building alternative ontologies, specifically via the use of the imaginative" (*Leaf* 120). Embodied writing rhetorics provide such an alternative.

Also working within a framework of connection, I will be less interested in delineating the lines between the organic body and the cultural body (or, incidentally, feelings as biological or social) and more interested in a holistic approach that respects the companionate nature of the body as both marked and marking. Haraway explains to her interviewer in *How Like a Leaf* that defining her methods as part of a "worldly practice" as opposed to aligning them with either side of the inherently problematic nature/ culture dichotomy emphasizes the "imploded set of things where the physiology of one's body, the coursing of blood and hormones and the operations of chemicals—the fleshiness of the organism—intermesh with the whole life of the organism" (*Leaf* 110). In the same way, embodied writing can help form a "worldly," "whole life" pedagogy that takes into account the ecological connections between the body and mind, nature and culture, rationality and emotion which we tend to elide for the relative simplicity of academic processes of inquiry. Owing more to Aristotelian logic than inquiry vested in awareness of the connections between body, heart and mind, traditional processes of academic inquiry focused on objectivism have excluded and/ or marginalized alternative

ways of knowing such as contemplative and connected knowing. As these typical processes are driven by narrow applications problem-solving through logic, they tend toward closure via disconnection and skepticism as opposed to the open-endedness of the imagination.

When inquiry *is* driven by the imagination, we end up with projects of connected knowing, or the process of understanding difference through connection, not distance. In contrast to separate knowers who experience the self as autonomous, connected knowers experience the self in relational webs (Belenky, et al 113-23). If the primary action of separate knowing is that of breaking down, connected knowing is characterized by building on and anew. Likewise, we can see the process of embodied imagining as connected; to genuinely connect, we need to be aware of our thoughts and feelings and attend to others' whether real or anticipated. In these ways, we can extend positioning not only as the key for grounding knowledge claims but also our imaginings. When we focus on the imagination, we change discussions of inquiry from finding *the* answer to a problem to investigating multiple possibilities *and* testing these alternatives against our embodied realities, lending more weight toward embodied pragmatism than a transcendent critical analysis that ignores our corporeality.

In other words, the embodied imagination becomes a tool of mindfulness for feminist pedagogies. Mindfulness, as understood by yogis, is the practice of slowing down and paying close attention to the present moment. Mindful knowing is, by default, connected knowing as it refuses the mindless fragmentation of our scattered lives which encourages us to see ourselves not of a whole piece. This attention to mindfulness,

together with the yogic tradition and practice I call upon next, roots my move toward embodied writing pedagogy in the recent, fertile ground of contemplative education. What distinguishes contemplative pedagogies is their combined focus on self-examination and awareness as deepened by the learning process. What further marks these pedagogies is their attention to the body as a primary site for mindful reflection, contemplative awareness and centeredness. It is on these grounds that we can see embodied writing pedagogies as creating new paths toward contemplative knowing. In a widely-cited article on contemplative education, Tobin Hart claims that contemplative knowing rests on opening the “contemplative mind” which is “activated through a wide range of approaches—from poetry to meditation—that are designed to quiet and shift the habitual chatter of the mind to cultivate the capacity of deepened awareness, concentration, and insight” (“Opening” 29). Once the mind is opened in such ways to create inner awareness, a corresponding opening occurs toward the world around us” (“Opening” 29). Hart’s understandings rearticulate what it means to be focused on a “whole life” pedagogy like embodied writing and show how a developed sense of embodied interiority necessitates an equal connection to exteriority and to others.’

In the afterword to *The Teacher’s Body*, Madeleine Grumet notes that the “body throws a horizon around [the] imagination...it tethers [the] imagination to a set of possibilities which, although they are protean, are not limitless” (274). Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler say much the same: “Imagination is situated; our imaginary horizons are affected by the positioning of our gaze” (“Situated” 327). How we imagine ourselves and our world matters because it shapes the meaning we take from our experiences and the

receptiveness with which we approach others' realities. Imagining ourselves as situated, embodied beings accords respect for differential positioning and compels us to respect the very real consequences of our materiality in our worlds and in our words. Connected to the body and attentive to difference, these feminist versions of the imagination are a far cry from the neo-Romantic "creative imagination" of expressivism.

Your Body Is Your Muse: The Embodied Imagination in Yoga

Yoga philosophy can be seen to build on Grument's idea that the body serves as an anchor for the imagination. Yoga is also a contemplative practice that actualizes the mindfulness at the heart of the embodied imagination. Iyengar's thoughts on the imagination are the second wellspring for my concept because they stress the application of the imagination in our ordinary lives as we bring our imaginings to bear on our realities in order to shape and to change them. Iyengar explains that the imagination must be steadily applied to our reality. Comparing this application to the writing process, he notes, "[a] writer may dream of the plot for a new novel, but unless he applies himself to pen and paper, his ideas have no value. . . . Never mind the idea, write it down" (156). The embodied imagination described here is the fire that transforms the writer's thoughts into reality on the page and in her life, differentiating imagining from daydreaming; the latter of the two lacks the pragmatic pulse. *Asana*, or practice of the physical poses of yoga, is the link that trains us to bring our thoughts to bear on our realities: "[a]sana practice brings mind and body into harmony for this task. . . . The coordination between them that we learn in asana will enable us to turn the shape of our visions into the substance of our lives" (Iyengar 157). This is not just about imagining possibility then, but using the

imagination as a source of intentional doing. Just as in writing, it is the process that becomes the focus.

Asana teaches us to embody our imaginings by bringing together the intelligence of the body, which “is a fact...is real” and the intelligence of the brain which “is only imagination” (Iyengar 63). “The imagination has to be made real. The brain may dream of doing a difficult backbend today, but it cannot force the impossible even on to a willing body. We are always trying to progress, but inner cooperation is essential” (Iyengar 63). To return once more to my own practice as an example, I must make my imaginings of *Adho Mukha Svanasana* “real,” or embodied, by listening to my body and tapping into my feelings through continued practice of the pose. This means I can’t simply overwrite by body’s intelligence, which grounds my intellect: “the brain may say: “We can do it.” But the knee says: “Who are you to dictate to me? It is for me to say whether I can do it or not” (Iyengar 30). It means that I must begin to imagine myself as not just consciousness or body but both by interweaving brain and body into intelligent movement that respects the limits of my present practice while stretching toward a future of what may be. The greater my personal awareness in the pose and the more experiential knowledge I gather, the more possibility my future pose holds. This reality rests in my present actions so that my imaginings are embodied through the fruits of my labor. That is, embodied imaginers develop awareness of habits by tapping into the intelligence of our cells so that we are able to challenge old patterns of doing and entrenched beliefs by *being in the present moment*, for it is the actions of today that will bring about the growth of tomorrow.

To be present, we must be flexible and must respect the fluidity with which we interact with others, be they subjects or objects, in the world. I will capitalize on this literal-metaphoric flexibility in chapter three. Gloria Anzaldua is an example of an author who embodies this sort of flexibility and awareness in her writings. It is for this reason I often use her as a resource in my writing classes. In *Borderlands*, she argues that while “we are taught that the body is an ignorant animal; intelligence dwells only in the head”, “the body is smart. It does not discern between external stimuli and stimuli from the imagination. It reacts equally viscerally to events from the imagination as it does to ‘real’ events” (*Borderlands* 59-60). With the congruence between her thoughts and those I have just explored from Iyengar, it is no surprise that Anzaldua adopts the concept of “yoga of the body” in a 1983 interview to explain the ways in which a writer’s creativity is filtered through the body and how readers respond viscerally (“Interviews” 77). This author’s “*Tilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink*” essay in *Borderlands* dramatizes this process of writing from the body and with the body while viewing the text produced as taking on a fleshy presence itself. About the visceral reaction of reading and its connection to a yoga of the body, she reminds us after reflecting upon the 1983 interview years later that “[e]very word you read hits you physiologically—your blood pressure changes; your cells; your bones, your muscle [stet] are moved by a beautiful poem, a tragic episode. So that’s the kind of yoga that I want: a yoga filtered through the body and through the imagination, the emotions, the spirit, and the soul” (*Interviews* 77). Almost thirty years ago, Anzaldua started a conversation about yoga, writing and the imagination I want to continue here within the frame of composition studies and embodied writing pedagogies.

Chapter Outlines:

As indicated above, this project is invested in a faithfulness of being within a “worldly” pedagogy that concentrates on the whole person. When I began writing, I had little idea how such a pedagogy would take shape among these pages, but the more I composed, the more organically my project seemed to embrace body, mind and heart, encasing these united aspects of being in its structure as well as its content. As a result, the organization of this project focuses on all three: the first chapter is focused on body, the second on mind and the third on heart. This structure unlocks the power of contemplative learning as applied to embodied writing pedagogies; such pedagogies are transformative of the writer’s whole being in an ethical and relational context which takes matter as the connective substance that unfolds to developed self- and other-awareness.

Each of my three theoretical chapters is followed by a corresponding “interchapter,” or equally-long section that reports on my efforts to practice embodied writing pedagogy in the classroom and analyzes students’ reactions to it. In doing so, these sections speak back to my chapters and showcase the pedagogical interventions and applications of the theory covered in them. The interchapters also loosely apply and yet confuse the chapter’s divisions between body, heart and mind, reminding us that while writing may be rooted in the linear, our embodied identities are most certainly not. Overall, the chapter-interchapter structure of my project supports my dual focus on theory and practice, dialoguing lived research from qualitative case studies with the theories from yoga, feminism and composition studies explored in my chapters and “speaking back” to the theory. The interplay between chapters and interchapters testifies

to my belief in the power of teaching practice to generatively complicate, shape and transform pedagogical theories—just as the lived experience of *being* a body in the world can inform our theories of embodiment.

In my first chapter, I turn attention to the body that writes by utilizing the feminist epistemologies of scientist Donna Haraway to theorize a writing body that provides a mode of authorship that agentizes student writing and authorizes students' experiences of embodiment. I differentiate my notion of writing bodies from other compositionists' use of the term, such as Fleckenstein's, as mine insists on a level of conscious awareness of our writing bodies; we certainly always write as bodies, but few of us are ready to claim them—especially in academic environments that insist on disembodiment. A focus on writing bodies within this chapter also indicates my concern with how writers experience their embodiment and practice it rather than on a semiotics of material placement, even if situatedness will be a key term to define this experience.

In my first interchapter, I take the notion of writing bodies into the first-year writing classroom in order to examine how writers imagine and actively navigate their embodiment within and beyond the writing process. Examining responses to a series of blog writing assignments that asked students to investigate the physicality of the writing process and to reflect on their writing habits and rituals, I argue that the first step in encouraging students to become embodied imaginers is having them contextualize their writing experiences in terms of their situated materialities and conceptualize their bodies as agentive points of mediation between a culture that seeks to mark them and a personal, material reality awash with experiences and feelings that can be used to speak back to that culture.

In my second chapter, I differentiate embodied writing from constructivist and expressivist writing, showing how early attempts by Hindman to reclaim the expressivist subject within critical pedagogies cannot generatively support embodied pedagogies. In this chapter, I examine how embodied writing reframes and reanimates the “personal”—a term we usually align narrowly with expressivism because of its concern with keeping the subjectivity of the writer visible at all times. Using Haraway’s view of situated knowledge as grounded in materiality, I argue that unlike expressivist personal writing, embodied writing traces the meaning and understanding produced by the writer as leading us back to her material-semiotic body as an epistemic origin. This concern for material situatedness allows embodied writing pedagogy to reclaim the personal responsibly while refusing to see student experience as interchangeable, a problematic of many critical pedagogies.

In my second interchapter, I narrate the experience of introducing students in two case study, first-year writing courses to a “yoga for writers” practice as part of a classroom effort to attend to the demands writing makes on us as bodies and minds. I argue that yoga not only models a method of learning that balances the mind, body and emotions toward the development of situated knowledge, but also provides a pedagogical tool to teach awareness and the need for writers to cultivate a practice of reflection. Within this context, I examine students’ reactions to our yoga practice and the transformative effects of this practice on their writing habits and rituals.

In my third chapter, I connect the dismissal of the body from our writing pedagogies to our control and devaluation of emotions, a devaluation Lynn Worsham has questioned. Examining the tendency to manage emotions in our canons of scholarship

and also the teaching lore of our field, I contend that because feelings and bodies are enactments of our materiality, they are both necessary to reclaim it. To do this work, I suggest we extend Haraway's discussion of situated knowing to include "situated feeling." This extension allows us to account for the sociality of emotion at the same time that we respect it as charging our flesh with agency. In this spirit, I argue that situated feeling may keep a stronger connection to the body than alternatives like Laura Micciche's "rhetorics of emotion." My discussion of emotion leads me back to the embodied imagination as a space wherein students' emergent body identities can be made agentive and the negotiation between situated thinking and situated feeling in writing can become a means of making meaning and self-determination.

In my third interchapter, I suggest that attending to students' emotional discourses through the lens of situated feeling encourages embodied writing pedagogues to approach "emotional flexibility" as a skill that can be taught and developed in the writing classroom. I examine how we can encourage students to see critical, persuasive writing as engaging thoughts and feelings. I investigate how a practice of yogic, mindful breathing can help unify students' thoughts and feelings toward new learning and growth. By putting the habits of mind cultivated by a practice of mindful breathing in dialogue with a recent NCTE publication listing the goals of composition courses, I argue that contemplative exercises can help our students realize the shared goals of composition pedagogy and contemplative education, including self-reflection, awareness and insight.

In my conclusion, I suggest that embodied writing pedagogies may help us to advance more mindful approaches to teaching writing. These approaches may raise

students' and teachers' awareness of the need for an embodied ethics of teaching, learning and writing; one that respects embodied difference and compels us to imagine new worlds and possibilities that “matter.” I also point to the changing dynamics of this project as I worked and suggest areas for further exploration as well as additional questions and queries my current work has raised.

CHAPTER ONE: BODY

“[It’s] not that I always write about the body, though I often do, but that I always write, consciously, as a body. (This quality more than any other, I think, exiles my work from conventional academic discourse. The guys may be writing with the pen/penis, but they pretend to keep it in their pants.” Nancy Mairs, *Waist High in the World*

Writing Bodies: Lessons from Science Studies

If we are to begin to use the embodied imagination as a vehicle for inquiry in our writing classrooms, we must first attend to the ways we make meaning of the bodies we teach in our classrooms as well as our own bodies as teachers. To embody inquiry as an imaginative process central to embodied writing pedagogy, we must first embody knower-writers. To understand embodiment as a central facet of composition studies entails accepting bodies as flesh and text, not just the latter. It means accepting that we *are* our bodies, not just that we *have* them, as my prologue relates. Within the field, there are few models we can easily follow to reintroduce the tension of the living, organic body and even fewer that productively apply this tension to our theories *and* practices. In this chapter, bolstered by the interdisciplinary nature of feminist theory I explore what feminist science studies may offer composition by way of new models of subjectivity to help move us from theories of writing subjects to “writing bodies.”

I propose a feminist alternative to the constructivist pedagogue’s understanding of the subject as a sum of its linguistic parts by drawing from scientist-theorist Donna Haraway’s feminist texts. I will explore her work by plundering ideas from her most

well-known texts including *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*⁷ (1991) which contains her classic “Cyborg Manifesto” and her sometimes-neglected but pivotal “Situated Knowledges” as well as her more recent book, *Modest_Witness @Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse*TM (1997). I will also look at *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008) which contain the most contemporary distillations of earlier ideas. The cyborg theories with which this author is most frequently associated are certainly critical to understanding her work and its aims; however, to focus solely on them is to minimize the importance of the particular philosophical substructure from which they spring and to miss the evolution of these early ideas in her subsequent theorizing.

With Haraway, I will work toward a definition of writing bodies as those bodies that are consciously *aware* of their materiality, for there are surely bodies that write unaware of or unwilling to accept the terms of their embodiment. The difference is what Nancy Mairs targets in my epigraph. My exploration of writing bodies will hinge on such conscious awareness while also refusing to deny the integrity of particular bodies, situated in time and place, but also feeling and experiencing their embodiment as, in part, an expression of interiority. After parsing these texts from Haraway for insights about embodiment and subjectivity, I will then turn to Mairs’ insights about embodying our writing with an eye toward how we might get students to think of themselves as embodied in the composition classroom. My efforts in this chapter will be extended in

⁷ It is Haraway’s chapters, “Situated Knowledges,” and the widely-popular “Cyborg Manifesto” that most interest me from this text as they have the most immediate take-away for our field. While over two decades old now, these beginning texts from Haraway’s opus are still immediately relevant, especially when put in conversation with theoretical updates from successive publications like *Modest_Witness* and *Companion Species*.

my first interchapter with a pedagogical discussion of how to apply theories of writing bodies to classroom practices.

Haraway's work in these collections represents a sustained effort to develop feminist epistemological methods and ontological conceptions of subjectivity that cast off phallogocentric systems of domination and mainstream theories of the body politic in favor of a strong materialism that recognizes the opacity of the material world. Notably, for Haraway this is a material world in which we live and to which we belong by virtue of our fleshiness—corporeality is a condition of our existence we are foolish to ignore. As I will explain in detail later, it is precisely our corporeal nature that humbles us in the face of a vast material world that has just as much constitutional agency on us as we do on it. Haraway has a vested stake in pushing against dogmatic, anti-materialist interpretations of postmodernism as a scientist interested in understanding the real world and as a feminist interested in making the world a better place. Her goals highlight this as they include, in her words, a simultaneous recognition of “historical contingency” and the “real world” as well as a commitment to “freedom,” “material abundance,” and “happiness” (“Situated” 187). Balance of the theoretical and the lived is key.

While oft-cited in feminist circles, Haraway is considerably less so in composition studies, having largely escaped our disciplinary attention, possibly because she challenges fundamental notions of the body upon which our disciplinary rhetoric and practice rests.⁸ Of course, her refusal of a linear writing style in favor of recursive,

⁸ One noteworthy exception to this is Fleckenstein's recent use of Haraway's attention to sight and visual metaphors as a taking-off-point for her development of a theory of visual literacy that underscores the duality of image and word. See Fleckenstein's *Embodied Literacies: Imageword and a Poetics of Teaching* (2003).

webbed and tentacle-like prose and her adoption of an irreverent tone toward the traditional and established may seal the deal so to speak. Nevertheless, what makes this scientist-theorist a radical in her field, namely her feminist attention to the body and her sensitivity to semiotics—as evidenced clearly by the title of her 1997 book—equally makes her a valuable resource in composition studies. Indeed, Haraway’s self-professed goals make her an easy companion to the praxis upon which our field relies even if her tolerance for heaping doses of substance alongside sign may be new to us. It is my hope that by rethinking our pedagogical practices and theories in light of Haraway’s materialism, I can begin to cement a foundation for embodied learning, teaching and writing in the composition classroom.

Of special interest to me is Haraway’s reworking of the subject to add to it a renewed focus on materiality and conjoining of nature and culture, a clear thread throughout all her work on epistemology. Her feminist revision is driven by the notion that the body resists total linguistic capture because materiality exceeds language and human understanding. As she argues clearly in her recent *Companion Species Manifesto*, we are part of the world as material beings whose very materiality both ensures our connection to others as well as limits our scope; we are one part of a vast material world that exists beyond our purview however delimited by culture we may seem to be.⁹ “Naturecultures,” or material-semiotic webs as opposed to definitively bounded categories, exist precisely because of the extra-linguistic qualities of subjects and objects,

⁹ This tenant enables Haraway to forward her basic argument against anthropocentrism and for understanding the relational responsibilities of cross-species development and communication. In turn, *The Companion Species Manifesto* argues for a mode of kinship that joins together the rights and responsibilities of species including dogs and humans, re-conceptualizing human evolution from the ecologically-minded trope of “significant-otherness.” The impact of co-constitutionality on subjectivity will be fully explored in later in this chapter.

including but not limited to minds and bodies, which can only ever be understood together. Signs and substances mean together, making it senseless to tease them apart. Metaphorical *and* physical connections and relationships thus supplant traditional hierarchical and binaristic boundaries. Indeed, the typological loss of the space between these words semantically mirrors the substantive, material acknowledgment. That we attempt to understand these categories separately or, more recently, see them as distinct grammatical markers, tells us more about ourselves and our preference for “the politics of closure” over of “differential positioning” than the nature of cultural construction or things themselves, according to Haraway (“Situated” 196). Yet if we give up definitive boundaries, we gain new means to be accountable to the real world and to take up the material responsibilities of social justice, which is always more than an intellectual endeavor.

Open to a shifting web of positioning and relationality, Haraway does not ignore postmodernism’s focus on linguistic construction and representation, but neither does she allow it to take on the deterministic contour provided by strong linguistic constructivism. She simply has no patience for a nihilistic or totalizing, anti-essentialist view that doesn’t leave room for materiality or real world indeterminacy since this traps feminism in a kind of valueless-ness that makes revision unnecessary, cast off with a flippant, “They’re just texts anyway, so let the boys have them back” (“Situated” 186). In a different way but with a similar, apathetic end, this is the kind of attitude students who feel pressure to conform to a strong critical cultural studies paradigm adopt when they can’t mediate their everyday lives with the teacher’s pedagogy. Too often these students eventually give in to writing texts removed from their embodied experiences in order to give the teacher what

he/ she “wants” according to the students’ perspective. It is this kind of dismissive attitude that Haraway blames for feminists’ widespread inattention to science; in composition, it is certainly a sign of constructivist pedagogy at its most troubled. In many ways too, this nihilistic attitude is a prevalent defense served up to explain the rather widespread rejection of science in the humanities which is seen as at odds with an acceptance of postmodern deconstruction.¹⁰

Haraway is such an interesting figure for composition because she acts as a bridge between the humanities and the sciences. This is especially important for composition studies as it has been concerned with establishing itself as a legitimate discipline and has done so by incorporating traditional scientific methods and discourse into its fold: using quantitative data and methods to hold down classroom anecdotes and claiming a disembodied scientific academic discourse as its mouthpiece. This is not without its effects, as compositionist David Brauer states, “the discourse of the natural sciences is so endemic to academic thinking that even scholars in the humanities ignore its influence on their own perspectives” (“Writing” 73). Haraway gives us a frame to see and to question this influence and an alternative to a traditionally phallogocentric means of legitimization.

Trained in primatology and biology, Haraway does not want us to give up on science as hopelessly masculinist since she believes in the value of the scientific method.

¹⁰ Of course, this term itself is unwieldy as it means to some like Victor Vitanza a kind of ludic postmodernism wherein everything is a floating target and suggests to others like David Bartholomae reason to investigate the rise of our identities through language groups and a means of providing a service to our students. I only mean to suggest that what underlies our varying weak and strong applications of postmodern theory and its popular outgrowth in our field, social constructivism, is a general inattention if not hostility to real, fleshy bodies so that embodied experience may seem to irreconcilably jar with our theory. This real consequence of our theorizing is what Susan Bordo calls the “no body” of postmodernism (see her *Unbearable Weight* (1993), especially “Postmodern Bodies,” for a detailed analysis). This evacuation of corporeality puts us in the strange position of denying the felt sense and knowledge of our experiences for the logic of our theories.

She would rather reclaim science and begin to temper it with a pragmatic feminism fiercely loyal to no one discipline while avoiding the luring trap of postmodern deconstruction. For while committed to rhetoric and the play of words as a theorist and philosopher of science, she refuses to relinquish the material to the rhetorical. So it is that Haraway's non-extremist method stands apart and has the potential teach us a mindful way of understanding matter and connecting to the body without dismissing theory out of hand.

Haraway accordingly breaks from the traditions of scientific realism and strong postmodern deconstruction, finding them both ironically interested in a homologous type of singularity. She shows us how understanding natures and cultures as intricately braided together is different than simply collapsing one into the other or reifying one over the other. In the humanities, collapsing natures into cultures is the route postmodern theories of knowledge creation often promote; conversely, modernist essentialism and scientific representationalism tend to separate by reification. But the braid is meaningless if it is teased apart. A focus on inter-relationality and co-constitutionality allows Haraway to avoid the traps of relativism and anti-materialism without giving up multiplicity, backsliding into essentialism or ignoring the power of signs. Despite the headiness of our theorizing, Haraway recognizes more than texts are at stake; understanding better means of living in the world is at the heart of all her projects. To close out matter, however theoretically justified, is not only untrue to our real, embodied state of living in the world but is also a nihilistic move that closes off options for change and difference.

Within this epistemology, Haraway theorizes a subject we should make use of in composition studies, one that sees the body as instrumental in knowledge-making practices. Hers is a subject that is neither “about fixed location in a reified body” or about “the body as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions”, neither squarely essentialist nor anti-essentialist (“Situated” 195-97). The body instead is understood to be both fleshy, a material presence existing superfluously beyond our linguistic representations and rules, and yet primarily accessible to us via our linguistic mapping practices as it is always situated and located within and by means of those rules. The lesson here is that as embodied beings we are rooted in and with the material world, not separate from it. In following Haraway my hope is to examine the consequences of defining writing and thinking in terms of the absence of the body and to suggest what we can do to reclaim our writing bodies.

This overview points to the two main ways Haraway embodies the subject: by materially situating it and by granting it a measure of extralinguistic agency. I describe in turn these methods in order to show how embodied subjects lose claims to transcendence, which traditionally objectify the body as something to be left behind, but gain an acknowledgement of their flesh. Flesh is no longer able to be sundered from subjectivity in this figuration even if it is also unable to be neatly mapped either. With this in mind, if writing pedagogy is to be socially responsible and committed to students’ lived realities, it must consciously attend to students’ enfleshment and the corporeality of the writing process. When we take on the responsibility of matter, guided by Haraway, we can work toward integrating attention to the body into our pedagogy and teaching.

Lesson 1: Replace the Modest Witness with the Embodied Subject

Responding to Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism*, Haraway (1991) articulates an understanding of situatedness in her essay, "Situated Knowledges," that embodies the subject against a patriarchal backdrop which tends to limit the power of materiality by assessing it a limitation, forever abjected to the realm of all that is feminine. If women have been their bodies, men, in turn, have been "freed" to adopt a transcendent and hence disembodied subject position ensuring the objectivity of the knowledge they work to produce, which is arguably evident today in the disembodied nature of masculinist academic discourse. Haraway elsewhere (1997) draws on Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (1985) to argue that this division was solidified by seventeenth century narratives of the Scientific Revolution,¹¹ wherein men constructed themselves via the scientific method as "modest witnesses," or subjects who could enact intellectual modesty by witnessing reality without implicating themselves in it. What marks the traditional modest witness is that he remains unmarked, acting merely as a "ventriloquist for the object world, adding nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment. And so he is endowed with the remarkable power to establish facts" (*Modest* 24), according to Haraway. Rather than voicing from an invested, personal stance, he takes on the role of speaking *for* the object world, denying the need to voice *with* the world. If we cannot possess ourselves, we must possess others in order to speak.

¹¹ Within these narratives, Haraway takes the story of Robert Boyle, the "father of chemistry" and the "father of the experimental" as paradigmatic (*Modest* 23). Boyle's experimentation with his air pump and disembodied, asituated recording of observations mark the appearance of this version of subjectivity within science and other disciplines who follow suit.

Matter remains passive, silent, inactive—a resource from which knowledge can be made but never itself agentive in the making.

Because gender construction is binaristic and relational, these narratives of the modest witness cast women in the part of their bodies, or as literally part of the object world that can be witnessed and controlled, that must remain passive and silent. This is a point Shapin and Schaffer overlook but upon which Haraway pauses. If “[f]emale modesty was of the body; the new masculine virtue had to be of the mind” (*Modest* 30). In this traditional picture, there are no embodied subjects, for while men are given province over the mind, equating it with objectivity, women are cast away entirely. That is, women are not thought of as subjects but as body objects. They become material objects to be viewed, denied agency and aligned with the subjective. In this way the production of knowledge and the production of subjectivities are inextricably linked.

These same narratives continue to grip the sciences as well as other disciplines engaged in the seriousness of knowledge-making practices, as science becomes the litmus for the other disciplines, including, too often, our own. To be sure, Haraway claims this separation “of expert knowledge from mere opinion as the legitimating knowledge for ways of life...[may be a] founding gesture of what we call modernity” (*Modest* 24), but it is one that has continued to hold sway up through contemporary times. This is evident in not only a continued valuation of a disembodied subject position within knowledge production but also in the writing technologies we have inherited.

Because the knowledge obtained from the experimental method was disseminated through written reports, a rhetoric of the modest witness was created alongside this new

subjectivity according to Haraway's historical account. This modest rhetoric was conceived of as a "naked" way of writing, unadorned, factual, compelling," arguably laying the way for contemporary academic discourse. "Only through such naked writing could the facts shine through, unclouded by the flourishes of any human author" (*Modest* 26). Writing, out of necessity, is seen as a technology that can be evacuated of subjective partiality, able to provide a transparent and neutral recording of the scientist's (or academic's) ventriloquist voice. Writing thus became and remains a central part of the methodological apparatus for establishing scientific fact, ordering nature through manageable chunks of transcribed experimental knowledge (*Modest* 26). Observational, scientific reports and claim-driven arguments may retain many differences—such as the attempt to foreground the evidential framework for a claim in academic arguments— but they are united in their preference for disembodied the modest witness. Both kinds of writing value the kind of substantiated proof that takes the writer's personal beliefs, self interests and subjective perspectives as something that can be transcended in the pursuit of knowledge.

The transparent tale and the disinterested, modest observer remain features of recognizable scientific as well as mainstream academic discourse to this day. We have inherited the value of "naked writing" or author-evacuated, objective writing. That is, the feminized emotive and experiential self, often understood to be the personal self of expressivism, is granted significantly less epistemological agency, if any at all, than the "modest" academic arguer, the witnessing critical intellectual, who furnishes the appropriate, impersonal substantiated evidence and displays rationality to make his claims (for an interesting analysis of how this preference plays out in our professional

writing see *Publishing in Rhetoric and Composition* (1997) especially “Person, Position and Style” as well as “Gender and Publishing”). It is precisely these inherited notions of objectivity in tandem with deep-set Cartesian mind-body dualism that fueled early feminist disruptions of academic discourse by compositionists like Jane Tompkins, Olivia Frey and Linda Brodkey.

Tompkin’s article, “Me and My Shadow” actualizes the struggle between the personal, subjective self, who is to be seen not heard, and the professional, disembodied witnesser, called to the stand for a kind of modest testimony untainted by the body. Tompkins highlights these subject positions: “There are two voices inside me... These beings exist separately but not apart. One writes for professional journals, the other in diaries, late at night. One uses words like ‘context’ and ‘intelligibility,’ likes to win arguments, see her name in print, and give graduate students hardheaded advice. The other has hardly been heard from” (169). Like Brodkey in “Writing on the Bias,” Tompkins asserts that in reality the split is a false one, a separation that keeps us from recognizing the embodied and embedded personal because of masculinist conventions; or, as Brodkey says, we are blinded from seeing a biased conventional discourse that “feigns objectivity by dressing up its reasons in seemingly unassailable logic and palming off its interest as disinterest—in order to silence arguments from other quarters” (547). Calls to logic usher in the adversarialism Frey targets in her study of professional journals and conferences.

And we may not have advanced as far beyond these early critiques as we’d like to think. More recently, Jane Hindman has argued that our field persistently values the same

kind of arhetoricity and objectivity Haraway elsewhere credits to the Scientific Revolution. While we have ostensibly given up on the ideals inherent in “naked writing” or writing that seeks to escape ideology, we have at the same time refused the embodiment of the author. In her “Writing an Important Body of Scholarship”, Hindman charges professional academic discourse in composition studies with a phallogentric perpetuation of an epistemology of objectivity, or the domain of the traditional modest witness. Academic discourse used and validated by compositionists in their professional writing, which is Hindman’s focus, “works to entextualize an abstract body of knowledge and disembody the individual writer” (100), she says, ironically constructing itself as arhetorical. Hindman points out, in short, how positioning ourselves as modest witnesses in our writing confers the “right” kind of authority to our prose, legitimizing the ideas it espouses precisely because it divorces the writer from her material existence, because it allows her to speak for the world rather than with it. Hindman’s critique is echoed in Elbow’s introduction to *Pre/Text* in which he questions why the same intellectuals and academics in the humanities who view “objectivity [as] passé” and who seem “to agree that we can never write anything except from a situated and interested point of view” (7) still hold tight to discursive forms of academic argument that maintain the subject’s distance from his/her prose and disdain openly expressive writing with a personal point of view.

Like these compositionists, Haraway fully recognizes that while women everywhere have specifically been the “embodied others, who are not allowed *not* to have a body”, feminists should neither simply take on the masculinist subject position of the modest witness in order to be heard nor reactively ignore the body (“Situated” 183). With

such an objectifying backdrop, Haraway argues it is understandable why so many feminists across disciplines have adopted social constructivist positions which use the great equalizer of rhetoric to show the historical, contingent nature of truth and to dismantle en masse notions of objectivity, revealing the oppressive power structures that kept them in place by insisting on the inherent rhetoricity of the body. However, Haraway finds these poststructural narratives of knowledge-making limiting, since they don't provide adequate grounding for a pragmatic account of the real world ("Situated" 187). Too many grievously ignore the reality of matter and the fleshy body as stated above.

Haraway provides an alternative to these narratives through her own work and starts by dismantling the modest subject's source of power: vision. She intentionally reclaims vision as the central metaphor to frame her subsequent discussion of knowledge, stealing it away from the masculinist "cannibal-eye" ("Cyborg" 180) or phallogocentric psychoanalytical significations of lack and uses it so that "we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" ("Situated" 190). The confusing syntax in Haraway's formulation subtly reminds us of the simultaneous naturalness of vision, and its social character, as we are taught how to see and what to value in our lines of sight ("Situated" 190). Queering the traditional understanding of vision as transcendent means for her exchanging lofty notions of transcendent vision for grounded ones. Because there is no unmediated sight, no acultural *or* immaterial means of seeing, the process is never innocent. Haraway points out the obvious—our vision is always connected to a body. This is a body that is not only marked by culture but is part of a material world in which is it locatable, partial and agentive.

Hers is a “feminist writing of the body” in which “[t]he moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision” (“Situated” 189-90). Just what kind of objectivity this entails I will turn to in a moment. To take up the first part of the quote and examine the underlying idea, Haraway’s writing of the body is literal and political because it is embodied. Haraway takes pains to insist that what we can see is limited by our body’s composition even if at the same time what we can make meaning of is limited by the cultural and ideological apparatuses we have internalized. It is just as important to accept the corporeal construction of our visual images, and thus the agentive status of our bodies, as it is to acknowledge the cultural conditioning that enables us to make sense of what our eyes see. As artists know well, the camera constructs as much as it records. But as those who wear glasses or contacts know just as well, sight is contingent on the body’s own agency.

Thusly recasting the metaphor of vision, Haraway’s mutated modest witness exchanges the self-effacement of previous versions for a self-awareness of its partiality and non-innocence. This new modest witness “insists on situatedness, where location is itself a complex construction as well as inheritance...[t]he modest witness is the only one who can be engaged in situated knowledges” (“Cyborg” 160-61). Her modest witness is not modest because he is able to view the subject world from a transcendent, disembodied position; rather, her mutated witness is modest precisely because she can only appeal to knowledge from a particular personal, embodied location, a certain material placement of being in/with the world, never above it. In sum, Haraway’s take on feminist vision helps to bring the fleshy knower back into view and to testify to her role in the construction of what is seen. It further affirms the responsibilities inherent in

understanding the process of seeing as associative and relational. Literally and metaphorically, this is a kind of connected seeing.¹² That is, it replaces detachment with engagement, connection and interaction.

As Haraway's quote indicates, the location of the knower itself must be understood dualistically: both as a "complex construction" as well as an "inheritance." That is, situatedness, the condition of literally being placed somewhere in the world, rests not only on deconstructing and understanding the linguistic web of construction that gives meaning to our historical and cultural placement but also on recognizing our inheritance, our birthright. This includes the material conditions into which we are brought, the real world that supports our organic bodies and the legacy of our flesh. The immediate implication for composition studies is the recognition of how the body is instrumental to knowledge, for it is only with and through it that we can come to know can create meaning at all. This is our material heritage as human beings. And while this process affirms the integrity of the individual, it is also a process that connects the individual to other bodies. As we begin to see, the embodied self who engages in local knowledge-making is differentiated by her place in the world as she self-consciously locates herself *within* it and is inextricably tied to it by virtue of her own organic matter, her flesh.

Replacing transcendence with an embrace of the real does not mean that truth is dismissed in knowledge-making, just redefined. As Haraway states in her autobiographical interview in *How Like a Leaf*, her "modest witness is about telling the

¹² This is akin to Belenky et al's connected knowing. Haraway defines the mutated modest witness' seeing as "passionate detachment," but I read it as connected, since her phrase is oxymoronic.

truth—giving reliable testimony—while eschewing the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations” (158). The loss of transcendence is precisely what figures in Haraway’s mutated version of the modest witness as she later goes on to explain:

I retain the figuration of ‘modesty’ because what will count as modesty *now* is precisely what is at issue. There is the kind of modesty that makes you disappear and there is the kind that enhances your credibility. Female modesty has been about being out of the way while masculine modesty has been about being a credible witness. And then there is the kind of *feminist* modesty that I am arguing for here (not feminine), which is about a kind of immersion in the world of technoscience where you ask a hard intersection of questions about race, class, gender, sex with the goal of making a difference in the real, ‘material-semiotic’ world. (*Leaf* 159)

Modesty here is defined in opposition to the arrogance of closure and in tandem with understanding one’s limits and one’s partial perspective. This is a modesty brought on by humility not mastery. Haraway is quick to point out that this kind of sensitivity to situatedness, of partiality of perspective is actually more powerful because it remains accountable to the material world and to real people. It is this kind of modesty that may help us to redefine our goals of social responsibility within composition to include the conditions of corporeality.

Kristie Fleckenstein attempts such a “modest” move in “Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies.” In this article, Fleckenstein asks compositionists to work toward an embodied discourse by accepting the concept of the somatic mind, which is to

view the mind and body as resolved into a single entity with permeable boundaries. Fleckenstein draws from cultural anthropologist Gregory Bateson to define the somatic mind as “tangible location *plus* being. It is *being-in-a-material place*. Both organism and place can only be identified by their immanence within each other” (“Writing Bodies” 286, author’s emphasis). I am arguing for a similar, but not identical, concept here. Fleckenstein’s writing body is the somatic mind, so that the experience of embodiment she targets is embodiment *as* placement in external place and time. As she states, “[s]urvival—ecological, psychological, and political—does not depend on the fate of a discrete, atomistic reproducing organism (or subjectivity) because such an organism does not exist. Instead, what exists (and what survives or expires) is the locatedness of somatic mind” (“Writing Bodies” 286).

Fleckenstein uses Mairs to exemplify her concept: “From the perspective of a somatic mind, the delimitation of Mairs’ being-in-a-material-place includes the person, the wheelchair, and the doorway she struggles to enter. Corporeal certainty is not the human being in the wheelchair (the illusory “I”), but the body, the chair, and the doorway simultaneously” (“Writing Bodies” 288). In contrast, what I would like to suggest here is akin to seeing Mairs as possessing an experience of corporeality that is as much internal as external. If we see Mairs as a somatic mind, we risk denying her the integrity of individual embodiment and we lose the complexity of the double gesture. Hypothetically, based on Fleckenstein’s equalizing of Mairs with her environment, we could imagine another woman in a wheelchair positioned in the same doorway at the same moment having the same frustrating experience of inaccessibility. There is a move toward corporeal interchangeability here. Although Fleckenstein’s concept is certainly more

complicated than such a simple scenario implies, the fact remains that once we remove the subjectivity of the “I”, what Fleckenstein problematically calls “illusory”, we lose the integrity of the individual body. And whether or not we lose it to the swirling postmodern mass of discourse or to the vortex of intertextual materialities, we lose the unique experience of what it means to be humanely embodied. What it means to be integral or whole is not to be of one piece so much as it means, in Haraway’s paradigm, to be undiminished by our interconnectedness with other subjects and objects. Being differentially-positioned in the world means that as bodies we are in a constant flux with our material environments and with other bodies (a kind of dynamic, material-semiotic situatedness I will turn to in the next section), which is not the same as losing the subjectivity of the embodied “I”.

Because we experience materiality as a complex relationship between exteriority and interiority, we cannot simply glide over the fact that being positioned by a doorway, even incorporating that too-small doorway into our sense of self at the moment of struggle is different than losing our autonomy to the doorway. As Haraway states, our embodiment is not simply fixed “in a reified body” but neither is it a “blank page” for other inscriptions, be they material or social (“Situated” 195-97). So while I would agree that our body boundaries are permeable and our experiences of embodiment include our material environments and are most certainly shaped by our situatedness, I wish to keep a space for body integrity and interiority in my understanding of writing bodies. For me, this is a more responsible conception since the door cannot experience Mairs as she can it. The objects and subjects of positioning are not reducible to each other, but are rather always embracing each other. When I hug my husband, I am “becoming with” him at that

moment, but I am also aware of myself as integral without him. I will take this argument up once more in my third chapter when I discuss the acts of extension and expansion as allowing us to think of embodiment as both an experience of interiority as well as exteriority. In this chapter, I will explore this idea further in the final section by attending to the notion of companion species. For the moment, I will turn next to the ways in which I frame writing bodies via Haraway's concept of situatedness, which is arguably a more responsible version of Bateson's theory of being-in-a-material-place.

Lesson 2: Embrace Situated Knowledge

So what then defines the partial, modest knowledge of the feminist witness? Situated knowledge, a paradoxical "embodied objectivity" ("Situated" 188) is defined by Haraway as that which will allow for a feminist retooling of the knowledge-making process that doesn't discount the reality of the real or the materiality of the author-actor. This term is meant to underscore just how central our embodied experience is; how knowledge, like the body, is always locatable and always partial. Indeed, situated knowledge rests on the subject's fleshiness, on her inherent embodiment as part of the organic world. Embodiment in this formulation takes on the meaning of dynamically embedded not statically bound. Haraway defines situated knowledges as "marked knowledges" ("Reading" 111) meaning that they are projects of knowing from the "somewhere" of the embodied subject as opposed to the "nowhere" of traditional empiricism or the "everywhere" of postmodernism ("Situated" 188-191). Emphasizing the somatic prerequisite of knowing Haraway states,

We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate colour and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility... This is an objective vision that initiates, rather than closes off (“Situated” 190).

To learn in and with our bodies means we must first accept that they are integral to the way we produce and understand meaning. The Achilles heel of so many other theories of knowledge production is precisely their assumption that we can rise above our material beingness. Naming “where we are not” entails exactly the opposite. Meaning rests on specific, embodied features of our selves, such as the literal way we see because of our corporeal makeup (two eyes in the front of our faces, the intake and interpretation of light by our rods and cones) and the meaning we invest in the patterns of diffracted light our eyes can register, as the above quote underscores.

It is precisely a focus on the body as securing our epistemological perspective—which necessitates a stance of openness—that constructivists such as Berlin miss with sweeping statements regarding the totality of social construction. Defending the logic of social epistemicism, Berlin, a master policer of boundaries, asserts for example that “the symbolic includes the empirical because all reality, all knowledge, is a linguistic construct” (*Reality* 166). While no idealist, Berlin may not outright deny the existence of

matter but he seems to find enough reason to dismiss any agentive status or genuine role in construction it may have. If nature, and the body in turn, can never be known in itself because culture is always mediating it, then for Berlin nature is just another word for culture, and real agency lies in constructivist narratives:

[T]he distinction between nature and culture can never be determined with certainty. The interventions of culture prevent humans from ever knowing nature-in-itself. In other words, experiences of the material are always mediated by signifying practices. Only through language do we know and act upon the conditions of our experience—conditions that are socially constructed, again through the agency of discourse. (*Rhetorics* 76)

Taken together, Berlin's dismissal of matter for discourse reframes situatedness as an intellectual negotiation referring to cultural and historical placement. Rather than seeing the lack of certain boundaries between the natural and the cultural as a liberating characteristic and a way to complicate subjectivity via materiality as Haraway does, he places meaning and value in discursive constitution. In other words, Berlin seems to want closure whereas Haraway wants openness. The body and flesh of the writer are dually edged out.

Discourse-community constructivists like David Bartholomae also overlook the body's role in situatedness with arguments about how student writers must (and can) so displace themselves from their material circumstances and enfolded existence in order to be taught to appropriate an authoritative academic persona that will allow them the voice needed to be heard in the academy (see "Inventing the University"). As with Berlin, the

problem here is not the demystification of academic discourse but the disembodied presumption. Thomas Newkirk's interest in critical pedagogies focus on the transformation of students puts another spin on this argument. Newkirk sees appropriation models like Bartholomae's as problematic because they ask students to take on not just a discourse but to "impersonate" a whole new situatedness: when "students in their late teens and early 20s are asked to engage with texts written for much older readers. An eighteen-year-old reading Foucault for the first time must pretend mightily, appearing to possess the background knowledge, interests, and concerns of an older, invariably more sophisticated (or disillusioned) implied reader" ("Transformation" 253). When we view Newkirk's critique from a materialist perspective, we see that in the appropriation model we are also asking students to take on a new discourse *and* a materiality not their own, pretending themselves into other bodies deemed authoritative or dominant and thereby willing away their own and dismissing the inexorable connection between thinking and physical being. These figurations of situatedness, based on a social analysis of linguistic construction, are revealed for their limitations under his Haraway's gaze. Her figuration is one incomplete without a body to literally place it or flesh to account for it.

Objectivity (redefined as local and revisable) is still a factor here; there is truth, however situated, to be told. Our naming processes—including the delineation between the subjective and the objective, the personal and the impersonal—have gotten us into trouble and encouraged us to ignore the source when faced with the subject of vision. But when we recognize our embodiment as essential to meaning making, Haraway contends, we begin to realize that vision from nowhere, understood to be the prerequisite to

objectivity, is quite impossible. As too is the vision from everywhere that constructivism promises. Within Haraway's formulations, objectivity *is* still possible provided that we understand it to be a responsible process of local knowledge-making that always originates from a body located in a material world, not as that which results in the divorce of matter from intellect or the infinite deferments of empty signs.

Unlike other knowledge processes which produce independent or "true-in-themselves" facts, situated knowledge "initiates" according to this same passage. I understand this to mean that situated knowledge is polyvocal so that it encourages conversations and joint revisions, making it a relational process. It begins a conversation rather than ending it. Recognizing our specific embodiment and thus our partiality encourages us to join with others in order to test our view against others' and to create relational, contextual knowledge. Thus, this conversation extends beyond dialogism as it invites in multiple voices. These factors all add up to what makes Haraway-ian situated knowledge distinctive: because it originates from our body, it is not simply another way of expressing the groundless "contingent" knowledge of other theories. Rather, situated knowledge complicates contingency by embracing history and critically accepting ideology while resolutely maintaining a material connection to fleshy bodies in a real world of matter. These bodies produce similarly embodied truths that connect individuals in webs making them accountable to one another *in the flesh*.

In this way, through situated knowledges we can create "an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different—and power differentiated—communities" ("Situated" 187). Our embodiment

can consequently become something of a common ground, even if we all experience it differently. Without a doubt, the meetings and negotiations with different others are what gives this knowledge its power. The web-like structure of situated knowledge is actually more powerful than the hierarchical structure of the past: “[l]ocal does not mean small or unable to travel” (“Situated” 161) Haraway reminds us. As a critical and reflexive practice, situated knowledge thereby enacts connected knowing.

Connected knowing values the historical and experiential by taking on a relational orientation to that which is being studied by those who are doing the studying—meetings matter. Such knowing procedures are characterized by an acceptance of openness and by a recognition of the need to join with others. In contrast to separate knowers who experience the self as autonomous, connected knowers experience the self as always in relation with others (Belenky, et al 113-23). The physical and metaphorical figure of the web is telling of the kind of power situated knowledge and the processes of connected knowing entail. Webs stress the connection of bodies and the inter-relatedness of knowledge; they enable that which is small to have a widespread impact as the ripples of a single tug can be felt throughout the entire structure. They also represent how separate bodies can sometimes feel entrapped by communal representation, highlighting the need for individual nodes. Even if notions of the web allow for responsiveness that hierarchies do not, there are risks in this system of power just like any other. And yet in the web, “[e]ach person—no matter how small—has some potential for power” precisely because of the heightened accountability of being “subject to the actions of others” and others being subject to one’s own actions (Belenky et al 178). This is quite unlike a hierarchical

pyramid where one must “move a mountain” to effect substantial change (Belenky et al 179).

There are many reasons then why situated knowledge is crucial to Haraway’s project. Like so many feminists of the third wave, she is driven to provide an alternative to whitewashed feminism, or that which takes women’s experience to be homogenous without factoring in the differences of women everywhere, without accounting for crucial discursive and bodily constructions such as race and sexual orientation. The feminist picture of unity always represents the economically-secure, heterosexual and generally normative white woman in the middle. Haraway’s uneasiness over this picture prompts her to be an early voice against claiming a singularity of women’s experience, replacing it with multiplicity. Her preference for local, situated knowledges and tolerance for differential positioning will, in fact, establish a foundation for her latter theorizing of companion species based on kinship and relationality. As she proves time and again, closure is what should make us uncomfortable.

In sum, Haraway’s concept of situated knowledge not only stresses the “non-innocence of the category ‘woman’” but also all other categories that claim a transcendent or essentializing point of view (“Situated” 156-57). But in a characteristic move, Haraway warns us against falling into relativism as we may “risk lapsing into boundless difference and giving up on the confusing task of making partial, real connection” (“Situated” 161). Neither choice is suitable for neither works from a positive hermeneutic. So Haraway chooses to forge a third, hopeful way. Situated knowledge recognizes that difference itself is not the end; rather, difference implies a partiality that

necessitates the joining of the subject with others in order to form coalitions based on affinity not identity.¹³ Difference works not just to divide but also to unite. “Some differences are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. ‘Epistemology’ is about knowing the difference” (“Situated” 161).

Lesson 3: See the World in terms of Verbs

In “Writing Rhythm,” choreographer and dancer Celeste Snowber details the experience of developing her performance piece, “Beyond the Span of My Limbs: Gesture, Number, and Infinity.” As a doctoral student Snowber injured her knee and was told she might never dance again. But dance was central not only to her studies but also her sense of self and well-being. She simply could not give it up. Consequently, Snowber devised a method of dancing that involved using a chair not merely as a prop but as “almost another leg” (246). She explains that this “leg” functioned much like her organic legs in that it allowed for her body’s movement through a series of leaning, rocking and extending. Snowber concludes that her experience using the chair as a means to continue dancing through her injury was pivotal to her understanding of movement itself:

By incorporating the chair into my notion of myself as a dancer, I explored the relationship of limits, in which longing became visible in artistic form. My body used gravity and levity as I pressed against the wooden frame of the chair,

¹³ Haraway has indeed been taken to task over the differentiation of affinity and identity and has since taken pains to explain how it isn’t so much that we can always chose our identities but that we can always chose to understand our inherent connection to others. She says in a recent interview: “I talked about kin as affinity and choice and people correctly pointed out that sounded too much like everyone rationally made choices all the time, and that’s not good enough. There are all kinds of unconscious processes and solidarities at work that aren’t about choice. Inhabiting technobiopower and inhabiting the material-semiotic configuration of the world in its companion species form, where cyborg is one of the figures but not the dominant one, that’s what I am trying to do” (*Leaf* 149).

arched into space from its weight, collapsed into its security, and even kicked it abruptly across the floor. At another point, I caressed the chair, rocked in its secure hold, and stood on it with my upper back and arms arched backwards, extending my spine to the limits of upward space...I use this particular dance as the point of reference for the place where my research questions were most challenged, explored and opened up (247).

And while Snowber describes the importance of the performance in terms of better understanding limits and longing, there is another story bubbling under the surface of her prose.

By using the chair as a leg, Snowber also gives us a glimpse of what it means to rethink our notions of subjectivity in terms of Haraway's theories. Snowber's use of the chair confuses her boundaries with its—this is seemingly what prompts her to rethink notions of limits as “places of possibility” as opposed to obstacles (247). Concurrent with Haraway's notions of partiality, here limits become a source of strength. Nonetheless, while Snowber admits that the chair becomes “incorporated” into her sense of self through the dance, becoming that third limb she comes to trust, she ultimately concludes that “encountering the limit of a chair” forced her “to create movements in a way I never would have imagined” (247). These statements focus on the autonomy of her body, a body that can push the chair away at will. This autonomy is in contrast to a sometimes-chosen dependence on the chair that becomes incorporated into her new identity as a dancer. Limits therefore open up possibilities for Snowber in ways that allow a

transgression of boundaries without ever ceding the integrity of the self, Snowber's embodied "I."

Using Haraway as a lens, we can reframe Snowber's experience based on her own language of incorporation as an example of the confusion of bodily boundaries to include that which is created and that which is organic. Snowber's dance is no less embodied when she uses the chair; for the chair can be seen to become a part of the body she performs on stage. Certainly we can imagine movements that confuse her limbs for the chairs', leaving the audience guessing. Snowber's chair dance is a tangible example of incorporation and co-constitution of a subject and an object in ways that rub against our normative definitions of both. Still, Snowber can push away the chair at any point, and her performances include these moments of separation, insisting on her individual, embodied integrity beyond the chair's less dynamic boundaries. Snowber's depiction of her dance experience becomes a platform to explore further Haraway's insistence on relations, namely her focus on both co-constitutionality and blurred boundaries that beget a hybridization which already exists but we tend not to name. This is a situatedness that folds us into the arms of our material placement but one that doesn't reduce us to it.

Despite our urge to separate Snowber from the chair, for Haraway the chair and the dancer would be instances of verbs coming together, an example of how "[r]eality is an active verb, and the nouns all seem to be gerunds with more appendages than an octopus" (*Companion* 6). Organic and inorganic, subject and object compose one another as verbs that meet in their doings rather than as nouns with boundaries that remain fixed within their relations. This is not to say that we suddenly begin to see the chair as a

living, breathing being—a chair is a chair—but that we begin to rethink our subjective positioning to it (and it to us). To see the ways in which meetings matter, we need to first slacken the reins of our boundary-making practices.

The blurring of the organic and the created is readily visible in Haraway's formulation of the cyborg. Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," now outdated by Haraway's own admission (*Companion* 4), is known for challenging Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, replacing it with a less antiquated notion of technobiopower which accounts for subsequent technological advances, and for pointing to his notion of docile bodies as inherently androcentric (Braidotti 198-99). Simply, Haraway describes her first manifesto's aim as trying "to make feminist sense of the implosions of contemporary life in technoscience" by appropriating "cyborgs to do feminist work in Reagan's Star Wars times of the mid-1980s" (*Companion* 4). But the manifesto does far more than just this. More than giving us a means to view science in terms of modern techoscience and a feminist window to view the consequences of the shift, the cyborg it relates represents one of many possible subjectivities available when we take seriously the blurring of observer and observed and the interwoven nature of the material and the discursive by means of situated knowledge. The entire manifesto takes to heart the "pleasure in confus[ing] boundaries and...the responsibility in their construction" ("Cyborg" 150). This part of her feminist message is sometimes neglected for a concentration on her analysis of technology, according to Haraway (*Reader* 325).

The cyborg, as Haraway defines it, is both a discursive, created body and a real, material body and is thus part fiction and part lived and experienced: "[a] cyborg is a

cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (“Cyborg” 149). Hers is a picture of chaotic unity and a traversing of boundaries that were always already permeable and, in kind, the cyborg is both a framing metaphor and constitutive of a positive agenda for Haraway. The boundaries she wishes to confuse include human-animal, organism-machine and physical-non-physical (“Cyborg” 151-53). Informatively, we can see an analogy between the cyborg-as-machine and the writer-as-text, as both become part of the technical tools that create them as they simultaneously use them to create. That is, the writer becomes part of her text as she both writes herself into being by rendering and reflecting on her experience and also finds lived reality and material meaning in the experiences that bring her to the act of composing. This is one way to approach the bodies that write in our classrooms, bodies whose material experiences literally matter even as they are also written in the acts of language incorporation.

Again, meetings matter. All cyborgian subjects, as boundary dwellers, embody a kind of reality with difference. In its hybridity-without-privilege the cyborg recodes how we view the mind/body, intellect/ corporeality so that we begin to dismantle the nature/culture binary among others. The cyborg insists that the natural and the cultural must be theorized together since we can no longer understand them as fixed referents. Put differently, cyborg subjectivity insists that nature and culture are co-constitutive and cannot be understood to exist independently. As such, the cyborg preempts Haraway’s later work as it attempts to show how “[h]uman’ requires an extraordinary congeries of partners. Humans, wherever you track them, are products of situated relationalities with organisms, tools, much else” (“Interview” 146). These relationalities, able to be seen

because of the boundary breakdowns she traces, make it clear that the cultural and the material are not “containers for each other” as we tend to see them but are instead “co-constituting verbs” (“Interview”146). Before recently settling on new metaphors Haraway proposes several versions of the hybridized cyborg subjectobject across her opus. These versions include the cyborg as girl¹⁴, as FemaleMan, as OncoMouse and as vampire.¹⁵ Haraway herself has recently exchanged talk of cyborgs for a focus on companion species. It is her work on this new cyborgian model of kinship that perhaps best elucidates what it means to give up pre-existing ontological determinants and to replace them with codependent models of constitution via interaction. Or simply, it clearly details how we can move from definitions of subjectivity dependent on things to notions of subjectivity based the doings of embodiment.

Moving from cyborgs to companion species, Haraway says, “I go to companion species, although it has been over-coded as cats and dogs...I think of the ‘Cyborg Manifesto’ and *Companion Species Manifesto* as bookends around an interrogation of relationalities where species are in question and where posthuman is misleading” (“Interview” 140). Extending her conversation about naturecultures, *The Companion Species Manifesto* argues for a mode of kinship that joins together the rights and responsibilities of species, taking as paradigmatic the relations between dogs and humans

¹⁴ When asked in an interview if her original cyborg in the manifesto was indeed conceived of as a girl, Haraway responded, “Yeah, it is a polychromatic girl...the cyborg is a bad girl, she is really not a boy. Maybe she is not so much bad as she is a shape-changer, whose dislocations are never free. She is a girl who’s trying not to become Woman, but remain responsible to women of many colors and positions; and who hasn’t really figured out a politics that makes the necessary articulations with the boys who are your allies. It’s undone work” (*Leaf* 23).

¹⁵ The figurations of the cyborg as FemaleMan, OncoMouse and vampire allow Haraway to play with the bounds of gender, technology and humans, and race respectively. The FemaleMan is taken from Fuss’ science fiction story; the OncoMouse is the genetically modified mouse used to study cancer and the vampire represents a crossing of blood and kin lines via its ingestion of blood.

by reconceptualizing human evolution from the ecologically-minded trope of “significant-otherness.” Conventionally, we deem those closest to us, our significant others. Suggesting close-bonds between animals and humans, this secondary term enables Haraway to forward a basic argument against anthropocentrism based on a grid of materialism on which humans can be mapped but not independently. Her argument thus extends to include the relational responsibilities of cross-species development and communication.

By arguing for humans’ and dogs’ significant otherness Haraway gives us a language to speak back to “[b]iological and cultural determinism [which are]“both instances of misplaced concreteness—ie. the mistake of, first, taking provisional and local category abstractions like ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ for the world and, second, mistaking potent consequences to be preexisting foundations. *There are no pre-constituted subjects and objects*, and no single courses, unitary actors, or final ends” (*Companion 6*). This entails a radical shift inasmuch as each being must now be seen as literally constituted in its relation to others. No preconstitution further means that the natural and the cultural must be theorized together since we can no longer understand them as fixed referents.

Of herself and her dog, Ms. Cayenne Pepper, she says, “We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh” (*Companion 3*). These two, human and animal, are “significantly” *other* to each other because their constitutional makeup depends on their companionate relations. This is a twist on the conventional process of othering which divorces rather than connects. Of course there are practical

reasons for their connected co-constitution including the balance of athleticism and handling both Cayenne and Haraway need in order to compete in the agility competitions they enter together. But Haraway is after something deeper, to which her final phrase attests. Haraway is not merely speaking of identity politics here, of what we align ourselves with and against as a product of our culture and ideological commitments; rather, this is a body identity that encompasses those politics and goes even further. Selfhood is seen here as a fleshy process in which each body, dog and human, is responsive to the other in terms of a materiality that goes beyond even consciousness, all the way to biology.

It is in terms of biology, which Haraway uses to get at nature without reifying it, that she first frames her useage of “companion.” Questioning the effects of her and Cayenne’s interactions within the framing narrative of the manifesto, her “Notes from a Sportwriter’s Daughter,” Haraway notes her Australian Shepherd’s quick tongue which has “swabbed the tissues of my tonsils, with all their eager immune system receptors” leaving her to wonder, “Who knows where my chemical receptors carried her messages, or what she took from my cellular system for distinguishing self from other and blinding outside to inside?” (*Companion 2*). Haraway knows that her questions are purely speculative and that they represent queries most do not think about yet alone pose seriously. But, these questions give her a tangible way to get at her argument that we must be accountable to our materiality and the way that it binds us to others—an accountability our current theories do not provide. Such accountability is forecasted in the etymology of her first term:

Companion comes from the Latin *cum panis*, ‘with bread.’ Messmates at table are companions. Comrades are political companions. A companion in literary contexts is a vade mecum or handbook like the Oxford Companion to wine or English verse; such companions help readers to consume well...As a verb, companion is ‘to consort, to keep company,’ with sexual and generative connotations always ready to erupt. (*Species* 17)

Haraway thus pins her notion of companion species to both material conditions of living and “being with” as well as language, showing how both rest on co-constitution and interrelatedness or on “an ongoing ‘becoming-with’” (*Species* 16).

On a kindred note, she too understands species as a categorical marker just as much as a makeup of certain genes. Haraway defines “species” in the following ways: as a biological kind, “and scientific expertise is necessary to that kind of reality”; as a philosophical category, “about defining difference”; as fleshy, “the corporeal join of the material and the semiotic in ways unacceptable to the secular Protestant sensibilities of the American academy and to most versions of the human science of semiotics”; and finally as implicated in impure subject- and object-making as her gloved hand “pick[s] up the microcosmic ecosystems, called scat, produced anew each day by my dogs” (*Species* 16). When joined together, then, companion species is a narrative about interdependence. Companion species links kin and kind in a loose grid of substance and sign. Haraway remarks that this grid is one she originally learned as a Roman Catholic: “I grew up

knowing that the Real Presence was present under both ‘species,’ the visible form of the bread and the wine” (*Species* 19).

Haraway’s material-semiotic account starts by embodying the interdependence of humans and dogs. She details the history of the transformation of wolves into dogs, the first domesticated animals. Attracted by the waste dumps of human settlements, wolves moved ever closer to contact. “By their opportunistic moves, those emergent dogs would be behaviorally and ultimately genetically adapted for reduced tolerance distances, less hair-trigger fright, puppy developmental timing with longer windows for cross-purposes socialization, and more confident parallel occupation of areas also occupied by dangerous humans” (*Species* 29). The interrelation was further defined when humans began controlling these wolf-dogs’ means of reproduction and slowly bred out aggressiveness.

But this is not a one-sided story. As much as people had a part in this story, this is one about co-evolution, not about the mastery of domestication. Haraway argues that humans may have capitalized on the many benefits of the would-be-dogs including their skills at herding and hunting but the animals were certainly agentive as well. Testifying to the limits of our notions of consciousness, Haraway’s against-the-grain analysis draws on a study of Russian foxes to argue that these “wolves on their way to becoming dogs might have selected themselves for tameness” (*Reader* 305). Not to be overlooked is wolves’ opportunism and “choice” to interrelate in this story; humans, after all, provided food and shelter.

Real companions respond to each other and this theorist claims humans and dogs are indeed companionate. This differentiates Haraway from other postmodernists who

have speculated on the relations between animals and humans. For instance, Jacques Derrida relates in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” an incident during which he faces his cat naked in his bathroom. He concludes that there is a gap between the two species which can be understood in terms of response. While the cat could react to him, it could never respond where response requires a consciousness of one’s condition in the world, or a sense of self knowledge. Haraway praises Derrida’s line of questioning but cannot go with him all the way. While she respects his focus on the real cat actually alive in front of him and his refusal to speak for the cat, she criticizes Derrida for not respecting the cat in terms of its significant otherness (*Species* 20). In other words, Derrida does not seriously ponder how his cat felt or what it might have “made available to him that morning” (*Species* 20).

Giving us a sense of what it means to interact as companion species, Haraway argues that meeting the gaze of an animal requires that we redo ourselves in the face of them. Looking back is literally an act of respect or *respecere*. In other words, “[t]o knot companion species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake” (*Species* 19, author’s emphasis). It means accepting animals, others and nature as presences to be encountered rather than absences we fill in; it requires respecting our engagements with them. Haraway thus faults Derrida for resting on his shame as a naked man in front of the cat rather than creating positive knowledge from his interaction which would have required “asking what this cat on this morning cared about, what these bodily postures and visual entanglements might mean and might invite, as well as reading what people who study cats have to say and delving into the developing knowledges of both cat-cat

and cat-human behavioral semiotics when species meet” (*Species* 22). That these particular questions may seem odd to us at first indicates our anthropocentrism and our limited understanding of agency. But to ignore these species entanglements is to refuse to respect meetings between selves and others—whether they are animals and humans or minds and bodies. And respect is what underlies Haraway’s notion of encountering wherein both parties reciprocally respond to one another.

Obviously the blurring of subjects and objects is important here as it was in Haraway’s theories of cyborgs. Both companion species and cyborgs shake our notions of the fixity of subjectivity and testify to the importance of the material world. This dynamism testifies to how situated knowledges insist that “[w]hat/ who is seen cannot be separated from who/ what sees, from where, and how; object and subject can only exist and operate as inextricably connected. The one ‘depends on’ the other, where each ‘one’ is multiple” and relational (Schneider 62). In this last manifesto, dogs become representative of the nature that eludes us even when it is as close to us as our bodies.

Lesson 4: Mind Materiality, It’s Agentive

The final lesson that Haraway imparts, one that the field of composition studies would be wise to heed, affirms the agentive status of the body. As we have seen, when we begin questioning the separation of the body and the mind in naturecultures, we must refigure the nature of meetings between all subjects and objects as *The Companion Species Manifesto* and its follow-up, *When Species Meet*, relates. When we talk about bodies, we talk about the world; “our” flesh is the matter of the world. This is a kind of all-the-way-down system of openness wherein the dismantling of definitive boundaries

leads to the explosion of the subjective and the objective, the unification of the mind and the body and an investigation into co-constitutionality. Haraway's theory of encountering thus reconfigures the relationships between material substances and makes it impossible to reasonably expect mastery or closure when dealing with the material. At the same time, it refuses to ignore the integrity of the individual body, however modest our connection to others may remind us to be. The tension between these positions is precisely this theory's source of strength.

And while Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* goes a great way in explaining how we may begin to approach the material world as an intricate dance of material meetings, it does not stand alone in working out how we may begin to see bodies (not just minds) as agentic. To return to Haraway's essay, "Situated Knowledges" is to find a missing piece in this bodily equation. In it, Haraway frames her discussion of agentic bodies around the loss of sex in the feminist discussion of sex and gender. Postmodern feminists have not only divorced sex from gender but also, in proving the social construction of gender, have often coded sex in much the same way. The result is that "[s]ex is resourced for its representation as gender, which 'we' can control" ("Situated" 198). Judith Butler for instance dismantles both sex and gender in *Bodies That Matter*. Butler argues in tandem with articulating her performance theory of gender that sex is not "a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but... a *cultural* norm which governs the materialization of bodies" (*Bodies* 2-3, author's emphasis). While it may initially seem to be a liberating deconstruction, dismantling the biological category of sex forces the body to be the handmaiden of culture, or worse yet, an empty puppet waiting to be controlled by cultural, historical and semiotic forces. Like

Derrida and his cat, Butler denies the body's ability to respond, limiting it to non-agentive reaction. This, in turn, mirrors the kind patriarchal appropriation feminists usually rally against according to Haraway.

What differentiates Butler from Haraway is not a focus on semiotics—they are both postmodern feminist theorists interested in the constructive powers of language—so much as it is Haraway's insistence that just because we cannot access sex from an unmediated, pre-linguistic point of view does not mean that we must simply classify it as yet another social fiction. Put differently, where Butler's world is always "real" in ways that must be offset by quotations to assert language's ultimate generativity, Haraway's is materially real even if our experience of it is always mediated by language. Just because we can't escape language does not mean we can transcend matter or flesh; real worlds are populated by real bodies. Haraway is adamant that to retain the body and its productive tension with our theories, we must retain sex. Losing the body to construction is just too great a loss. Reclaiming the biological basis of sex does not mean we reify it or adopt a kind of biological determinism, but that we resist appropriating the body for our purposes, refusing to see "the body itself as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions" ("Situated" 197). To return to the language from the *Companion Species Manifesto*, we must respect the body's response if we ever hope to engage with it productively.

Philosophers of the body, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson see this kind of agentive body through the lens of a strong embodiment that challenges our disembodied philosophical understanding of reason and the mind as separate from the body. Key to

their argument is breaking the dichotomy between perception and conception. They say, “While *perception* has always been accepted as bodily in nature, just as movement is, *conception*—the formation and use of concepts—has traditionally been seen as purely mental and wholly separate from and independent of our abilities to perceive and move” (*Flesh* 37). Linking the body to both processes insists that it is more than *involved* in knowing and feeling, but that it *shapes* the very nature of knowledge.¹⁶ For instance, our seemingly abstract concepts like “front” and “back” are characterized by our bodily orientation in the material world and our corresponding feelings of proprioception (*Flesh* 37).

Working to reclaim bodies, Haraway forwards a conception of matter, to include the world and bodies, as coyote and trickster. This useful myth originated in American Southwest Indian accounts. The coyote bears a hugely iconic status in Native American culture and history and is credited with everything from the origin of man to the creation of sexual pleasure (“Handbook” 78). While Haraway does not linger on this figure’s gender significance, it is interesting to note that unlike our traditional conceptions of “Mother Nature”, the coyote is traditionally figured as male in Indian legend, only occasionally portrayed as a woman (“Handbook” 210). Nonetheless, he does share in a kind of generativity: the coyote may be known as a trickster but he is no mere fool as he is endowed with the power of creating and transforming.¹⁷ Altogether, the coyote gives Haraway a language to use that while perhaps spiritual is not religious, allowing her to

¹⁶ Lakoff and Johnson’s header for the section under which this argument is parsed is appropriately and helpfully named, “Embodiment Not as Realization but as Shaping.” See *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Chapter 3, for their discussion.

¹⁷ See Dawn Bastian’s and Judy Mitchell’s *Handbook of Native American Mythology* for further detail and traditional tales of the Native American coyote.

conceptualize matter as beyond our semiotic systems. This understanding of matter respects it as unable to be mastered and does so without calling upon a patriarchal God or falling into objectifying accounts of a naturally feminine earth/ body.

If we cannot master it, the trickster material world is one that cannot be “discovered” by science because it is itself agentive, able to act upon us. The world of matter is an object that does not sit still “waiting to be read” by a “master decoder” (“Situated” 198). Situated knowledges, in fact, require the “object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent” (“Situated” 198). Haraway’s notion of situated knowledge further recognizes the power of partiality as it is our constant state of being which necessitates our meetings with others. Likewise, she encourages us to adopt a relation to the world as if we were in constant conversation with it—speaking with rather than speaking for. “Conversing with” affirms the reciprocity she poses through companion species who constitute each other relationally.

And a trickster world ensures our humility and reminds us that paying attention to our own materiality is not so much a choice as it is a necessity. When we recognize our limitations within this system, we are finally freed to find possibility in what we do not know: “[t]he... Trickster [world]... suggests our situation when we give up mastery but keep searching for fidelity, knowing all the while we will be hoodwinked” (“Situated” 199). Accordingly, we owe to our bodies constant self-reflection and reinterpretation to represent them in ways that do not merely appropriate them or the material world in which they coexist. It bears repeating that this is a system built on a fundamental dynamic in which we humans have *a* role in constructing the world, certainly, but not *the* role.

This generative limitation can begin to explain why matter exceeds our discursive constructions. The Haraway-ian irony here is that rather than limiting our ability to understand, this web-like approach to knowledge is precisely what allows us to seek situated truth and objectivity in terms of Haraway's quest for situated knowledges. For, epistemological meaning rests just as much on materiality as it does on language.

In sum, the coyote embodies matter as active so that meaning cannot be thought of as "whole" without understanding its material entanglements. To mean is more than a discursive affair, it is a material one. Thus, objectivity is recast as accountability to situatedness and responsibility to the way meetings are negotiated and understood. If matter is agentic, ideology is not everything. By agentizing matter, Haraway reforms our notion of agency from an individualist, human-centered ability to choose and respond to one that literally is a result of our interactions and material meetings.¹⁸

Body Exiles:

Nancy Mairs makes it paradigmatically clear what it means to write as a body, and putting her ideas in relief against the composition classroom that does not allow for

¹⁸ An interesting engagement with the topic of matter's agentic status, actualizing Haraway's theorizing, can be found in Elizabeth Wilson's recent article, *Gut Feminism*. Wilson takes up a classic topic within the feminist domain of analysis, eating disorders. Never denying the cultural implications and constructions of eating disorders, Wilson is after the "organic character of disordered eating" (80). Her central claim is "the bulimic capacities of the throat should draw our attention not just to behavioral intent or cultural transformation or disorder in higher cortical centers or mechanisms of unconscious representation...[but also to the agency of the body]...The vicissitudes of ingestion and vomiting are complex thinking enacted organically: binging and purging are the substrata themselves attempting to question, solve, control, calculate, protect, and destroy (82)." To prove this, Wilson thinks through an example of a bulimic who documents her ability to vomit after eating by drinking fluids. Wilson argues that this is an example in which the body's organic thought switches the performance of the throat so that ingestion mimics the rectum's performance of expulsion (81). The body's reversal of these processes takes such a hold that chronic bulimics compulsively binge and vomit without external stimuli (81). Wilson believes the bulimic's lack of control is attributable to the body's autonomy, the body's thought (82).

such bodily expression demonstrates the very real consequences of ignoring materiality. She claims in her autobiographical *Waist High in the World* that it is impossible to represent her mind simply as a slave to her failing M.S.-stricken body as if her body were a mere object that could be divorced from her self. This alone is remarkable: if anyone is justified in defining the body as a “rebellious other”, surely it is someone with a disability. Mairs, however, so interweaves her subjectivity with her body that when speculating about who she would be without the chronic disease she answers, “Literally, no body. I am not ‘Nancy + MS,’ and no simple subtraction can render me whole” (8). While she recognizes that she can chose to write about topics that don’t include her health or explicitly refer to her body, Mairs claims that writing without her body is impossible and that her writing identity is entangled with her material reality (9-10). Few of our current pedagogies would allow such an admission; however, this entanglement suggests serious consequences for our writing classrooms.

Mairs’ entire book, title and all, fronts her literal perspective on the world, her embodied and partial “perpetual view, from the height of an erect adult’s waist” (16). Situatedness and perspective are material and real here because they are always connected to Mairs’ body. Among the disabled, Mairs’ perspective is one from the margins. She explains that “[m]arginality’ thus means something altogether different to me from what it means to the social theorists. It is no metaphor for the power relations between one group of human beings and another but a literal description of where I stand (figuratively speaking): over here, on the edge, out of bounds, beneath your notice. I embody the metaphors” (59). Situatedness means for Mairs that she literally sits waist-high in the world and that the meaning she imparts from and constructs through her

writing comes just as much from the placement of her fleshy body—sometimes in a wheelchair, sometimes placed on the toilet by her husband—as her cultural and historical orientation. Mairs’ example leads us to understand how even those with less visible disabilities such as ADD also “embody the metaphors” but can “stand” to ignore this fact. Conversely, those with relatively few or no disabilities embody the perspective of the center, of the able.

The semiotic meets the lived material in others ways as well. Mairs’ recognition of her embodied subjectivity changes how she chooses to reconstruct her world discursively. Mairs states a preference for calling herself a “cripple” against the wishes of rhetorically-sensitive, politically-correct individuals who understand the power of language to construct the world. Mairs argues that their reconstruction of her world through such “PC” terms as individuals with “differing abilities” do not represent her embodied reality: “‘Mobility impaired,’ the euphemizers would call me, as through a surfeit of syllables could soften my reality. No such luck. I still can’t sit up in bed, can’t take an unaided step, can’t dress myself, can’t opens doors (and I get damned sick of waiting in the loo until some other woman needs to pee and opens the door for me)” (13). To deny Mairs’ physical reality is to deny her selfhood; pointing out the social construction of disability does little to change her reality of sitting impatiently in the bathroom hoping for someone to open the door. By using Mairs as an example we can begin to investigate how refusing to give up our fleshiness opens up new avenues of rhetorical power and options of making meaning through the webbing of language and the body.

If Mairs' waist-high view of the world and "crippled" body attest to the kind of embodied situatedness Haraway is after, her insistence that she writes *as* a body, seeing herself only in holistic ways, demonstrates the embodied subjectivity Haraway calls for when she revises the subject from the point of view of the object. Importantly, this embodied subjectivity is to Mairs constructed as much by her brain chemistry as by cultural configurations of "depressed MS sufferer," (42) Calling herself a "creature" of her "biochemistry" (42), Mairs can be seen to take up Haraway's challenge to no longer see our bodies as mere objects of knowledge or that which is merely marked by the discursive, thinking subject. Mairs enacts Haraway's insistence that we see matter (the world, our bodies) as "an actor, and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as a slave" ("Situated" 198).

Haraway gives us a term for this felt duality: material-semiotic actors/ agents. Because the body is part of a material world that extends far beyond our powers of construction, it refuses to be dominated or written entirely by our master narratives. Following Mairs, this does not mean we give up trying to inscript our bodies to rewrite those narratives; part of her effort, she claims, "entails reshaping that self and that world in order to reconcile the two" (60). Such an attempt at reconciliation can be found in Jane Hindman's mixed-form, academic and autobiographical self-portrait in "Making Writing Matter." In it, Hindman questions the total textualization of the self and takes herself as case in point. Reflecting on the limits of academic discourse to represent her subjectivity, Hindman argues that she is not just rhetorically constructed as an alcoholic by the master narrative of Alcoholics Anonymous but that there is a real, bodily way in which she was already an alcoholic before she ever made the choice to discursively construct herself as

such (98). While Hindman struggles to inscript her body in this article in ways that do not simply defeat matter's viability as agentive and meaning making, Mairs recognizes the limitations of metaphorically abstracting the body through language, a "task that must fail" in the end (60). Mairs' conception of her body and Hindman's struggle manifest Haraway's reformulation of the subject as more than the sum of its linguistic markings, unable to be understood without being seen holistically as subject and object, body and mind, co-constitutional in ways we can't hope to fully understand—but no less worthy is the effort Mairs would remind us.

Haraway's major contribution to epistemology is this merging of the subject and the object which embodies the subject and gives matter meaning that is not necessarily contingent on construction. That the two are forever linked means that the self as a material-semiotic subjectobject can never claim transcendence over the body, only ever a partial perspective which is more than just metaphorical. Channeling currents of ecofeminism, the body refuses to be dominated or written entirely by our master narratives; it resists the hold of language. Haraway insists that like a poem, the body becomes able to speak itself ("Situated" 200) as a subjectobject, bringing up the importance of voice to which I will turn later. Our responsibility to identify ourselves with our bodies means we must pay attention to our embodied feelings and represent them with "fidelity" (199). In turn, we must give up our attempts to somehow rise above the flesh or erase it from the scientific method and our prose via calls to discursivity or pure referentiality. If epistemologies cannot be founded on notions of transcendence from the body, according to Haraway, then neither can theories of composition, since our bodies factor centrally into the meaning we make through our writing. Following the

demands of poststructural theories and cultural studies pedagogies, writing teachers have largely embraced a schizophrenic split from our embodied existence in order to recast ourselves as “subjects” within the academy, dutifully helping our students learn to do the same. But Haraway gives us an alternative that does not eliminate postmodern notions of textuality but better holds them in tension with embodiment.

Mapping out bodies rhetorically may help us to recognize our cultural construction and the shaping power of language, but in this process we cannot lose sight of our very real corporeality. I envision an embodied model of composition in which the body is seen not just as passively inscribed or just as a thing-in-itself, but as an agent-actor in a dynamic process that produces situated products along the way—a process akin to the act of composition itself. The goal of embodied writing as a theory and practice is not to get rid of postmodern theorizations and enact a “return” to modernism or essentialism, but to find a middle ground on which, perhaps, the strengths of each can be played upon each other in fruitful and generative ways. In the next interchapter, I reclaim the writing body for both teachers and students by viewing authors as Haraway-ian embodied subjects. I develop a positive bodily hermeneutic that sees bodies and minds as co-constitutional and examine how this changes the way we view what kind of knowledge our writing produces. I also examine how my pedagogy of embodied writing not only validates students’ experiences but also helps them realize the concrete potential of their writing and how it can impact the real world beyond the classroom.

INTERCHAPTER ONE:

“I have never heard of the mind-body experience in my life but at this moment I still feel like writing is a brain thing and not a mind-body thing. There are only two things that you need to write: your brain, and a hand.”

-Student blog response, my emphasis

Writing Bodies: Using “Body Blogs” to Rethink the Composing Process

The first step in developing what I am calling the embodied imagination is encouraging student writers to think of themselves as writing bodies. What I outline in the following pages is one attempt to get students both to contextualize their writing experiences in terms of their bodies and also to conceptualize their bodies as agentic points of mediation between a culture that seeks to mark them in particular ways and a personal, material reality awash with experiences and feelings that can be used to speak back to that culture, particularly through the creation of embodied, situated knowledge. Using an account from a recent first-year writing course, I detail the ways embodied writing pedagogies can make the body visible in the writing classroom and examine the consequences of such visibility.

In this course, I developed a double focus on our bodies both as the subject of inquiry and as integral to the writing experience itself. Not only did I want students to investigate the corporeality of the writing process, I also wanted them to imagine the ways they made sense of the world as primarily embodied and, thereby, to complicate their notions of experience and personal knowledge. I wanted to them begin to see how

their material realities and corporeality helped construct notions of how they understood the world and the ways they created meaning in their writing; I wanted my students to become attentive to their fleshiness and therein to adapt their writing process to admit in elements of feminist-contemplative pedagogy, which is receptive to the student writer as an embodied whole. That is, I wanted students to start seeing themselves as writing bodies.

I hoped that investigating embodiment as a field of study as well as a lived condition would recursively strengthen these abstract and concrete endeavors, lending a pragmatic balance between the two. An investigation into the importance of our flesh itself represents a cultural and theoretical shift in composition studies, making our once untouchable, unacknowledgeable bodies the focus of the writing classroom in ways that do not seek primarily to textualize them. Instead, the cultural body and lived body are here fused into one, at once complicating our rhetorical notions of reading and writing as well as our field's understanding of "the personal" in ways I related within my last chapter. Claiming the personal *as* the "particular and specific embodiment" ("Situated" 190) that makes meaning-making possible frees a space in which to think about the material-semiotic entanglement of the fleshy body and the cultural body which come together under the full rubric of embodiment without essentializing this term or reifying the writing body.

In order to work toward a positive and integrative hermeneutic of corporeality, my first challenge lay in helping students reconnect to their bodies *in the classroom*, bodies that they had been programmed by years of education to ignore when doing

academic work. My opening quote humorously yet seriously highlights this learned ignorance by pointing to the irony of my students' ability to articulate the importance of mind *and* hand to the writing process and yet fail to connect the two. By the time we get them, our students have learned to disconnect their intellectual pursuits from their personal bodies, unless they are in physical education classes where the body cannot and need not be pretended away. From the hard plastic chairs in which they are to sit passively, to the rules students are accustomed to following prior to their college classes (and even in some classes at this level), such as waiting to use the restroom until after class or not eating during class, students have been cultured to ignore and control their bodies when attending to the development of their minds. This phenomenon stood out to one of my students, who, in an early blog investigating the ways our bodies are made visible and invisible in education, commented:

Class is one of those things where my mind is awake (for the most part) and my body just wants to do something, finding the only occasional relief when I raise my hand to answer a question. My brain is processing the information that is being said in class while my body is like "I want to move around" and normally responds with my foot tapping. Although, by the end of the first class my brain has had enough for the day as my body is excited to finally move.

Here, the primary body expression my student imagines acceptable in the classroom is the docile one of raising her hand. Aside from calling up Foucauldian images of passive bodies, this student's controlled language is interesting for the ways it submerges the tug-

of-war between body and brain at the same time that it describes it. Her reliance on the “although” that begins the final sentence reproduced in her response belies the ease with which she controls her body, underscoring the involuntary nature of her foot tapping. Also worth note in this response are the action verbs—do, raise, move—that she uses to describe her body even when she is ostensibly telling her reader how her body must remain passive when her mind is “processing information.”

Because her brain soon wears out from this processing, she capitulates to her “excited” body after just one class. It may very well be because of the ways her body is ignored in class that this student shares in a later blog her belief that writing is a purely mental endeavor—even though she seems to recognize some unfulfilled link between the mental body and physical body in the response reproduced above. Composition instructors can easily support these learned views by conducting classes in ways that encourage students’ passive bodies, such as when we don’t spend time openly discussing how our bodies are implicated in the writing and learning process and when we dismiss the constructive role of the lived body and experience, often a knee-jerk reaction to side-step the labels “expressivist” and “essentialist.” Even so, there are pedagogical means by which we can recover these losses without trapping ourselves within uncomplicated views of language or culture. I am particularly interested in the ways embodied writing pedagogy, particularly when informed by contemplative principles and acts like yoga, can be such a means. Here, I proceed with small steps toward that end goal.

To work against this learned reaction to dismiss the body and to begin investigating and valuing embodiment within the context of my class, I constructed a

series of “body blogs” that asked students to consider how their bodies were implicated in their writing and learning processes. Known to my students at the start of their blogs were the ways we would eventually build off these early writings with a sequenced yoga practice integrated into our class, a practice meant to actualize their initial findings and speculations and to move them toward non-dualistic notions of the mental body and physical body within the context of the writing process.¹⁹ The pedagogical reasoning behind these blogs was fairly simple: if ignoring our bodies is learned, then it can be unlearned as my own development as a yogi suggests. Of course, this “unlearning” is a slow and gradual process that students may initially find strange since it flies in the face of their relationship to their bodies as learners prior to our class together.

As my course unfolded, I had numerous concerns about how to go about such a process of “unlearning” in ways students would find productive; I did not want them to feel they were simply riding a hobby horse of their teacher’s; I wanted them to find a personal stake in our journey. I was especially worried about students’ negative reactions to a body focused-class. As this experimental course of mine was a first-year writing requirement for my students, the first of a two-semester sequence at my university, they had no prior knowledge of the course prior to being assigned to my section and were simply placed into my classroom to meet general education requirements. Even if students found themselves drawn to our course topic, I was worried that their interest would wane as they began to discuss their classroom activities with peers and friends enrolled in other writing sections structured around topics they might view as “safer” or less disruptive of their preconceptions of a composition class. Finally, I was concerned

¹⁹ See interchapter two and three for an exploration of this integrated practice of yoga and writing.

that students would resist sharing information about their bodies, information they might view as private or too personal.²⁰ In an attempt to encourage participation and assuage any anxieties over the last concern, I made students' blogs private, a journaling feature allowed by our class website. These private blogs were supplemented by public posts on our course website using other web-based tools and, of course, collaborative, real-time classroom discussions.

The only way I felt I could address the first two concerns regarding student resistance to our topic was to plunge in from the very beginning of our class so as to make the investigation into our bodies a naturalized element of the course. I introduced the first body blog in the first week of class and explained its importance by tying it to the thematic content of our first unit, "Narrating Bodies." This unit was structured so as to introduce embodiment as a legitimate topic of study in the writing classroom. In it, we read works that put in question our ability to narrate our identities outside the framework of our flesh like Shelly Jackson's "My Body: A Wunderkammer", Bridget Booher's "Body Map of My Life", Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Story of My Body" and Alice Walker's "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self." This unit allowed me to set the stage for our course-long investigation of embodiment and to give greater weight to my students' private, course-long blogs; we were simply finding our own ways to document

²⁰ Ultimately, this was a baseless fear as I have since found most students eager to discuss and analyze their bodies—something they hardly get to do reflectively in the context of other courses and often in the context of their personal lives. In the latter case, students are often too busy *being* a body to think much about what this means, as I've discovered in my conversations with them. As with other invitations to explore the significance of personal experiences, students are often excited to talk about themselves and engage in a discussion that puts their lives in dialogue with our course themes and texts. Nevertheless, I always do put in place safeguards for reluctant students, including making the blogs private and allowing students to discuss bodies other than their own.

our writing identities, keeping our field of study, writing, in mind and applying the insights of our authors to our own bodies and embodied writing processes.

The first blog asked students to identify their writing selves, to talk about themselves as writers, characterizing their motivations and habits, and asked students to reflect on how they approached writing. Students were to use their answers to begin thinking through how their bodies shaped their writing habits and habitats. Questions I invited my students to consider included: “What kind of environment do you prefer when you write? When do you like to write and in what positions do you put your body? Do you sit up, lie down, eat, play music, watch TV, etc? What kind of sensory experiences do you have as a writer, and how do you feel as you write? For instance, if you get stressed, do you notice your leg tapping up and down, or do your hands get clammy? How do your body and mind play off of one another as you write? Does your nose seem to pick up all food smells within a mile radius when you write, distracting you? Or do you get so absorbed, you lose the desire to eat?” Because this response was the first step of many toward encouraging my students to think about themselves as writing bodies, I also requested my students venture a few guesses as to *why* they might work in the ways they describe and what they thought about our project of investigating the body-mind connection as writers.

As a corollary part to this blog, I asked my students to complete a more general reflection on their writing experiences, both formal and informal. This is a fairly common assignment in our field, but one with which this particular class of students, astonishingly, seemed to have little prior experience. Many students commented upon the fact that they had never before been asked to think about themselves as writers in either

way that this blog was asking them to do; instead, they had been told they must “just write” in their previous classes. One student sums up the class’ collective surprise by saying, “When given the chance to write about myself as a writer, I was taken aback at first. I’ve never thought about my writing before...[but] just purposefully did it for school.” Having used versions of this general reflection for years in my writing classrooms, I was surprised at their collective experience since metacognition is crucial for writing students’ improvement since it engages them in setting goals, tracking accomplishments and weaknesses and generally finding a stake in their writing beyond simply earning a passing grade in our class.

This general reflection also asked students what they thought qualified as “good” writing in college, how that might differ from high school expectations and what their personal writing goals were for our class. Not only did this standard reflection give me a sense of my students’ previous writing experiences and them a sense of accountability for their learning in my class, but it also gave us a platform for the main part of this assignment. I instructed those students who could not yet answer how their bodies might be implicated in their writing processes to complete this secondary reflection first, before thinking through part one of the blog. Many students, even those who had made observations about their writing bodies prior to the blog, found this building-block approach helpful as it allowed them a type of “embodied remembering” experience wherein their initial speculations of how they positioned their bodies and the conditions of their preferred, material writing environments were triggered, proven and even built upon.

Not surprisingly, the written responses to the first blogs overwhelmingly described writing as an onerous task to be put off for as long as possible; many of my students described the writing experience as one of procrastination and eventual pain. At this stage, students had a tendency to approach the notion of being a writing body with disbelief. In fact, it is interesting to note the adversarial language of battle so many students used to describe their attempts of controlling their bodies when writing. The metaphorical usage of battle as a conceptual map for relations between the body and mind itself points to the ways in which the meaning we make is grounded in our material realities as bodies in the world.²¹ At the same time, it propels a conceptual dichotomy between the mind and the body, seeing them as warring factions, specifically in that the reasonable mind must dominate the unruly body.

For instance, one student wrote, “My mind knows that I NEED to sit down, focus, and write a paper, but my body is bored (tapping leg) or hungry and they are in constant battle to win me over while writing a paper.” Another female student accounts for this “battle” in her blog’s figurative language, equating her flesh with the death of her creativity or writing ability: “Writing for me is solely a mind thing. If I start trying to bring in other senses I’m *done for*, because I automatically get absorbed in whatever sense I’m thinking about and then the writing goes out the window, so to speak. I try not to be aware of the rest of my body while I write because I, clearly, get distracted” (my emphasis). Yet another student describes the way his body betrays him when writing: “I will always get antsy when writing school assignments...so assignment papers are a very

²¹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson build on previous work and approach the embodied mind through primary metaphors in language in their recent book, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999).

painful experience. This is why I dread them so much.” It seems at this point students are ready to blame the battle wounds that show up in their papers in the form of undeveloped ideas, disorganized structures and wandering sentences on the ways their bodies disrupted the functions of their perfectly capable minds; viewing these as discontinuous allows them to maintain the Cartesian split between their bodies and minds and to construe weakness as an element of the flesh.

Because they did not view their bodies and minds as continuous or as companion composers of meaning, students at this stage had a hard time connecting the details they shared about their composing habits and embodied writing experiences to their understanding of the writing process. As a result, after detailing the ways their bodies move, bounce, channel their mental energy and fidget when they get tired, my students overwhelmingly concluded their responses with statements referencing how their bodies were *not* part of the writing process. For example, the student above who admits she is “done for” if she thinks about her body while writing and claims writing as purely mental expression states in the same blog that when she writes, she “move[s] around a lot. Like now for instance, I am currently rocking my chair back and forth... Also when I write I like to hear the click of the keys as I type, I need that auditory sense to be able to type or it just feels weird...Also when I write I start bouncing one of my legs.” Indeed, it is immediately after this sentence that details her body’s energy that she claims, “Writing for me is solely a mind thing.” That listening to the clicking keyboard keys means she finds comfort *and* creativity in the sensory experience of the writing process doesn’t occur to my student in this response and neither does the ways she obviously channels the

rocking and bouncing energy of her body, as synched with her mind, to achieve the goals of her writing session. This lack of corporeal awareness is further confirmed when my student admits in conclusion to this blog that she is “hyper aware of other bodies when I write. One of my pet peeves is when somebody is reading over my shoulder while I write or type.” Other bodies are even more accessible to this student than her own.

Writing herself into a similarly complex position, another student conceded that the body blog

“assignment has allowed me to realize the small things my body does while I am writing. Something that I do when I write is that my right leg bounces up and down as if it were on a spring board, especially when I get particularly into what I am writing or I am somewhat stumped. Also I tend to hit two of my teeth together when I am thinking about how I am going to structure the next sentence. I’m not sure how to describe what I am feeling when I write, possibly because when I do write it is as if the computer is sucking up all of my emotion (which in most cases is what I want). I get inspired by a lot of things, but one thing that makes me write on a consistent basis is my short temper. I get mad...extremely mad very quickly and in order to prevent taking it out on some innocent bystander I let my anger out on a piece of paper...In all honesty before this blog, I have never heard of the mind-body experience in my life but at this moment I still feel like writing is a brain thing

and not a mind-body thing. There are only two things that you need to write: your brain, and a hand.”

I use the end of this particularly interesting student response as my epigraph to this interchapter precisely because it sums up the contradictory messages these blogs revealed. Students at this stage had plenty to share about their material writing environments and bodily habits but couldn't go so far as to conceptualize or imagine themselves as writing bodies. While she notes the ways her leg bounces and teeth tap together, for instance, the student behind this response cannot see writing as more than a “brain thing.” In short, she along with her classmates still found it difficult to claim their embodiment. I chose to include a full version of the above response to show how this was so even as many of my students seemed to know something fundamental about the workings of embodied narratives, which start at the level of our feelings and emotions. Above, my student articulates this felt understanding when she explains how her emotions are a crucial part of the intention stage of writing so that her body literally brings her to the page.

My student's response articulates a popular view of emotion as inspiration even if she cannot yet see how *emotion* is another movement of her body like her chattering teeth and bouncing leg. Jane Hindman claims emotion as a central motivation or mover of embodied writing in her article, “Making Writing Matter.” Hindman, like my student, states that her emotions often propel her to write, taking as case-in-point her sudden and overwhelming anger at hearing her experiences with alcoholism rhetorically-codified and academically-neutralized by conference presenters in ways that denies her embodied

experience of being an alcoholic (103). It is this anger that propels her to write “Making Writing Matter,” a reflection on the embodied nature of writers and the prose they produce. What these professional and student examples together point out to me is that when we tap into our visceral reactions, we can expect to open the door to feeling as well as thinking processes. But unlike Hindman who has the authority to introduce contrastive readings via her professional position and public writing forum, my student does not (perhaps *cannot* just yet) view her emotional or visceral response as necessary, healthy or potentially constructive. Even if writing does allow my student to channel her anger from a physical expression of violence, she wishes to be devoid of feeling: she wants the computer to “suck” up all her emotion. While we can easily read the writing process she describes here as embodied, her motivation is to feel *less* like a vulnerable body (a liberating move against the tide for Hindman) and *more* like an empty channel, highlighting her wish to control her body as opposed to tapping into it and any accompanying feelings in order to cultivate patient awareness. The comparison between my student and Hindman highlights how, when we view the body as separable from the mind, we take up the cultural baggage that casts the flesh as that which makes us vulnerable instead of that which enables positive action.²²

If the first blogs were to gauge my students’ initial reactions to our investigation into their bodies as central to writing and meaning-making processes, the second and third installments of the body blog were geared toward my attempt to help students work

²² The differences between responses also highlight how important embodied notions of voice are as they determine who can speak against norms. The age of the speaker is obviously a difference that helps configure the right to speak. These additional factors, beyond my purview here, might complicate but certainly do not invalidate my analysis above.

toward an understanding of embodiment in line with those found in Hindman and extended by the feminist writings of Donna Haraway and popular yogic texts like Iyengar's *Light on Life* and *Light on Yoga*, approachable modern tomes of ancient philosophies updated for modern audiences. Embodiment seen from Haraway's feminist lens, for instance, is neither about a "fixed location in a reified body" nor about "the body as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions" (195-7); rather, it is about the relationality and co-constitutionality of the fleshy, material body, a presence who's situated reality cannot be exhausted by discourse, and the semiotic body, situated and located by means of our discursive mapping practices. Because these mapping practices are constantly changing and our bodies are in constant flux as with the rest of the material world, embodiment is never static and cannot be essentialized within this feminist-contemplative picture.

Showing the kindred nature of feminist theorizing and yogic philosophies, B.K.S. Iyengar, founder of the yoga method that shares his name, says much the same in his own writing about the dynamism between the individual body and the world. Iyengar states that the lived body cannot be conceived of as separate from the material world, both of which are "constantly changing so that we are always looking at Nature from a different viewpoint" (*Light* 7), as our bodies and environments constantly shift, change and adapt. The body I want my students to claim in and through their blogs, following such ideas, is the lived body, which is understood through material dynamism as connecting us to the larger material world of which we remain, through our flesh, an inextricable part. Embodiment is both a social mapping process, signifying and marking our social interactions, *as well as* a material reality. As a result, experience is a way of naming our

embodiment which can never be fully exhausted by discourse since our bodies retain agency both within and beyond our discursive conventions. These body blogs put these ideas in action as they ask students to think about the ways they experienced their bodies as writers and felt the consequences of both their interiority and exteriority unfolding into and onto each other as so many layers of phyllo dough.

To tap into my students' existing knowledge of the reality of their lived bodies, I asked them in the second installment of the body blogs to answer the question, "Beyond writing, how do you otherwise express yourself as a body?" I wanted them to think through the daily movements of their bodies and the kinesthetic knowledge their bodies held when viewed through the lens of the activities in which they actively participated. Central to my whole project was getting students to view body expressiveness as tied to critical writing. I explained to student that "activities" within this context could certainly include sports such as running, exercising, playing tennis and could also include such actions as playing instruments, talking nature walks and even primping and prepping our bodies for the day by doing hair, makeup or dressing.

Given that it has only been in the past decade of my own life that I've become interested in conventional physical activities like running and yoga, I was keenly aware that some of my students may not be involved in team sports and might, as a result, might feel they had nothing about which to write. I wanted to stress that we all have a connection to our bodies and hoped my students would accept my open invitation to take the prompt in the direction they felt adequately addressed their body movements, as uniquely situated as each body from which they sprang. No matter the direction, I asked

my students to consider questions such as, “How does your body express itself in these activities? How do your body and mind work together? Or, how do your thinking and movement fit together in these activities? Can you give specific examples (take time to detail them)? How might your body sometimes lead your mind in those activities (my favorite example here is how we often just drive without thinking and wonder later how we ever got to our destination!). You should also think about what have you learned about your body and its expression from these activities. As you re-read your writing here, what have you not thought about before about being an active body-mind that this blog is making you explore?”

Not surprisingly, the most active athletes in the class relished the opportunity to discuss their activities and kinesthetic knowledge for this blog. And what surprised me the most was that so many of my students were involved in university teams as well as intramural sports. Others were similarly committed to playing instruments or continuing activities such as running or swimming performed as part of a high school team and now a crucial aspect of my students’ identities. Even if they did not compete at the university level on structured teams, my students described their physical activities as central parts of themselves and their weekly schedules. Everyone agreed that this blog was the easiest to write because it was the closest to their daily experiences and allowed them to share bits of themselves that would normally remain silent in a writing class.

One student swimmer had the following to say in response to the second body blog prompt:

Nothing beats the feeling of my muscles working, pulling deep into the water, propelling me forward. The complete physical aspect of the sport is so enticing to me when my brain feels like it might explode. However, swimming is not only a physical sport, but it is a mental sport as well. Swimmers have to be totally focused, especially in practice. Practice is the time to think about the technicalities of the stroke. “Is my streamline tight enough?” “Are my elbows high enough to catch the maximum amount of water?” “Am I kicking the right distance off the wall to maximize my momentum from the turn?”

For her, the physical strength necessary to succeed at this water sport must be accompanied by a great body awareness, so great that she must rely on her body’s intelligence to maximize her winning potential, which comes down to fractions of a second as she explains later in the same response. Her description nicely points to the ways she uses a version of the embodied imagination to feel her body’s spatial positioning: only by learning how her arms feel and which muscles tighten can she sense how high her elbows are when she is in the water. Mindfulness of her body and its placement and desires is necessary for her success as a swimmer, and she can only achieve this level of awareness when she sees herself as a whole piece, as body and brain working together to achieve future goals and embrace present realities. Another student, a golfer, describes a similar experience of embodied awareness on the green:

I play golf very often, as much as six days a week during the summer weather permitting. My body has the movements of my golf swing deeply engrained. However I often make minor changes or tweaks to my golf swing as needed to improve it or put it back into place if pieces have moved around a bit...Pieces are never in exactly the same place, as many things can affect the way you set up to the ball. And any change in the set up will change the swing. I have found that even the clothes I wear can affect the way I set up. For example, I have discovered that I more easily get into proper set up position if I wear pants compared to when I wear shorts. My theory is that the pants give me the feeling of having a slightly lower center of gravity. But if my body and mind weren't connected, I would never remember from day to day how to hit the ball...I am trying to connect my body and mind in golf more by trying to be better able to visualize my swing and learn to play more by feel and instinct, which is hard to do when you are given all this time to think about what you are going to do before you do it.

This response is exemplary in its detailed description of how this student's body and mind work together when playing golf, which is why I quote it at length. The way he works toward the importance of visualization for his sport and how he pins the successful expression of his swing on the integration of his physical body and mental body are examples of insights I hoped some students might stumble upon in these blogs. This second student not only imagines himself as an integrated whole as a golfer, which will

hopefully encourage a transfer of meaning so he will eventually see himself as a writing body, but he also articulates a version of the embodied imagination I proposed in my introduction and expanded in the last chapter.

My golfing student continues to describe his attitude toward change as a competitive golfer on the university team. He notes particularly the ways imagining changes and differences *as* embodied, as impacted by materiality and rooted in the real, gives him a freedom of expression he cannot capture solely in language:

When making changes [to my swing], I have discovered it's easier to make a visual of the change and feel it compared to trying to put it into words. Our bodies have a harder time interpreting words than images and feelings of movement. But what is maybe the most important thing in golf is making sure your body and mind are aimed at the same target. For example, if your body is aimed the pond, but you are thinking about the green left of the pond, chances are you are going to hit the ball towards the pond... This really makes me wonder how the mind-body connection is present in all activities.

For this student, the imagination is situated quite literally in the body and affected by it. As he states, his swing is shaped by his body's positioning, no matter where he hopes the ball will land. In this way, he knows to be sensitive to his flesh and to respect his sport's engagement of *both* his body and mind. Mindless fragmentation of his being is detrimental to his success as a golfer and, he will soon learn, to his effectiveness as a

writer. So great about his remarks at the beginning of this section is his focus on how feelings and sensory images are just as meaningful in the process of his practice as fully-formed verbal thoughts and words. This student is already versed in the ways that imagining ourselves as embodied necessitates an understanding of situated thinking and feeling as mutually constitutive and reinforcing. He testifies to the ways the body as signifier cannot exhaust the meaning of materiality which exceeds even language.

Of course, not all students' prior experiences lend for such for such easy transfer. For some students, the body-mind connection is much more troubled at first and presents a confusing paradox:

[As a musician and guitarist] I guess I can never really be one hundred percent certain if it is in fact my mind telling my body what to do because sometimes I feel like my body has a mind of its own. Wow, I find it ironic the way I just worded that because it seems to have disproved my point. Everything is much more complicated than people would think things to be...When I hear a song I log it mentally in my head and then I pick up my guitar and start playing. Sure, it takes a few tries for me to get a song down correctly, but I learn to play it pretty fast and I haven't forgotten a song that I learned yet. My fingers just happen to go to the right place at the right time and it works. I think it's something that happens unconsciously at first, and then I realize what is going on and I work with it.

This student guitarist understands on a felt level that his body is at work in his learning to play new songs, as his “fingers just happen to go to the right place”, but he still seems disconnected from the process. While he might recognize his body as an epistemic origin, he doesn’t have the conceptual maps to understand how this might work, likely because our learning culture often doesn’t provide these. As a result, he “feel[s] like [his] body has a mind of its own”, and he says he doesn’t understand this mind—even when he follows it after a while, after realizing “what is going on” as his fingers move on his guitar strings. This description is fascinating for its revelation of how much body awareness and attentiveness to his corporeal orientation could help this student unify his fingers’ energy and intelligence with his mind’s desire to learn a new song. With mindfulness of his body, which he would slowly develop in my class, my student might be able to understand the playing of music and the composing of writing from a new, contemplative and visceral perspective. And this might help him appreciate why his body moves in unpredictable ways at times:

Unfortunately, I feel like the body, even though it is connected to the mind, acts on its own sometimes. I think that some of the time the body reacts to things before the mind comprehends what is going on. For example, when I’m bored in a class or in anything my body shows that boredom even when my brain knows that I shouldn’t be slouching or anything. My body moves on its own even if I tell it not to and to pay attention. Things happen that I can’t control sometimes...[My body] moves in ways that I can’t

understand, yet it also helps me in my music and in other areas.

Having the two connected is better than having them as separates.

This student's continued meditation on the body reminds me of the first lessons I learned in my yoga classes about respecting the body by asking less for control over it and more for connection to it so as to channel its energy in pleasing and productive ways. While this student knows this connection is ideal because of his experiences playing, he is unsure how to navigate it and sees his body as disruptive in more formal learning environments. Of course, we may begin to wonder if this is more a result of restrictive learning environments that are not guided by embodied-contemplative educational principles which would have students learning how meaning is made with and through the body, by focusing its energies, as much as it is revealed and constructed by the mind.

After asking for the first two blogs and noting in my students' responses equal measures of understanding and confusion, I asked students to bring together any insights they might have made in the process of completing this assignment and to forward any interesting, new questions, bringing both to bear on their writing. The third body blog's guiding question was, "How can you become a better writing by using body-mind skill sets you already have?" I explained to students that the blogs were meant to get them thinking about how their bodies might play a larger part in our thinking and expression than we normally realize. By building off the last set of responses, I wanted them to analyze the irony of imagining themselves as bodies during certain activities in which they were encouraged to see themselves of a whole, integrated piece but not during others, such as writing, due to cultural understandings of intelligence.

I didn't so much want students to begin to reify their bodies or account for every movement in the writing process as bodily; rather, I wanted them to discover the agency of their writing bodies in partnership to their intellects. In all, the final blog entry asked students to reflect on the ways the body and the mind are connected in interesting, inter-related and interdependent ways. Building on the guiding question, the full, detailed description for this blog read: "To finish your final installment, bring your insights from the first two blogs together. Read them over and revisit your thoughts and feelings. Discuss your initial responses in the first two installments. Anything you'd change now? Any new insights you'd like to bring to bear on them? Think specifically about the body-mind awareness you may have discussed in blog two in terms of your physical activities. How could you draw on this awareness to become a better writer? Can you apply some of the same techniques, say, that make you a good swimmer or baseball player, etc to your writing process? Be specific and give examples/ details. Can you learn anything about listening to your body as you write, either metaphorically (ie. in terms of calling upon personal experiences in essays) or literally (ie. in terms of endurance)? How you might bring more awareness to the process of writing? What parallels can you make? Where do the two not seem to fit? Where are there tensions and why might they exist? What may you realize now that you've completed the body blog that you didn't before?"

An overriding theme in students' responses to this final comparison of body blog installations one and two is that of body appreciation and a budding corporeal awareness. To quote one student is to echo the rest: "I always believed in the concept of the body being far less important than the mind. But after some thought about the subject, I have come to the realization that the body and mind are equally as important in making up an

individual.” That these blogs helped students begin to think of themselves holistically, as one piece, was crucial in their beginning learning process for our class. Not only would they appreciate the lessons of our units on disability, eating, body image and identity more from this point on, but they would now be ready to investigate the physicality of the writing process through other embodied acts such as yoga. While obviously not the final step in accepting themselves as writing bodies, my students were now questioning the ways they saw writing as “mind work” and why they divided this kind of work from body work. They began to wonder with renewed appreciation the ways their other classes locked their bodies out. And, they began to inquire how this new knowledge could change their experiences of the writing process and the ways they approached writing assignments from this point onward.

For instance, one of my students found new meaning in the drafting process; for him, understanding his writing body as a viable player in the meaning-making process meant respecting the ways that body-based skills take time to develop. He notes, “I really think that now I should begin my assignments when I get them assigned because I feel that I will now need to revise many of my papers and writings before they are due and that time is limited if I begin the assignment the day or night before.” Instead of procrastination, this student believes he should start to apply his “swimming stamina of being able to be focused on one goal” even when the finish line is nowhere in sight because his “body is at stake.” Given that we all want our students to spend more time and effort in their writing and to take their drafts through multiple, global revisions, this is an important discovery this student may not have made if he weren’t invited to apply

the body skills and knowledge he already has to the writing process, helping him begin a process of demystification that encouraged motivation. Not to be overlooked is the way reconceptualizing the writing process as visceral helps such students actively engage their bodies in it rather than trying to ignore them, which may prove to be distracting. The same student noted, in fact, that when “normally when engaged in writing, my body is tired and bored.” Learning to respect his body and investigate why it was bored (in part because it was ignored) helped this student create new writing habits that resulted in less painful writing sessions and recognize the need to give himself ample time for writing breaks, cutting through his habitual procrastination.

This student notes that using this “swimming stamina” will allow him to apply a new measure of focus to his writing as well. He states, “That way when I write I am only focused on the subject of the paper and not who is on Facebook or who just texted me. For example during a swim race I rarely ever think about anything except my stroke, turns, and winning the race or beating my most current time.” Noting as well the overwhelming nature of being constantly surrounded by technological distractions as he wrote, another student agreed that he learned through the blogs that slowing down his writing process would help promote focus and increase the quality of his writing in turn. This second student claimed he could apply lessons of focus and interconnection to his writing, drawn from his experiences playing baseball. He stated,

One principle I can maybe apply to better my writing is to slow down. As I mentioned in my earlier blog, when I’m playing well in baseball (or any other sport for that matter), everything seems to slow down for me. I feel like I have

more time to react, and therefore am able to better affect my results...If I were somehow able to slow my mind down and pick what minor details are important, while maintaining focus on the larger issue, I feel like I could improve my writing significantly. Often I am too straight to the point, and I rush to get down my ideas and prove my thesis. I need to slow things down, like I do in baseball, and put some of the smaller things that I admire into my writing.

This student might be hinting at the ways our minds and bodies work together in what has been called physiological coherence. In activities like sports and many disciplines of contemplation like meditation, the body, heart, brain and nervous system synchronize with one another, which can lead to improved attention often perceived as a slowing down of time and described as being “in the zone.” At these times of body-mind harmony, students may experience increased performance and a decrease of stress and anxiety because of a “regular heart rhythm, decreased sympathetic nervous system activation and increased parasympathetic activity and increased heart-brain synchronized (the brain’s alpha rhythms becomes more synchronized to the heartbeat) (Schooner & Kelso, 1988; Tiller, McCraty & Atkinson, 1996; qtd. Hart 31).²³ This knowledge can be applied to the reverse as well. That is, when students don’t feel this kind of physiological coherence, they might take a writing break in order to later return to the writing process later with a refocused mind—a valuable lesson. One of my students vocalized this: “When you write, you can also listen to your body by learning when you’re tired. Writing when your body and brain are tired is a waste because your work will come out sloppy

²³ This harmony could be compared to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s notion of the optimal “flow” experience. See his *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (2008).

and rushed. When I write and become tired or sick of writing, my hand or foot will begin to tap. If I know my body well enough, I can take this as a sign to take a break and finish my writing at another time.” This is a lesson of learning to work *with* as opposed to attempting to overwrite the body’s intelligence and of being mindful of our embodied feelings in the present moment, which is the practice of mindfulness. In their movement toward imagining themselves as writing bodies, students work toward more reflective and less reflexive understandings and negotiations of the writing process.

Finally, some students noted that their bodies could become sources of inspiration and energy for the writing process, drawing off the idea that the physical writing body can provide shape to writing through feeling and the motivation to write. One student noted, “Often times when you are assigned a writing assignment about an event in your life, you need just look at your scars for reminders on what to write about.” Another student also used emotion as a link to the invention state of writing, giving her an impetus to write: “In addition, I could also draw on the energy I get when I am feeling upset, angry, or stressed into writing. I would normally take this energy into a physical activity and feel like I could achieve the impossible because my mind just went through the motions of the activity.” Both seem to agree with the second student’s closing blog comment, “My body goes hand in hand with my emotions.” It is no coincidence that these students are articulating a premise of contemplative pedagogy, or the need to respect the viscosity of feeling and the ways the heart can be a bridge to the mind and body.

While more a start than an end, these body blogs asked students to investigate seriously their writing identities and personas as necessarily embodied. They gave my students a foundational understanding of what it means to write aware of both body and mind and how a focus on self-examination and awareness can help increase their productivity and enjoyment of the writing process. As students crossed the threshold of knowing they *have* a body to becoming aware of *how* that body impacts the meaning they make in their writing, they made adjustments to their writing processes in order to respect their bodies. In short, they became writing bodies who enacted the principles of the embodied imagination.

CHAPTER 2: (BODY-MIND)

“We teach in a culture that simultaneously obsesses about and disregards bodies and in an academic culture that still views teachers and students as ‘minds’ and ‘intellects’ only...Our theories of pedagogy cannot afford to neglect the dancing bodies in our classrooms.” Tina Kazan “Dancing Bodies”

“Getting Person(al):” Material-Discursive Attachments in Embodied Writing:

My central concern in this chapter is what it means to write and to know as a situated body within a feminist-contemplative paradigm of embodied composition. This chapter will position the knowing mind in an organic, intelligent body, so that it might be better understood as a body-mind, and will locate knowledge within its material context(s). Theories of how we know implicate the ways we define knowers, which was the focus of my previous chapter. Constructivist pedagogies seeped heavily in postmodernism, which stresses knowing entirely through language, are correspondingly vested in transforming students based on disrupting their consciousnesses, or their minds. They forward a view of the writing subject as ideologically and discursively constructed so that students are more accurately understood as bundles of cultural desires than as corporeal beings with physicalities that mean and matter in excess of language. As a result, these pedagogies tend to validate students’ disembodied thinking, writing and knowing processes in the classroom.

Because it is not bound to its material location and body, Lynn Worsham has called the postmodern subject of these constructivist pedagogies a “wild subject” (“Postal” 247). It is precisely its state of detachment that makes this subject unrestrained

or “wild.” As this conception of detachment conveniently stresses the rhetoricity of writers, giving our field desired academic merit, it has become a common way of understanding the subject within composition scholarship. Jane Hindman critiques the ways this problematic detachment from the material is motored through composition studies’ professional writing practices. As experience rises to the level of representation and body to text, Hindman claims our professional writing “works to entextualize an abstract body of knowledge and disembodiment the individual writer” (“Writing an Important Body” 100). The writer remains rhetorical precisely because she can transcend her material composition, valuing her consciousness over and above (as removable) from her body (100).²⁴ As this hierarchy is normalized in our professional writing, it follows that it becomes part of the hidden curriculum, or as Worsham might say, part of the dominant pedagogy, we teach our students. But Haraway points us to the ironic consequences of accepting this wild subject: when we discount the material situatedness of the individual by making matter primarily an affect of subjectivity, we end up perpetuating a typically modernist ideology of the modest witness, or the belief that the writer-researcher can transcend and therefore be understood outside his/her corporeal placement in the world.

A handful of compositionists have begun to reclaim the body and, with it, the personal for our writing practices—but much work still remains. Despite developing interest in materiality (Hawhee, Fleckenstein) and positionality (Gregor and Thompson, Kazan), embodied writing, a pedagogy and practice that reclaims the materiality of the

²⁴This is the domain of the traditional modest witness. To reconfigure this insight into the language of this project, Hindman points out that positioning ourselves as modest witnesses in our writing confers the “right” kind of authority to our prose, legitimizing the ideas it espouses precisely because it divorces the writer from her material existence. Hindman explains how she is a victim of this epistemology, which is antithetical to the embodied writing she practices, in “[Mis]Recognizing Awesome Bodies” (1996).

writer, remains undertheorized in composition studies.²⁵ Embodied writing represents a hopeful feminist alternative that captures the importance of our felt experiences without denying the material-social responsibility of critically investigating our embodiment. This pedagogy “of the person” has much in common with expressivism, often understood to be itself a “pedagogy of the personal;” indeed, both centrally locate the writer and seek to incorporate her experiences into expressive-academic narratives. But the differences are decisive. Embodied writing, with its focus on lived, social responsibility and situatedness leaves behind expressivism’s solipsism and its essentialist conception of the unified self understood outside of the community and removed from the social. These crucial differences may be missed by a casual observer or skeptic. Consequently, without a theoretical framework for embodied writing in place, we risk its conflation with expressivist writing, which itself has been taken to task for attention to practice at the expense of theory, and we continue to impoverish our understanding of the personal. Working toward such a framework, in this chapter I would like to examine how embodied writing reanimates the “personal”—a term we usually align narrowly with expressivist pedagogies because of their concern with keeping the presence of the writer visible at all times—yet avoids the essentialist cast of this term under expressivism.

In response to the perceived limits of expressivism,²⁶ the version of embodied writing I propose responsibly reclaims the person(al) as a writing body, or a body that

²⁵ This is true even if teaching *as* a body has received some attention by feminist scholars in composition like Michelle Payne and Susan Jarratt, among others.

²⁶ Of course, there are many ways to counter these claims against expressivism, which tends to be made into a straw figure for other approaches. As I am interested in the potential of the personal, I tend to have much sympathy with expressivism. For me, embodied writing can incorporate expressivism’s strengths and leave behind its weaknesses—even if these are narrowly understood and are often a result of their emergence in the 70s and 80s, when the field was not asking the same questions about the construction of

writes as surely as it is written, redefining this pedagogical-cum-epistemological term. Like expressivism, embodied writing puts the *person* and her experiences at the center of its pedagogy; unlike expressivism, embodied writing traces the meaning and understanding produced by the writer as always leading us back to her material-semiotic body as an epistemic origin. Her writing can therefore be classified as *personal* in ways that change the implications of this term. That is, we can see the personal within embodied writing pedagogies as “attached” rather than as separate or private. If these attachments start with a connection to the writing body, they also incorporate a larger world of matter to which the body belongs as well as the social, ideological and discursive worlds that predicate this body’s movements. Embodied writing, in other words, is “attached” personal writing precisely because it attends to the personal at the same time that it strives to situate it—*materially* and discursively. Its attention to a fuller conception of personal situatedness is why embodied writing can be seen as a process of attentive mapping versus one of unmediated, authentic reflection. And, it’s corresponding awareness of the individual within a relational context that merits the whole person is why this pedagogical approach can be understood as part of a larger movement toward contemplative education.

As attached, embodied writing works on a level of connection and interaction between signs and matter while never denying the agency of the latter: signs and bodies mark *each other* as “companionate composers.” I borrow and tweak this term from the last chapter. As I detail there, Haraway uses “companion species” to agentize objects like

meaning it is presently. Nonetheless, there is value in moving “past” expressivism; namely, cutting through the expressivist-constructivist debate which belies the complexity of both approaches.

bodies as well as objectified, nonhuman species like dogs. This dualistic and interdependent notion of agents in the world insists on the inability to splice responsibly objects and subjects and thus conceptions of mind and body, human and nonhuman, nature and culture, calling to mind the non-duality of thought and matter in yoga. The concept of companion species, as Haraway references it, reminds us to be accountable to our materiality and the ways matter is both creative and compositional. Social responsibility starts and is enacted at the point of our flesh. Applied to writing pedagogy, companion composing similarly refers to the ways in which meaning is both semiotic and material as well as the dual process by which our bodies shape language and are, in turn, shaped by language. In embodied pedagogies of writing, because the person(al) writing body is agentive following such formulations, it must be understood as more than a rhetorical construct; even if we approach matter through language, embodiment allows or makes possible our interpretations.

As such, the embodied writing pedagogy I propose here rejects traditional modes of detachment and seeks to relate the material and discursive at the level of meaning and enact it at the level of our bodies. This bridging-bonding orientation is a significant difference from other dominant writing pedagogies that claim knowledge-making happens when writers give up claims of their authorship or move “beyond” the personal either because of its lack of material integrity in ideological systems (it is an epiphenomenon) or because it will taint the pursuit of the knowledge claims made in our writing (it is subjective). To the first, postmodern viewpoint, we can apply Susan Bordo’s succinct question, “What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel anywhere? If the body is a metaphor for our

locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all” (“Feminism” 145). Bordo’s insight guides my pedagogy and negates the separation of the personal and the critical, dismissing the second objection.

In contrast to the postmodern evacuation of the body’s materiality, embodied writing seeks to use our web of material-discursive attachments as a source of strength. Indeed, these attachments are the site of power and criticality for this kind of materially-minded personal writing. As much as they are convenient metaphors, a point-of-view stems from a located body and a voice from vocal cords; a writer’s identity is always first embodied. But because bodies are in constant flux and interchange with culture and other bodies, or are differentially positioned, embodiment, and thus the personal, is never fixed. Once I have reviewed these pedagogical and epistemological differentiations in the pages that immediately follow, there are three applications of the personal within expressivism that embodied writing pedagogies must significantly revise: first, a foundational understanding of the person(al), or the person and her attachments; second, personal experience; and third, the personal essay. I will examine these applications in turn.

Embodying The Person(al):

Writing Persons, Writing bodies:

My parentheticals in the main header of this chapter are meant to underscore the ways our theoretical understanding of a person, or what we might readily call the subject or self, predicates the way we “attach” her to her prose and thus understand her role as a writer and meaning-maker. Advocate of embodied writing Jane Hindman uses an

expressivist notion of the personal subject to drive her essay, “Making Writing Matter: Using ‘The Personal’ to Recover[y] an Essential[ist] Tension in Academic Discourse.” She highlights for me both the strengths of writing that pays serious attention to matter as well as the reasons why expressivist paradigms cannot fully support this attention. In this essay, Hindman attempts to show how the authority of the expressivist personal, autobiographical self must be reclaimed for embodied rhetorics. Even so, Hindman does not suggest we naively return to any essentialized notions of the self that are not aware of our social or linguistic construction—this is an attachment she does not want to lose and neither do I. Rather, Hindman notes that we need to better hold tension between an expressive, personal self and a cultural, socially-constructed self in order to no longer ignore our materiality as writers (89). Essentially, she argues for a double gesture, claiming that neither subject position alone will work; our attempt to move *from one to another* evades the real issue of our corporeality. Hindman, like me, is interested in reclaiming the material person behind the personal, reattaching a sense of corporeality to this term.

To be attentive to matter, Hindman advocates writing our experiences and bodies into our prose as impetus and evidence for our arguments. In this way, our writing becomes personal, or evidentially full of its fleshy author. Using her experience to navigate the theoretically thorny issue of subjectivity, Hindman’s main objective is to consider “how [her] personal experience with alcoholism and with the discourse of recovery demonstrates to [her] the futility—indeed, the conceit—of trying to dispel the tension between competing versions of how the self is constructed” (92). Hindman believes that holding onto the expressivist self, because it accounts for personal

experience, will allow the body that poststructuralist constructivism has overwritten back “in,” or allow it to count in our writerly quest for understanding and meaning.

I certainly agree with the spirit of Hindman’s struggle. However, another way of looking at Hindman’s attempt to resolve expressivist and constructivist notions of subjectivity with each other is to see both as fatally flawed. The irony of the constructivist-expressivist debate that continues to echo throughout a great deal of our scholarship is how it hides the implicit agreement between these two dominant pedagogies on the matter of transcendence from our flesh. The Western tradition of downplaying the body for the mind is evidenced in both contemporary constructivist and expressivist pedagogies as *both* work in ways that detach us from the materiality of our lived bodies and experiences.

If critical constructivism promises transcendence from the body through theories of discursive production wherein the subject is always interpolated by a discourse that precedes it, an essentialist-leaning expressivism²⁷ does no better as it promises transcendence through an individual mind that can rise above its social environment as well as the limitations of the body, negating the role of materiality (Crick 257).

²⁷ Of course, the issue at hand is never as simple as calling expressivism “essentialist.” There are many ways expressivism attempts to bridge or mediate the seemingly disparate positions of essentialism and constructivism. This mediation is a core thread running throughout Elbow’s work, what he calls “embracing contraries.” Here, I capitalize on how this embrace of contraries, because it allows for liberal-humanist notions of the self, is often collapses into a reductive essentialism. I justify my move in three ways: 1. I imagine my audience to be comprised of constructivists who may be more interested in how the shortcomings of their approaches may indeed mirror many of the expressivist approaches they define against 2. The aim of this paper is not to detail the ways in which expressivism has been misconstrued for both “straw man” arguments and taxonomic approaches (see Richard Fulkerson). For a detailed analysis of this misconstruel, see Sherri Gradin *Romancing Rhetorics* and Paley “The Social Construction of Expressivist Pedagogy.” 3. Thus, the aim of my argument is not to dismiss expressivism but to show how so many of our contemporary approaches are not viable, literally not livable or full of life, since they promote uncritical disembodiment.

Constructivist compositionists such as Berlin have proposed pedagogical approaches like social epistemicism, which are invested in teaching students, as sites of desire, how to deconstruct hegemonic metanarratives so as to destabilize their power. Nobly, this practice is meant to free a dialogic space in which students can “talk back” by re-theorizing and composing new narratives, precisely because these students are always-already ideologically entrenched in the collective, having come to consciousness through it.

Berlin may not strictly deny the existence of matter, but he seems to find enough reason to dismiss any genuine role it may have in the formation of the subject. If nature, and the body in turn, can never be known in itself because culture is always mediating it, then for Berlin nature is just another word for culture, and our only agency lies in constructivist narratives (“Rhetorics” 76). Bordo names this kind of faith in the rhetoric of construction the “epistemological fantasy of *becoming* multiplicity” (“Feminism” 145, author’s emphasis). It is this dream of limitless multiplicity and rhetoricity that Hindman argues against, which is why she places more—perhaps too much—hope in the material attachments of expressivism. For her, constructivist approaches lose the real, even biological ways her body is already an alcoholic prior to the discursive tag and corresponding rhetoric surrounding this label. Denied matter(ing), the body has no real presence in this dominant pedagogical approach; it becomes the “no body” of postmodernism that Bordo challenges.

Yet, as I state above, I would argue that expressivism is troubled on the matter of the body as well. Expressivist attention to the self has become an easy target. It has been

thoroughly critiqued for all too often forwarding a romantic notion of the mind/ soul, mandating by proxy an essentialist view of the subject—this view provides the tension Hindman wants in her double gesture. And while I do not want to join a crew of critics who too easily dismiss the insights of expressivism, it seems to me that these critiques have missed the most untenable feature of all: comparatively little has been said about how this romantic notion is disembodied since this mind/soul is often identified *as* the person(al), so that the concrete body becomes a mere fleshy vehicle for the psyche. Despite their focus on experience, expressivists have not only promoted ideas of students rising above the collective in order to express an ineffable personal self but they have also equated this self with the individual's mind and something akin to a Platonic “fantasy of authenticity” that ignores the weight of corporeality. This appeal to intellectual transcendence tends to disembody experience at the same time that it is claimed.

In sum, the expressive transcendent mind as divorceable from the flesh is a conception that enforces the separation of a consciousness from the body that acts primarily as a vehicle and/or extension of its internal thoughts. Experience is emptied of its materiality, in turn, and is valued more as a memory contained by the intellect or as fodder for personal reflection. Elbow's “movies of the mind” metaphor, for instance, highlights the way meaning in the expressivist paradigm is often seen as removed from the experiencing body. Enacted through our writing, the “I” of personal writing seems to be more an individual mind's expression of itself than an embodied “I” that expresses a writing body—what I am after here.

To return to the example, Elbow locates meaning in the individual's consciousness with his "movies of the mind" metaphor: "Meaning is like movies inside the head. I've got movies in my head. I want to put them inside yours. Only I can't do that because our heads are opaque. All I can do is try to be clever about sending you a sound track and hope I've done it in such a way as to make you construct the right movies in your head" (*Writing* 152). Here, meaning from experience is something shaped by the mind and remains something that wishes to "get out" through language expression. This is so even if the language we use to express ourselves is shared as Elbow asserts (*Writing* 155). On both accounts, thoughts exist unchained to bodies.

Recent attempts to recast expressivism have argued successfully that this pedagogy is neither radically apolitical nor antisocial. For instance, Sherri Gradin has argued that traditional accounts that pitted expressivism against constructivism have missed expressivism's inherent sociality and community focus. Noting that the expressive self has always been identified as living a communal life and navigating this life via shared language, Gradin claims that a better label for this pedagogy would be "social expressivism." This amended term takes into account the expressivist understanding of the subject as a consciousness created by a "dialectical relationship between the self and world" or between the "structure of the self and the structure of society" (114). While this new account might achieve Gradin's goal to show how "the romantics did not deny the social construction of the self" (113), we can also see how it perpetuates a vision of the self as discontinuous from the world of matter. In her formulation, the extrinsic environment of matter—which would necessarily include the body—is still somehow able to be distanced from the psyche of the individual. Instead of

residing *with* the body, the psyche speaks *for* it and resides *inside* the body as an “innate seed”, Gradin later goes on to say (115).

Ann Bertoff, who Gradin claims as another modern social expressivist, shows how the dichotomy between body and mind in social expressivism creates a hierarchy that devalues matter: “By naming the world, we hold images in mind; we remember; we can return to our experience and reflect on it. In reflecting, we can change, we can transform, we can envisage. Language thus becomes the very type of social activity by which we might move towards changing our lives” (751; qtd. Gradin 115). Echoing back to Elbow’s movies of the mind, the embodiment of experience in Bertoff’s explanation seems to matter much less, if at all, than the way language is used to shape it or memory is used to store/ configure it. As Bertoff’s quote shows, the power of personal experience rests not in having the experience or the physicality of our meaning making or even writing, but in the power of naming or our intellectualizing of experience through language. This is not to say naming experience isn’t a shaping activity or an important one at that; it is to say that it isn’t *everything* or isn’t exhaustive of meaning. Expressivist meaning-making as detailed by Gradin indeed takes into account a shuttle between the personal and the social by accepting notions of audience and the construction of language, making us question the common critique of expressivism’s “radical individualism;” still, expressivism remains largely disembodied—surprising for a pedagogy based in experience.

Since in my previous chapter I proposed and developed a theory of writing bodies as a way to refuse the disconnection of the writer from her materiality, I will not linger

any further over Hindman's double gesture here. There, the feminist model of embodied subjectivity I develop using Haraway as a guide gives us another way of theorizing the embodied subject from within postmodernism without returning to expressivist notions of the self which, in the end, tend to reclaim a disembodied writer. The strength of my model, I believe, is in its elaboration of how exactly we can claim a "double gesture" or how we can make sense of the move to claim everything at once. What I want to underscore before moving on is that both Hindman and I attend to the subject because we seemingly both feel the need to re-theorize the writer when we change the paradigm of writing. The harmony between our projects can be explained simply: in order to see writing as embodied, we need to see the writer as a body and her writing as an embodied practice of making meaning. Our projects coverage on the point that close out matter, however we theoretically justify it, is not only untrue to our real, embodied state of living in the world but is also a nihilistic move that closes off options for individual change and difference embedded in our writing pedagogies and classrooms.

Writing the Personal:

Once we've reclaimed the fleshy person, what we mean by "the personal" must change too. As Candace Spigelman remarks, we have tended to define the personal as removed from the collective and thus have denied its relation to the social. In *Personally Speaking*, her book-length treatment of this complex term, Spigelman states, the "personal involves a particular way of conveying information that seems to represent an autonomous writer's unmediated reflection on his or her 'authentic' lived experience" (30). This is the essence of the critique against expressivist pedagogy. Her effort in

reclaiming the personal is to “detach” it from these limited conceptions by understanding it instead as a rhetorical construct, as fully mediated by a social language (30). Spigelman would therefore reject Gradin’s grasp on the personal as an “innate seed” (115) or her attempt to revive expressivism’s current viability by historically connecting it to Romanticism. Accordingly, Spigelman’s move to rhetoricize the personal is one that could finally bring it under the postmodern rubric by questioning its autonomy and the “free” or “private” space this concept seems to invite.

Even though she is committed to rhetoricizing the personal in order to give it new viability, Spigelman doesn’t completely ignore materiality in her discussion. She states that because she does not want to simply flip the binary that values the mind over the body, she chooses not to enter these debates. She accomplishes this end by not lingering over the corporeality lost in her model. In refusing to enter into the fray, however, Spigelman may implicate herself in those discussions of materiality she claims to find inherently reductive (33). Her concern over binaries, along with the “anxiety” (60) that she claims accompanies the debate over the personal, leads her to see this epistemological term as a representative label within her pedagogy, even if it is valued at the same time for the space in language it guarantees. But, I would argue that embracing the personal as more than a discursive label neither means necessarily entail unmooring it from its anchorage in the body nor does attention to materiality need to be reductive. I believe we have more options than Spigelman sees.

For me, Haraway presents a third, hopeful option. She helps me to rethink the person(al) *as* the “particular and specific embodiment” (Haraway “Situated” 190) that

makes meaning-making possible. As its etymology suggests, the personal in embodied pedagogy is about the fleshy person, relating to one's body which is understood within language but maintains meaning beyond it as more than the simple object of our inquiry. An embodied notion of the personal is opposed to the expressivist notion of the personal as the psyche as well as the postmodern notion of the "personal" as an epiphenomenon or rhetorical construct, indicated by the offset quotations. My move to understand the personal as the material-semiotic entanglement of the fleshy personal body and the cultural body, *which come together under the full rubric of embodiment*, requires us to leave behind both the wild subject of postmodernism as well as the personal subjectivity embraced by early expressivism, however caricatured this latter notion of the subject has been in our scramble away from it. The body, and so the personal, is always mediated by language but never overwritten by it. It becomes a revolving door for ever-changing demarcations between the private and public, now seen through a lens of attachment as opposed to unmediated autonomy.

Incorporating notions of the embodied personal into composition pedagogy means accepting our students as "bodies who aspire to write" (Kazan 392) or writing bodies, as I proposed in the last chapter. I use this term to get at how the writer becomes part of her text as she both writes herself into being by reflecting, reliving and rewriting her experience—we are written through language—and also finds lived reality and material meaning in the experiences that bring her to the act of composing—our bodies press language into shape. Taking away the (epistemological if not typographical) space between these words emphasizes their intimate connection, the real inability to splice them, affirming the co-constitution of writing-language and bodies-matter. In short,

writing bodies highlight the attention to companionate composing that differentiates embodied pedagogies from others. My term, writing bodies, is my field-specific adaptation of Haraway's notion of "naturecultures," or the ways we can see our world through material-semiotic webs as opposed to definitive boundaries. Naturecultures exist precisely because of the extra-linguistic qualities of subjects and objects, including but not limited to minds and bodies, which can only ever be understood together even as they retain individual integrity.

Our attempts to understand the categories of writing-language and bodies-matter separately within our pedagogical practices tells us more about ourselves and our preference for "the politics of closure" instead of "differential positioning" than the nature of cultural construction or things themselves (1991, 196). Bodies become more than mere texts in these formulations and material experiences literally matter even as they are also (re)written in the act of language expression. Corporeality is therefore neither "about fixed location in a reified body," challenging notions of authentic embodiment, but nor is it about "the body as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions" (Haraway 195-97). Our fleshiness instead points to a material presence existing both within and beyond our linguistic representations and rules, primarily accessible to us via our linguistic mapping practices but also materially-situated and located within a larger world of matter to which we are accountable in the flesh. Understanding comes just as much from the body as the mind, since they are companionate composers in this epistemological picture. And because we can never experience the world from another's exact location, in another's body, the personal highlights a felt material integrity that even language cannot supersede, even if we can

only make “sense” of this through language, and, through language, share our embodied experience with others. Embodied writing pedagogies exchange words like “unique” and “authentic” which have previously tagged along with the personal for words like “located” and “responsible.”

Situatedness and Agency of the Personal:

Once we view the personal as an expression of our bodies as well as our minds, we are dually required to rethink and expand our notions of situatedness. Because it views the body as more than a house for the mind or empty stage on which cultural scripts can be performed, the kind of feminist, material-discursive, “personal situatedness” called for in embodied writing differs from the more popular postmodern versions of social situatedness that constructivist writing pedagogies typically promote. No more can we simply refer to situatedness as a metaphor for socio-cultural placement; now we must also see it as about specific embodiment.

Elbow stumbles across how narrowly we tend to apply our understanding of situatedness when he states that compositionists routinely accept conceptions of situatedness and view objectivity as “passé”: “[f]ew academics now believe that they can achieve objectivity—or that this view from everywhere-and-nowhere is even a desirable goal. Everyone seems to agree that we can never write anything except from a situated and interested point of view” (“Forward” 7). This leaves Elbow to wonder why the field remains antagonistic to personal writing. Elbow may be confused because he mistakenly aligns our field’s general acceptance of situatedness with the personal. While to Elbow the opposite of objectivity is the subjectivity of the personal, to many other

compositionists the alternate option is instead the ideological saturation of the self. In this popular view, the personal is so overdetermined that neither objectivity nor subjectivity is possible. Therefore, language as mediator between self and society retains a sense of amateriality as untied to the organic world.

In contrast, material-discursive, personal situatedness—what I will shorten to personal situatedness from this point on— places us in the body as much as it situates us in discourse communities and social, ideological systems. The conception of personal situatedness upon which embodied writing rests thus refigures agency as a product of the interaction and co-constitution of the person and culture. As such, embodied writing is embedded in a figuration of agency as springing from our material attachments and the body’s status as agentic in forming these. The knower-writer’s material placement, her “specific and particular” body in relation to other bodies, guarantees her epistemic potential; without it she could neither connect to others nor create meaning. This notion of embodied agency stands in stark contrast to standard performative definitions of agency wherein agency is seen as an extension of our social situatedness, disconnected from the material and completely discursive.

Judith Butler’s notion of the “constitutive outside” is an example of how agency is alternately construed through language, rather than through matter, and represents the limits of this view. Butler’s construal is significant within composition studies since her theories of performativity, which rest on this notion, are tangled throughout our disciplinary scholarship on constructivism. Of the constitutive outside, Butler states, “[t]here is an ‘outside’ to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute

‘outside,’ an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse; as a constitutive ‘outside’ it is that which can only be thought—when it can—in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders” (“Bodies” 8). The constitutive outside carves out a space for excess within language by way of marking the unintelligible against the intelligible, bringing the other about. Importantly, this theorization allows Butler to argue for the social construction of gender while also questioning the inherent tie between sex and gender. The result, however, is that “[s]ex is resourced for its representation as gender, which ‘we’ can control” (Haraway 1991, 198).

While it may initially seem to be a liberating deconstruction, dismantling the biological category of sex forces the body to be the handmaiden of culture, or worse yet, an empty puppet waiting to be controlled by cultural, historical and semiotic forces. This view of language’s total encapsulation of reality, taken up by constructivist pedagogies like social epistemicism, limits the potential *for* change and our potential *to* change as Kristie Fleckenstein remarks. For, “[w]ithout bodies—those instances of flesh that disrupt the consistency of style and that point to a signification before and beyond language (Gallop 14-20)—no resistance of systemic transformation can be effected...nor can individuals cast themselves as agents of change because the uncertainty of deconstructed positioning erodes the embodiment necessary for agency” (“Writing Bodies” 284-85). Agency and situatedness are recursively linked. We fundamentally change the notion of what it means to be agentive when we remove it from the body, and this change renders great losses. Fleckenstein urges us to refuse the disconnection of agency from the body by theorizing somatic writing as entailing both immersion and emergence, two techniques of situating ourselves. Immersion requires us to attend to the particularity of bodies,

remembering that we experience our cultural placement materially and emergence means we also accept the ways we are culturally constructed (297). Together, these orientations help us to construct a fuller conception of agency as it relates to embodied writing practices.

Here again, I find a return to Hindman helpful since she exemplifies how we might keep the tension alive between the discursive and the material, personal body in order to reveal this kind of material agency that “immerses” us in bodies and “emerges” in particular cultural moments. Hindman wants to reclaim a kind of material agency by showing how her embodied experiences as an alcoholic have discursive consequences—that her lived body affects the construction of her narratives as much as her body is itself marked by culture and language. This is what I have elsewhere labeled “companion composing” following Haraway. Hindman argues that biology and rhetoric *both* have roles in constructing alcoholics. This argument stands against the standard academic view that “if not for the discourse of A[lcoholics]A[nonymous] . . . alcoholics would not know themselves as alcoholics” (“Matter” 93). While Hindman agrees that her choice to construct herself as an alcoholic has indeed created a personal reality of recovery that did not exist prior to her entry into AA, she retains her conviction that her agency is also tied up with the way her body *means* as an alcoholic outside of recovery discourse (“Matter” 98-99). In other words, she claims her felt embodiment includes her alcoholism even if, to make cultural sense of this condition, she needs to approach her body through discourse. As a result, she articulates the ways embodied writing, like the model she performs in the article, hinges on notions of agency as more than a product of locating

oneself in a certain discourse; it means also locating oneself in (a) material reality/realities.

This kind of material-discursive locating has consequences for the classroom as well. Tina Kazan argues that as different bodies come together to comprise the corporeal text of the classroom, they begin to appropriate meaning in particular ways based on how their embodiments play off one another. She consequently claims the necessity of exploring how bodies mean in educational spaces like the writing classroom. “Feeling out” bodies is pedagogical work we always do but rarely reflect upon as teachers. For Kazan, the writing classroom is a situated space of learning because of the ways bodies are physically related to each other. For instance, the physical placement of the teacher at the front of her classroom materializes her authority and differentially positions her as removed from her students even if her body shares certain physical characteristics with those students, such as young age or popular dress (380-81). Pedagogy enacted is always a mix of language and matter interacting together, meaning together.

In Kazan’s analysis, the eye confers location and space to the process of situating oneself and others. Kazan uses Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the “surplus of seeing,” or the idea that because each body is necessarily opaque to itself, can literally only see outward, to argue for the relationality of bodies to each other and the need to understand situatedness as stemming literally from the point of view of the fleshy body. Understanding situatedness as arising not just from discursive placement but also from the “situated nature of perspective” (385) invites an understanding of how composition teachers “teach writers, bodies who aspire to write” (392). Like my notion of

writingbodies, Kazan defines the process of (teaching) writing as one that always already involves the body.

Her analysis further shows how teachers are dually implicated in a process of reading bodies and—because we maintain positions of power in the classroom, however much we eschew our authority—sanctioning them. Like the dance instructor who mistakenly reads Kazan and her lesbian friend as a couple but cannot transcend the heteronormative ballroom dancing language on which she relies, teachers sanction how bodies are allowed to speak in the classroom. Sanctioning takes place via the ways teachers literally see the bodies before them and the corresponding ways they gesture to bodies in language. Kazan’s essay points to a danger of erasing embodied differences when we ignore how personal situatedness is material.

Here the processes of seeing and naming must work with one another in order to be used effectively to honor difference rather than to oppress non-normative bodies. Again using Bakhtin as a lens, Kazan importantly centralizes difference through this process of visual reading: “[A]ccording to Bakhtin, we are situated in a unique space that allows us our own perspective...Bakhtin’s surplus of seeing honors difference, since for me to merge with someone else is neither possible nor desirable” (385). To be responsible seers, materially-sensitive seers, we cannot make the mistake Kazan’s ballroom dance instructor did: we cannot assume normative student bodies; we must, instead, acknowledge embodied differences using the powers of our felt sense *and* adjust our language use accordingly.

Outside the dance studio, Fleckenstein in her recent book, *Embodied Literacies*, similarly points out the way we neutralize student bodies in academic discourse and the resistance this promotes, attesting to the seriousness of Kazan's claim and the need for developed sensitivity to personal, embodied situatedness. In this book devoted to increasing the scope of literacy to include the embodied nature of imagery, Fleckenstein argues that teaching academic writing is not just about developing a successful psychological identification to a middle-class life and value system, as represented by Bartholomae's discussions of appropriation, but is also about adopting a physiological identification since the act of writing "imposes on students the bodies of white, heterosexual, middle-class males," (49) an argument well-made by feminists from Virginia Woolf to Helene Cixous and Jane Tompkins. The stakes are much higher than discursive reconstruction. Fleckenstein's analysis is meant to give us a greater understanding of student resistance, but it also highlights how our narrow application of social situatedness tends to hide these embodied consequences of learning to write.

Asking how bodies are situated in culture is only half of the picture of embodied writing that these women draw for me. We must also ask how our bodies appropriate that culture to their own ends. Aside from a select few compositionists, recent attempts to attend to materiality tend to spurn questions about the material consequences of semiotic practices, largely ignoring the fact that this question should work both ways to include how our material practices impact and implicate language.²⁸ Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, for instance, frame their project as one interested in getting "beyond the

²⁸ An example of how this question would work in the reverse as I suggest can be found in Sondra Perl's notion of felt sense, which dialogues nicely with Haraway's conceptions of the body as agentic. I will discuss this connection in the next chapter.

‘personal’” aspects of experience “towards the social” in order to draw “attention to the material consequences of discursive practices” (“Problematic” 261). They validate this movement away from the personal body toward the social body, which locates agency in language and not bodies, at the same time that they hope to recognize the material conditions of experience by viewing it through a lens of critical ethnography. This is both confusing and paradoxical. Quite possibly without the Haraway-ian theories I call upon here, Lu and Horner cannot make the full theoretical jump to include individual bodies in the realm of matter.

Nonetheless, we can build on their efforts to focus on the generative possibilities of asking both this question as well as its implied converse: how are bodies and matter implicated in the processes of our practices and not just marked as a result? Questioning the agency of matter is what Haraway means us to do when she deems natures and cultures as co-creators or companion composers. Closer to home, this is precisely what Kazan and Hindman recover for me through their analysis of matter and what I am here terming personal situatedness. It is this conception that fuels embodied writing, or that which incorporates the personal knowledge of the author within a critical-personal text that develops a picture of agency as motored by the interactions between discourse and matter.

Personal Experience:

I have argued that embodied writing pedagogies give us an alternative to defining agency and meaning as entirely discursive. They refuse to collapse matter into language *and* refuse to reify the nondiscursive; rather, they see matter and language as braided

together in complex ways that significantly affect each other, changing the ways we approach the writer and her personal investments. In terms of writing, embodied pedagogies approach first-person expression as an expression of our materiality. Recognizing the epistemic potential of individual, fleshy bodies encourages us to reassess the ways in which we validate personal experience in our writing classrooms. If we view experience not as an illusion of the “personal”—which in following postmodern logic would remain enclosed in quotation marks—but as a way of naming our embodiment, then it becomes apparent that part of what it means to validate bodies is to validate the ways in which they materially navigate the world and the resulting knowledge that is produced and (re)created through the boundary-making practice we call writing.

Embodied writing pedagogies require us to accept the importance of lived experience, all too frequently aligned primarily as an expressivist tendency. When we do not allow our students to write with their experiences or to work through their material investments in our classrooms, we implicitly ask them to take on a disembodied stance in their academic writing. In doing so, we devalue the diversity of their bodies and deny the physicality of the writing and meaning making processes. It is not enough to create a personal classroom atmosphere wherein students feel comfortable sharing personal experiences if we do not similarly allow this integration within their writing; this split gives them contradictory notions about how knowledge is generated. Our students’ personal experiences should be seen as more than cultural constructions and should count for more than their ability to be neatly mapped onto cultural grids, but too often this is how we view them from within our constructivist pedagogies.

An example of how the refusal of the embodied and situated dimension of personal experience might work in a social constructivist pedagogy is present in Karen Paley's analysis of Patricia Bizzell's writing classroom. Paley sits in on an undergraduate writing class dedicated to training peer tutors. While Paley remarks that the overall tone of the class was warm with "no evidence of confrontational pedagogy," she does conclude that Bizzell works to reframe students' comments so as to minimize the importance of personal attachments and maximize the cultural import. She states that Bizzell "welcomed personal commentary [from her students] only when it was explicitly linked to social, 'representative' issues" (187). This is evident in an example of the ways Bizzell validates students' readings of Patricia Williams' essay "Crimes without Passion." Paley transcribes a student's response to Williams' essay and then Bizzell's response to the student during a classroom discussion:

Sarah: I think there's a connection between all the stories that she tells, a lot of them have...the issues she's proposing, how those issues came about as part of her development. So there's a personal aspect of why she's so engaged in these issues.

Bizzell: I think this is a really important point, that she relates her personal story and the issues; and Sarah's quite right that one way of doing that is by developing it over time, showing that it's something that has been an issue for her since she was young. So the stories that she tells about herself are not just personal stories, they are representative...and I think that's very important. ("I Writing" 185)

There is a “submerged disagreement” during this class that remains unnoticed and/ or unacknowledged by the teacher, according to Paley (185). Paley notes that the subtle disagreement between Bizzell and her student, Sarah, is indicative of the ways in which personal experience tends to be subsumed under the label of “socially representative” in order to stress how the self is a social construct and therefore not *personal* in the ways students like Sarah might articulate. As her quote indicates, Sarah thinks there is a connection between a person’s individual “development” and his/her engagement with certain ideas and this likely is rooted in the ways Sarah experiences the impact of her material reality on her process of meaning making.

Bizzell’s treatment of the personal demonstrates the ways student experience becomes interchangeable when it is divorced from our material agency and limited as an expression of the social. I do not take issue with Bizzell’s attempt to teach her students the ways in which personal stories have cultural resonance. What I do count as a pedagogical loss is the implicit hierarchy between the social and the individual body that her comments normalize. The claim I’d like to foreground is that we can talk to our students about the relationships between the personal and the cultural in ways that allow the person to stand *with* and not *for* the social by calling upon the critical power of his/her embodied experiences. Embodied writing focuses on the process of knowledge-making as reflecting and analyzing a series of material experiences that reveal the complex construction of the individual as she takes shape in a cultural and social environment, but also as she marks that environment by means of her material embodiment and interconnectedness. It exchanges narratives of authenticity for those of situated positioning and humility. Engaging in embodied writing practices means that we accept

positioning as that which grounds knowledge claims and reclaims the body of the author. The personal is more than representative; it reveals the author's lived material investments. The classroom as well as the page should reflect this.

The Promise of Situated Knowledge:

Embodied writing practices must move beyond the constructivist interchangeability of knowers and experiences if they are to entertain seriously the epistemic potential of individual bodies differentially located. If knowledge is always attached to the knower, we need to be wary of deeming the narration-reflection of experience a ventriloquizing act on students' or author's parts, one that is merely representative of the social. Even if the web of experience is configured by its attachment at all four corners to society, the mapping of that web can still be felt in a materially-locatable and thus personally embodied way. Indeed, this practice of material mapping is arguably the more responsible practice of viewing knowledge-making as it does not elide difference at the level of our bodies.

In its focus on the materiality of experience, embodied writing again parts ways with expressivism and social-expressivism. To assuage the anxiety about experience, Spigelman says her project purposely emphasizes "the *construct* that is personal experience" (60). So as with the personal, she claims experience as a narrative fiction. Viewing it this way, she can "understand experience-based writing as rhetorical rather than referential" (22) and therefore avoid the epistemological baggage associated with these two charged terms. These changes significantly weaken constructivist arguments against personal writing, allowing Spigelman a stage on which to present a picture of

personal writing *as* argument in her book, *Personally Speaking*. In her view, narrative can be seen as “rational” and dialogic and can be blended with academic discourse to engage in the same kinds of “critical cultural examination” with added dimensionalities that result from linking the differing worldviews of each discourse (2-8). Because my final section in this chapter explores personal narrative, I will defer an analysis of hybrid writing Spigelman mentions until later. At the moment, I would like to investigate the ways embodied writing can propel the reclamation of personal experience started by compositionists such as Spigelman and Paley without giving up a hopeful and respectful orientation toward matter.

Simply put, I want to forward a view of experience within embodied pedagogies of writing that sees it as much a material reality as a narrative construct. It is true that “experience is not—indeed, cannot be—reproduced in speech or writing, and must instead be narrated” (Brodkey “Writing Ethnographic” 26 qtd. Spigelman 11), but the process of shaping goes both ways, and so needs to include the ways our experiences beget our interpretations. I believe a feminist attitude of humility is best when approaching these issues in order to counter the tendency to mastery which often leaves us illogically claiming that our narration of experience somehow voids its materiality.

In thinking about how embodied writing can claim personal experience as material, in light of a feminist eschewal of mastery, Haraway is once again helpful to me. Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges, or the material-discursive meanings we create from our experience, is a viable epistemological topos for embodied writing pedagogies. In order to realize fully embodied writing, we need to see it as engaging in situated

knowing and thus producing situated knowledge. Situated knowledge can be used to develop embodied pedagogies of writing to make them not only more theoretically sound but also more pedagogically generative when enacted in the classroom. Situated knowledge becomes a way to rethink our current writing approaches and can help us to work toward changed writing practices—ones that recognize fully our embodiment as writers and the material reality of our experiences. This kind of knowledge rejects traditional modes of detachment and seeks to relate the material and discursive at the level of meaning and enact it at the level of our bodies. Situated knowledge is consequently what gets made on the page and in the classroom when we engage in embodied writing and teaching practices.

Situated knowledge is a feminist epistemology based on “particular and specific embodiment”²⁹ (190) which produces “partial, locatable, critical knowledge sustaining the possibility of webs of connection” (191). These webs privilege attachment through “passionate construction” and “resonance, not...dichotomy” (194-95). Based on these definitions, we can first see how situated knowledge highlights the ways materiality and discursivity are tangled in our webs of meaning, making it impossible and particularly senseless to separate them. Nor does it behoove us to overwrite matter as a function of the social insofar as it is reduced to nothing more. Situated knowledge consequently places the writer-knower in the center of the meaning-making process and refuses to ignore how her body is implicated in her knowing as materially placed and connected to

²⁹ For my purposes, I will focus on Haraway’s notions of human embodiment. For the ways in which our embodiment is complicated by animal-machine hybridities, see Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto.”

her experiences. These experiences spatialize the knower in the world, literally positioning her in definite yet dynamic ways.

Put differently, situated knowing is an epistemological practice that changes our understanding of *how* we come to know by locating knowing within individual, experiencing bodies not a transcendent realm of truth or a social “body” motored wholly by language. Here, embodiment is a necessary condition of meaning making, fixing the body as the origin of knowledge. Its inseverable connection to the body is what makes this knowledge “partial” as well as “locatable.” *What* we know accordingly changes too. If the process of knowing is primarily experiential, we must seriously entertain our personal experiences and work to interpret them critically without losing their embodied reality. In this feminist epistemology, “[d]iscourse and reality are in close relationship, but they are, nevertheless, distinct” (Hirschmann 327). Indeed, we can understand the relationship between discourse and material reality as one of companionate composing.

Because experience is a product of this mutual, interdependent composition, and not just linguistic, writers “do not simply ‘reinterpret’ [their] experiences through a new discourse; experience also enables reinterpretation...experiences are discursive, but they come, at least in part, from somewhere else, not ‘just’ from discourse in an endless devolution” (Hirschmann 327). We accept the idea that experience can be understood entirely through discourse when we read it exclusively as a text. That there is more to material reality than discourse should not be seen as a limitation inasmuch as it is a position of openness that validates our ultimate lack of mastery over a material world to which we belong but can in no way ever comprehensively view. This remains so even if

we use language to explore our place in the world: “[t]hat such experience can only be shared *through* language is important to recognize. Indeed it may be a crucial dimension of the standpoint notion of shared experience that we communicate about it through language, but discourse cannot exhaust the ‘reality’ of experience” (Hirschmann 327). Understanding can come from *interpreting* an experience not just *having* it so that we can connect to each other even when we experience our embodiments and material-discursive worlds differently (329). In short, we can situate ourselves within the context of an experience through our imaginative interpretation of it without having experienced the actual context ourselves; the meeting of discourse and matter is a generative one that enforces the companionate relations between the two.

As such, situated knowledge is an interested practice of knowing through connection, partly because we use language to communicate with others and partly because we are always connected to others through our shared materiality. The commonality of our materiality, which can be seen as a dynamic common ground even if it is experienced or embodied differently, gives situated knowledge a relational, “webbed” orientation that establishes it as a method of connected knowing. Connected knowing values the historical, social and experiential and is characterized by its stance of openness, a continuous deferral of closure, and by the recognition of our need to join with others (Belenky et al, 113-23). It understands difference through connection, not distance. In contrast to separate knowers who experience the self as autonomous, connected knowers experience the self as always in relation in “webs of connection.”

The worldview of interrelatedness required by situated knowledge entails “the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another’s point of view” (Haraway “Situated” 190). The position of interrelatedness and attachment to other matter—people as well as other objects—is what makes this knowledge responsible where responsibility is seen to stem from a understanding both of the interest of all knowledge claims as well as the perspectival limits of personal, experiential knowledge. This notion of connected responsibility as giving weight to knowledge claims contrasts with the distance from the self other methods of knowing suggest. Here, one can be critical *and* personal at the same time since it is impossible to rise above the self. And neither does this connection to the knower invalidate the public use value of her knowledge claims: as stated above, the map cannot exist without the map maker, but it can be read and followed by others.

Situated knowledge is therefore not the same as subjective knowledge. It recognizes multiple standpoints and not just one. It is interested in a dialogue between the personal and the social that doesn’t collapse the integrity or importance of either. Situated knowledge accommodates a multiplicity of embodied standpoints since “differences in experiences produce differences in standpoints” (Hirschmann 320). In other words, it offers an alternative that does not harken back to expressivist epistemologies which were not always similarly attentive to difference. Expressive epistemics often forwarded an essentialist conception of knowing wherein truths were “subjective” or based in the knower-writers’ consciousness. These truths all ultimately corresponded to an absolute Truth in a romantic sense of this term. By basing themselves on these essentialized notions of truth, expressivist theories tended to eclipse difference: expressivist “process

manifestos said very little about differences in race, gender, and class and therefore may be faulted...for implying that those differences were not relevant or significant” (Tate 12). As with the feminist standpoint theories Haraway writes against, expressivist pedagogies forwarded a view of a homogenous writer-knower. Berlin critiques the expressivist worldview by arguing against its “commitment to an epistemology that locates all truth within a personal construct arising from one’s unique selfhood” (*Reality* 153). Nevertheless, Berlin, following constructivist theory, proposes a parallel version of the homogenous writer by locating all truth within a transcendent realm of language divorced from the specificity of an individual’s material placement and corporeal makeup.

Situated knowing practices mediate these problems and reclaim embodied experience without the romantic lens or subjective theories of expressivism. Recognizing difference is part of the situated knowing process for, “if knowledge is developed through experience rather than an abstract world of ‘Truth,’ then different experiences will yield different bodies of knowledge” (Hirschmann 320) which can be strengthened by being placed in relation to each other—bodies mean in relation to other bodies even if they retain individual integrity. So even though lived moments are accessed through the social filters of language and cultural histories, the stories we develop to explain and capture these moments are always threaded to the moments themselves and the “having” of the experience. Certainly “the stories we tell ourselves of our experiences come filtered through the collective subjectivities of our social and cultural relationships, so that our interpretations of experience are not simply individual” (Spigelman 63) or personal, but they are also not simply social or textual—interpretations of material realities presuppose

those lived realities without exhausting them. These material acknowledgements fly in the face of our pedagogical tendency, following from cultural studies theory, to discredit our students' ordinary experiences as naïve or interchangeable. Experiences of the student (and teacher) instead need to be both authorized and analyzed in embodied personal essays.

Redefining the Personal Essay:

That experiential testimony and situated knowledge are validated in embodied writing practices suggests the many ways personal essays change in the process of attending to materiality. In “Written Through the Body,” William Banks explains how embodied writing requires a revision of what we understand to be “personal writing.”³⁰ Banks claims that the personal narrative has been cast as anything but “critical” in our scramble away from expressivism. Indeed, the very definition of “critical” seems to include an absence of the personal (22). But this move away from the personal—and related ignorance of how personal writing can be critically responsible—has resulted in a move away from our embodied experiences. To revisit the language of my previous chapters, our field can be seen to use a similar conception of critical discourse as science studies, so that we perpetuate modernist notions of the modest witness.

In order to see value in the ways we can use these experiences to write “through” our bodies, Banks seeks to prove how embodied writing pushes beyond the goals of

³⁰ Banks situates his theories of embodied writing alongside Hindman's. Worth note, these two are differentiated by Banks' interest in both professional and student writing (where I too stand) and Hindman's focus on professional writing practices.

expressivist personal narratives. While expressivist personal writing was sometimes content to leave the personal unsituated, Banks argues that embodied personal writing should strive to reveal the “symbiotic relationship” between the social and the individual and thus between the writer and her text (22-35). The use of peer quoting is one example of the situated practices I use in conjunction with the personal essay in order to complicate any clear divisions between private and public as well as “substantiated” and personal knowledges.

Banks and I agree that embodied writing should not be confused with expressivist writing, then, even if both are forms of personal writing: “The difference...is that embodied writing is more socially responsible than earlier forays into expressivism because it requires writers to foreground their sense of self at the same time that they consider the social implications of this gesture away from ‘impersonal,’ disengaged, disembodied rhetorics” (35). Writers must be aware of the ways they are written by culture and driven by language as they simultaneously work to integrate the integrity of their material selves and experiences in their texts.

To authorize student experiences, we must explore how they come from a body self-reflexively affirmed and differentially positioned. Because our bodies as sites of knowing are embedded in culture and language, our experiences are not self-evident but they are where we must necessarily start. To ignore them is to “pretend to disengagement” (Haraway “Situated” 196) like so many constructivists do. To work toward engaged analysis, the situated knower is the first to examine how her experiences are not solely her own, and how she must accept her partiality and join with others

through language; nonetheless, situated knowing does not reduce materiality to discourse since our materiality can actually function as a challenge to discourse (Hirschmann 325) since it is agentic. As a result, situated knowledge presents a third space of rhetoric-cum-referentiality.³¹

If we use situated knowledge as a guide, we begin to see the ways we can discuss personal stories and experiences that reveal writers' attachments while allowing them the material integrity they deserve. To promote critical thinking, we can teach students to look for and analyze the incongruencies that arise in these stories because the knower is situated in ways she herself cannot fully recognize due to her embodiment, her specific placement in the world. Students can begin to see dissonance as a result of not only competing worldviews but also different configurations of situatedness. We can discuss with them the ways the writer is materially, culturally and ideologically situated and how these are simultaneously strengths of her writing and knowing and also signs of her need to join with others. We can begin to show how in strong personal embodied writing, authors tend to recognize the partiality of their knowledge claims even as they validate them as a product of their experiences and feelings.

Affirming Situated Knowledge through Peer Quoting:

In this section, I would like to examine how writing teachers might engage our students in producing situated knowledge, or how we might get students to approach experience as generating local knowledge that is marked by the body of the knower and

³¹ Rosemary Hennesy in *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (1993) also argues that we need to see the interaction of the discursive and non-discursive.

is localized by her material positionings. I believe there are many ways we can involve our students in critically analyzing *and* affirming their experiences in ways that accord them agency as bodies that act in the world and not simply as consciousnesses that need to be disrupted by our critical pedagogies. While invoking experience as impetus and evidence for their writing is certainly a start, one that Hindman advocates, asking students to use each other's personal writings as source material may advance this step even further. Every semester, I ask my writing students to post final and process drafts of their papers on the discussion board function of our instructional technology's website. The discussion board is an online forum where students can post their papers as attachments, comment on each others' work using the internal features of this course design site and create and respond to additional posted threads. All students have access to the course page on our website and can therefore view one another's papers at will. This provides a public forum for written work so that homework assignments can include reading and commenting on peers' work, which gives students the opportunity to examine their responses to a paper assignment alongside their classmates'.

Because the discussion board is accessible to all the members of our class, it becomes an online archive of our work, not only a repository for many of our readings. This accessibility allows me to challenge students to acknowledge each other as "experts" of their experiential writings, reinforcing the view that knowledge is situated as it stems from differently positioned bodies in the world—here, bodies students know intimately from our weekly class gatherings. Because I ask students to incorporate their personal experiences as evidence in their writings, the papers on our course site not only represent an analysis of the themes and texts we are discussing in any particular unit, but they also

showcase each students' personal response to these texts, hinged to examples from their life experiences. I thereby affirm the process by which experience can be generated into situated knowledge in the writing classroom is by encouraging students to see one another's experiential narratives as source material. And, when students quote from their peers' personal-academic narratives, they validate the ways in which local knowledge can "travel" or how it can be validated as both a product of individual experience and as carrying cultural resonance.

The obvious advantage of this kind of immediate and pragmatic publication is the way it creates an audience for students' narratives beyond me, the teacher-grader. Suddenly, students can access each others' papers, and they, in turn, begin to entertain seriously the injunction that they write their papers to the class unit as an embodied audience. Peer review can, of course, provide the exigency for viewing classmates as an audience for their prose, but given the transitory nature of drafts and the limited sharing of them in the typical two-to-three person groups, I have found that students view the peer review experience as more "private" than public, a label they do not readily apply to our course website.

With the notion that their classmates will be sometimes required and always encouraged to read each others' papers, a public audience for their personal writing is put in place. As a result, students adjust their personal narratives to include the views of others and to be sensitive to the differential positioning of their classmates based on a variety of embodiments and corresponding viewpoints. I've had many students tell me that this kind of audience awareness makes them more sensitive to bald stereotyping and

prejudicial remarks in their papers since they do not want to offend their classmates. This is an obvious and powerful lesson about audience. When using peer sources in their writings, I also ask students to be responsive to the differing ideas and opinions they encounter and to examine how they might attribute the differences in their arguments to the different bodies of experiences available to each classmate. At its best, this process encourages students to develop awareness of the partiality of their own experiential knowledge as they contend with others' ideas and arguments, a staple of situated knowing practices.

Most students see the value in this process since it makes them feel they are doing “real” writing; yet, this kind of writing often presents the kind of challenge summed up in one recent student evaluation. When asked to comment on the process, a student stated that peer quoting was “more difficult than anything because my thoughts aren’t the same as others.” This is the kind of difficulty I want my students to wrestle with. Other students’ final evaluations of this process indicate the ways examining and building situated knowledge into their papers present both a learning opportunity and a challenge:

“It was nice to read papers from other students’ perspectives...this greatly added to my writing.”

“This was difficult to do at times. Going through and finding a good source was not always easy.”

“My peers always have different ideas that I can incorporate into my own papers. Their ideas also sometimes make me debate my own topic, which in turn helps me make a better argument in my paper.”

The challenges noted in these responses point to the ways students begin to entertain difference as stemming from the particular student bodies they encounter in class but too infrequently in their writing. Of course, this kind of responsibility is a characteristic of situated knowledge: ideas connected to people make students more aware of how ideas don't live disembodied from authors in ways they have likely been implicitly taught before.³² This encourages them to apply greater sensitivity to their claims, contentious or otherwise, and encourages them to develop awareness of the partiality of their experiential knowledge. Humility and responsibility go hand-in-hand. Finally, in addition to teaching them how to navigate situated knowledge claims responsibly within a community, the use of peer quoting helped students' writing processes:

“I really liked having access to peers' papers because it helped me to write my own papers by looking at examples.”

“Reading others' work was very helpful in that I could see the other directions people took the assignment.”

“It is nice to see other students writing styles. It also gives me more ideas for my own paper.”

I'd like to work through a couple of specific examples of the peer quoting process as a way of building upon how this practice encourages students to view the knowledge created in their writing as situated. As part of a class exploration of modern-day eating practices, a recent student of mine, Josh, wrote a fairly controversial paper regarding his

³² Even such rules as referring to an author via his/her last name after first reference can be seen as a tool of depersonalization and therefore a way we remove our writing from the bodies that produce and consume it.

views about the consumption of beef in America. After reading Michael Pollan's indictment of the industrial food chain in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and the lessons meant to guide our food choices toward more healthy and sustainable options in *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, this student discussed with me his desire to write a final unit paper arguing against our excessive meat-eating habits. He was intrigued by Pollan's off-hand reference to "flexitarianism" and wanted to investigate how this semi-vegetarian diet, which permits occasional meat intake, could lessen the pollution caused by Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. CAFOs contribute to global warming and spawn other detrimental environmental consequences.

In his rough draft, Josh was fairly one-sided in his approach. He worked through his personal feelings on the topic and connected his ideas about flexitarianism to the university, proposing that the Lehigh cafeteria contribute to the effort of reducing air and water pollution—pollution caused by the demand for cheap and plentiful red meat. As I asked students in the assignment to localize the ideas explored in their papers to situate them, Josh suggested that the cafeteria adopt a "meat-free" day once a week. As I do with all students writing final unit papers, I encouraged Josh to read through his classmates' early unit reflections so as to dialogue with the experiences of his fellow students throughout his paper. These early papers were responses to Pollan in the form of personal reflections on Pollan's ideas. The early reflections did not incorporate outside sources; they were to be experiential narratives based on individual eating philosophies and previous experiences with food and diet which took Pollan as a sounding board for their own ideas. After reading through his classmates' reflections and meeting with me for a set of conferences, Josh revised his paper to include a more sensitive approach to

counterarguments, recognizing that his life experiences which led him to be concerned about the environment may not be shared by all.

Josh explained in a writing blog entry about this paper that he found much value in peer quoting. He stated that reading a classmate's paper which presented the claim that an apathetic approach to eating was justified by the pleasures of ignorance helped him to think through the partiality of his initial stance. Josh said, "I think [my classmate's] paper was so great for me to read because it was a directly opposite viewpoint from mine. When I was explaining how many people know the consequences of eating certain foods, they still chose to eat those food for their immediate pleasures... This is fascinating because people (myself included sometimes) will want something so badly that even if we know we are hurting other or ourselves in the future, we still won't be deterred." Here Josh understands difference through connection—the parenthetical in which he includes himself among the opposition "sometimes." As a result, he enacts connected knowing by exploring the limits of his own situated knowledge.

Connection through significant attachments is the guiding vision here; webs are the dominant image. As such, situated knowledge can be seen as a feminist reconstruction of connected knowing.³³ First proposed by Mary Belenky and her colleagues, connected knowing is the process of joining with others through the sharing of personal and particular experiences (Belenky et al 115-119). Situated knowing is

³³ Although I tend to read Belenky et al's notion of connected knowing as less essentialist than many others have, I can see how their reliance on empathy and metaphors of care can perpetuate a *feminine* epistemology. I see Haraway taking many of their insights about connected knowing and developing them into a feminist revision. This revision accepts that judgment does not have to be a closed process which shuts down understanding but can instead be seen as a viable response—one that encourages us to be ever more critically-reflexive and resistant to closure.

connected knowing because it is a personal and embodied epistemological mode that puts the self in relation to others at the same time that it validates that self's fleshy perspective.³⁴ If we see personality as embodied identity, then situated knowers are indeed connected knowers who see "the personality of each member of the group enrich[ing] the group's understanding" so that "[e]ach individual must stretch her own vision in order to share another's vision. Through mutual stretching and sharing the group achieves a vision richer than any individual could achieve alone" (Belenky 119). This coalitional consciousness encourages the individual to be cognizant of his situatedness even when he is working toward understanding and relating his own experiences. Josh, specifically, enacts the care necessary in complicating his own situated knowledge claims and understanding others': the "care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view" (Haraway 1991, 190).

Seriously entertaining the embodied pleasures other classmates may find in red meat encouraged Josh to approach differing views as *part* of his argument, incorporating difference as opposed to ignoring it. In his final draft, Josh directly recognizes those who would disagree with him by stating, "Asking people to completely remove a certain foods [sic] from their diet, especially a good tasting food, is a big request in the eyes of many. With this said, asking people to eat [a] certain food less should be a request that is not only feasible, but realistic." And while Josh's language may still be a bit antagonistic in its directness, recognizing others' experiences becomes a frame for his paper.

³⁴ Belenky et al may not front the flesh as Haraway does, but they notably concentrate on the knower as environmentally placed. See particularly their case studies outlining women's ways of knowing (23-131). Thus, they create a fuller picture of epistemic development, reaching beyond the mere cognitive, even if their project is understood as mapping the intellect.

After he presents his case for flexitarianism, Josh directly quotes his from his peer's reflection in order to reconcile his views with those who might oppose him. Josh claims that he realizes his classmate's view is not singular, but is instead "shared by millions of Americans" and concludes that if the breadth of evidence pointing to the health detriments of diets based in meat consumption does not deter this consumption, then his argument for a reduction of meat may not be convincing either: "If the information from these new studies has not made people change their eating habits, a strong impact on the environment is not likely to make an impact in their mind of eating habits as well." But, in what I consider to be a very mature writerly move, Josh concludes that the work of the minority, where he places himself, is still valuable. He ends by claiming that it is his job to help others like his classmate to see the ways flexitarianism can be a compromise between the pleasures of eating red meat and the responsibility we must take for our eating habits. In all, Josh provides an example of the way knowledge claims in embodied writing practices are strengthened when placed in relation to others' experiences and ideas; webs are stronger than hierarchies.

Indeed, Josh's comments exemplify for me the ways student writers engaged in embodied writing can build coalitions by dialoguing with others, such as audiences and sources, to link to other knowers. They can do so by speaking with, not for, those others; dialoguing with them in responsible ways that respect material-semiotic involvements. Joining with others to put local knowledge in movement and to expand its reach is about a kind of active involvement that collapsing the personal into the representative cuts short. In sum, we can do the same kind of work with our students but send them messages that the body counts, our material as well as cultural placement matters and the

personal has political power in the real world. Without a doubt, the meetings and negotiations with different others are what gives this knowledge its power: “[l]ocal does not mean small or unable to travel” (2000, 161) Haraway reminds us.

This ability for personal knowledge to “travel” is framed by Elbow as a question of reaching an audience when he claims that personal writing is “is often more clearly attentive to an audience and its views than we see in much academic writing—where writers often slide into a glassy-eyed stance of talking to everyone but not really connecting to anyone” (Elbow “Forward” 10). Attachment matters here. If connected, coalitional knowing processes drive situated knowing, they propel embodied writing pedagogies which take these processes as foundational. For within situated knowing, the same material, en fleshed body of the individual that guarantees her epistemic potential also reminds the knower that as she is only one part of a vast material world and is located in a particular place in that world, that she must humbly accept “where s/he is not” and therefore connect with others in order to critically investigate individual, embodied experiences.

Embodied Essays are Socially-Responsible and Self-Reflective:

Because embodied writing keeps lived experience in view, it is actually more responsible than many other forms of writing. I discussed the irresponsibility of the modest rhetorics of scientific and academic discourse in previous sections, so I won’t repeat that argument here. Suffice to say, early feminist critiques in composition by women such as Tompkins have documented the ways in which divorcing academic discourse from the writing self have allowed masculinist rhetorics to take the dominant

role they have.³⁵ Both Hindman and Banks highlight the ways social-responsibility is present in their writing models. Hindman claims that her personal writing “transforms her immediate self-absorption...into an awareness of not only how [her] responses have been socially conditioned and socially perceived, but also how I as an author can intervene in that conditioning” (103). Banks uses Hindman’s notions of responsibility to promote his own when he writes that for him, personal writing should validate the truths of experience as well as the ways those experiences are read and interrupted by others (35). What both these authors implicitly state in their claims is how embodied writing is meant to be public writing, meant to have an audience larger than the self.

Both, therefore, claim the need for embodied writing to be seen as a version of personal writing that brings together the individual and the social. Hindman argues that this hybridity calls for a kind of awareness she calls “unflinching self-reflection.” Hindman characterizes embodied writing as requiring the writer to give up mastery over her prose or subject. Instead of mastery, the embodied writer must claim this kind of self-reflection which, she claims, stems not only from validating our writing bodies but also from understanding the many voices we have at our disposal when we write. Another way of framing Banks’ and Hindman’s comments about reflection and awareness is simply to note that embodied writing pays attention to relationships—between selves and others, discourse and matter, writing and bodies.

³⁵ Jane Tompkins argues against the dichotomies these rhetorics present writers in “Me and My Shadow.” She writes, “You have to pretend that epistemology, or whatever you’re writing about, has nothing to do with your life, that it’s more exalted, and more important, because it (supposedly) *transcends* the merely personal” (170).

Hindman actualizes this kind of self-reflection by incorporating her feeling body in her essay, giving it presence on the page, while also commanding the authority of her academic voice which calls upon outside research and enters into a disciplinary conversation. In order to short-circuit the distant mastery of this kind of academic voice, she blends it with a personal one that is supported by her experiences. Hindman explains that this blending was a conscious choice in her essay, stating that the sections in this essay which capture her lived voice are meant as an “interruption for effect: “I wanted to represent my internal experience of competing ideologies occupying my mind simultaneously and of trying to determine which one to privilege when and why” (102). I believe her performed example in this essay shows how embodied writing draws power from its hybridity and its refusal to allow personal writing to be narrowly contained. That is, Hindman shows that embodied writing can utilize numerous voices in order to accomplish its ends, taking what it needs from academic jargon and research as well as personal experience and worldviews rooted in lived materialities.

Another, shorter example from a female student working on the same unit paper as Josh from above demonstrates how situated knowledge formed, in part, by the process of peer quoting can enact this kind of voice-blending, allowing us to see essays as personal and critical at the same time. This student, Joanie,* argues in her paper that we must break our unquestioning trust in the food industry and actively begin to investigate from where our food comes, including its origins and conditions of production. She also demands more accountability from those who supply our food—from university cafeterias to wholesale grocery stores. Joanie therefore sides with Pollan’s impulse to

display the industrial food chain's questionable practices, such as force-feeding cows grain instead of the grass natural selection has chosen for them.

She also nevertheless recognizes how easy it is to discredit Pollan's conclusions that we should stop our disordered and fad-based eating, which permits the ignorance that motors the irresponsible production practices of the industrial food chain. Joanie makes this point by connecting to a peers' paper:

I agree with [Allison] in that Pollan's ideas about eating whole foods are just another fad like the no carbs diet or the almost exclusive protein diet (1-2). However, Pollan isn't talking about not eating a certain part of the makeup of our foods, he is talking about putting good things into our bodies to make us healthier, without the only seeming goal to be skinnier.

Allison's paper which Joanie quotes from here argues that "Michael Pollan is convincing in his argument of what society should include and leave out of their diet, but he is also just another guide to 'what not to eat.' He views society, which includes everyday people like me, as obtaining flawed eating habits. This leads the public to obsess over what to pick at each meal. He views American eating as disordered, but I see him as a major part of this disarray." Joanie goes on to claim that both she and Allison, as athletes, should be particularly concerned about the ways their eating is disordered. Allison becomes a voice for Joanie to represent the complexity of Pollan's argument as well as her own, but in blending all three voices together on an equal playing ground based on a lifetime of personal experience with food, she is able to come to a more sophisticated and sensitive conclusion than she might have otherwise. Spigelman calls this kind of juxtaposition of

personal narratives and theoretical/ professional sources a “surplus” because it represents a coming together of perspectives or different ways of knowing in order to re-see an issue from multiple perspectives (92).

The kinds of situated knowledge produced on the pages of Joanie’s paper also recursively create embodied effects in her everyday life. Joanie writes that she had been eating fast food on her way to her equestrian riding club: “I also eat at Wendy’s because it’s on the way to the barn to which I go at least four times a week because its easy and convenient. Americans are all about convenience because we live such busy and hectic lives, which feeds into the American eating disorder because what is easy and quick is processed.” Showing the ways in which situated knowledge encourages us to think about how narratives shape the interpretations of our experiences as well as how our experiences help to shape those very interpretations, Joanie concludes, “Through the process of writing and thinking about this topic I have changed my eating habits a bit. Instead of going to Wendy’s I now wait until I get to a deli that has fresh meats and bagels, which is definitely healthier than the option. Through eating healthier, whole foods I am starting to be a solution to Pollan’s eating disorder. I am making an effort to put better foods into my body to stay healthier.” But her body counts in this picture too as she adds, that even if “our taste buds need a little guidance”, “we [still] need to follow our taste buds” and not ignore them or we simply will end up repeating disordered patterns of eating that we cannot maintain, such as when we cut out a food group like carbohydrates altogether.

Using Micro-ethnographies to Produce Situated Knowledge for Student Writing:

Beyond these validations of personal writing, perhaps the strongest means we have as writing teachers to forward an epistemology of situated knowledge in our classrooms is to engage students in experiential writing projects that foreground the relationships between the personal and the cultural in ways that allow the person to stand *with* and not *for* the social. Project-based learning is experiential and reminds us that students' bodies are at stake in their learning processes. To this end, a recent class of mine followed the question of how disability and deviance are physical as well as social experiences, impacted by our bodies and language. To physically talk back to our texts, which include sections of Nancy Mairs' *Waist High in the World*, excerpts from Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller* and the film, "My Crazy, Sexy Cancer," I asked my students to complete a group "deviance" project modeled after the ABC "What Would You Do?" social experiments. These ABC experiments document everyday citizens' reactions to deviant acts in an attempt to see if passer-bys will intervene. This show has, for instance, staged what looked like an instance of fraternity-hazing and waited to see how many people attempted to call the police or otherwise act in an ethically- or civically-minded manner. My writing students tailored this experiment to the realities of their lives by completing acts that violated norms of behavior on our university's campus. This process engaged students in a physical process of inquiry-based research, animating the ideas in our texts and generating experiences they could analyze in their writing. In the same spirit, I have asked students to complete an auto-ethnography of a language community to which they belong and then to share and analyze their findings in a culminating paper and presentation. Such assignments are valuable because they engage

students in localized knowledge-making and require them to attend to extradiscursive moments of meaning.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to explore, along these lines, the auto-ethnography writing project, as it seamlessly blends the position of the embodied researcher with that of the writer. Because this project requires students to begin a knowledge-making process that reflects and analyzes a series of material experiences from within their language communities, it helps them understand their complex construction as they take shape in a cultural and social environment, but also as they mark that environment by means of their material embodiment, thereby complicating easy distinctions between the social and the personal while refusing to deny the integrity of the latter. I have taught the auto-ethnography project multiple times, but most recently I introduced it to students in a first-year writing course as a method of somatic learning which would help us connect our analysis of the role of language in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to students' embodied realities.

Their Eyes is a text that calls attention to the ways our stories of identity are dually shaped both by our physical experiences and the way we represent these experiences in the language at our disposal, the language of our communities. The novel helps my students explore this dualism because it immediately places Janie, the main character, on a porch with her friend, Pheoby, to self-narrate the details of the life experiences that have kept Janie away from her house in Eatonville, Florida for so long. The resulting conversation unfolds into the novel's narrative, which is bookended by this story-telling frame. As my students and I read the novel together, we discuss how the

material setting of the porch is crucial, since the novel represents the porch as a social space where the individual must answer to her community. Because Janie is placed on a porch to do her talking and telling, the novel affirms the communal nature of language and the ways in which our stories are never *only* our own—even if they are, in part, this too—but always also belong to our cultures; Pheoby’s presence reminds us of this as does Janie’s statement that her friend can later relate her story to the town if she wishes (Hurston 7). Framed in these ways, I lead my class to a discussion about how we are shaped by discourse communities and how we help to shape them in turn.

These conversations set the stage for the auto-ethnography writing project, which I call “Exploring ‘Porch Talk’ in Our Local Communities” when I teach it alongside *Their Eyes*. Because most students have never heard of this kind of field observation before, I shortly introduce them to ethnography as a way of doing primary research for writing, one that attends to our lived experiences. And so with my guidance, students choose to study the informal language within any of their social groups—religious, academic, or extracurricular—in order to see how language generates and enforces particular meanings among members, helping to create ideologies that shape the identities of the individuals who belong to these groups. For example, one of my students, Sam, studied the language used in her group therapy sessions on campus. These were small-group sessions in which four undergraduates, including Sam herself, and two graduate psychology students who served as group guides, worked through the stresses and dilemmas the younger students faced.³⁶ Because this project asks students like Sam to

³⁶ On my urging, Sam first asked her group if she had their permission for her study of their language use. They agreed on the terms that they would remain anonymous. While her study was particularly sensitive to

investigate the informal discourse present within their groups, it encourages them to explore how their personal speech patterns are attached to social structures, helping them complicate their notions of the private and attach it to the social and communal. Sam's analysis of her group, for instance, prompted her realization that she (along with her group's members) refer to their sessions as "group" and not "group therapy" because of the stigma attached to the word, "therapy" in our culture ("Therapy" Handout).

As ethnography both validates situated experience and affirms the position of the embodied researcher, it engages students in the process of generating situated knowledge as defined by Haraway. Ethnographies support the idea that knowledge is always connected to a knower, making it "possible to think of a cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances" including that of the writer-investigator whose voice "pervades and situates the analysis... [so that] objective, distancing rhetoric is renounced" (Clifford and Marcus 12). This is even more the case in auto-ethnography, which is characterized not by the immersion of the self in an outside community via participant-observation, but by using one's own communities to analyze the intersections of identity and culture. Auto-ethnography uses oneself as an "ethnographic exemplar" so that "[o]ne's unique voicing... is honored. In this way, the reader gains a sense of the writer as a full human being" (Gergen and Gergen 14). Auto-ethnographies are, I've found, therefore a legitimate way of helping my students see that researchers and writers do not have to evacuate their materiality in order to make substantive claims to knowledge in their writing—a view they often import with them to college because high

the privacy of those involved, all students are given the option of keeping their sources confidential. What is noteworthy is Sam's desire to "out" herself to our class by choosing her therapy group for study.

school writing rules usually forbade the use of first-person expression and experience as evidence. Because they focus on lived experience, auto-ethnographies ask students to be attentive to their bodily presence as writers, helping them to see their personal writing as connected to their materiality; here meaning quite literally is sourced from it. Students' writing "I's" correspondingly become expressions of their "full human being-ness."

By bringing their whole persons into view through these projects, my students as writing researchers are validated as personal bodies, attached to their communities and enabled by their attachments to create situated knowledge that is localized by their material positionings. As Sam documented the language of her group through a series of observations during which she fully participated as a regular member, her claim was that the language of her group therapy community was marked by a vulnerability that is usually absent from our public discourse, one that is both "scary and necessary" for "the helping environment that group therapy tries to create" ("Vulnerability" 2). Sam discussed in her paper how important their rule that "no one is to talk about group outside of group" is to the openness of expression characterized within the sessions ("Vulnerability" 2). If such talk is bound to the campus offices used for her group's meetings, the meaning-making that occurs within these therapy sessions is quite literally localized for Sam. She also remarks that the way individual bodies are situated in a small and intimate circle in group is another factor that allows speakers to risk using "feeling" language that would make them vulnerable to judgment in other material environments where such physical intimacy may be absent ("Therapy" handout). This openness is also enabled by the relative youth of everyone present in group, according to Sam, since the graduate student members are understood more as senior leaders than as "authority

figures” (“Vulnerability” 4). Sam’s analysis testifies to her group’s recasting of vulnerability as enabling among young bodies whereas in mixed groups with older bodies this vulnerability may feel disabling because of a lack of shared positionings.

Because this project also asks students like Sam to interview at least two members of their group, it affirms the partiality of their perspectives and requires them to confront the ideas raised by engaging others’ opinions and experiences. Of course, this affirms the process of situated knowledge as interested in responsible, local knowledge which, because of its self-conscious situatedness, respects different readings. Indeed, Sam encountered another way to read the vulnerability present within her group’s language as a result of what one of her interviewees said. A fellow undergraduate in group stated, “You can tell if someone needs to talk by watching how they react to a question that’s posed and paying attention to their body language” (“Vulnerability” 4). Sam told me in a conference that her interviewee’s statements made her think about an entirely new dimension of language use that hadn’t occurred to her before: body language. Sam’s receptiveness to her interviewee speaks to how situated knowledge is not the same as subjective knowledge; it recognizes multiple standpoints and not just one. By completing her project, Sam recognized that situated knowledge must accommodate a multiplicity of embodied standpoints since “differences in experiences produce differences in standpoints” (Hirschmann 320).

In exploring the body language of her group, Sam was able to not only analyze the ways communities shape our identities through language but also the ways individuals push back against this language construction. As they complete this project, I

ask students to keep in mind how bodies might rebel against the shaping power of their communities in order to help them develop a fuller understanding of situatedness. Of course, this is certainly the more difficult aspect of the project to document, but it is nevertheless worthwhile; it introduces a generative tension between students' bodies and dominant discourses—including the critical discourse I ask them to use as ethnographic writers (who must be invested in analyzing their experience). Affirming students' embodied agency to break the rules of language use and acknowledging that the parameters of the assignment may be complicated by our ongoing material lives sends the message that not all meaning can be simply transcribed through language and that agency can be construed materially as well as discursively.

Sam rose to the challenge of documenting the extralinguistic meaning embodied in her group's communications by working from her interviewee's statements and positing an explanation of body language as resisting the norms of the group's acceptance of vulnerability. One of Sam's conclusions on this topic was that "being able to read body language is an essential part of my group's 'porch talk' and group [therapy] as a whole. A member's body language can sometimes be more honest or indicative of what is going on for that person than what the member is saying" ("Therapy" handout). In the class presentation of her findings, Sam explained that she understood this claim personally, as she sometimes caught herself with arms wrapped around her midsection even as she was ostensibly claiming to be open to the opinions of her group members when they were giving her advice about how to deal with her problems. Sam's analysis of body language altered her to the ways in which her body resisted the dominant language structures of her group, namely the ones that required verbal openness and discursive tags such as a

vocabulary of emotional expressiveness to communicate a state of vulnerability shared by all members. The ways Sam used her felt knowledge of “group” to guide her analysis is a specific advantage of auto-ethnographies: because students are members of the groups they choose, they can attempt descriptions of how their own bodies resist the language norms of their communities and not only rely on others’ descriptions.

Using her feelings as a guide, Sam consciously observed the other bodies in her group and came to the conclusion that such “silent forms of communication [such as] someone biting their nails, picking at their shirt, or darting their eyes” show nonverbal “resistance to the advice” of others (“Vulnerability” 6). These ideas productively complicated Sam’s original claims about the open environment of the group by adding to it an embodied response that, at times, contradicted the language rule in her group that demanded members be open to the giving and sharing of advice without feeling judged (“Vulnerability” 6). Sam’s process of making meaning from her experiences and then adding complexity to this meaning by dialoguing with others differentially situated within her group not only fulfilled the assignment to document the shaping powers of her language community but also engaged her in a process of situated knowledge that affirmed her body’s agency in the meaning-making process and asserted her situated, social positionings as well as the epistemic power of her embodiment. The situated knowledge produced by students like Sam in their auto-ethnography writing projects highlights the ways materiality and discursivity are tangled in our webs of meaning, making it impossible and particularly senseless to separate them. Such projects thereby create a writing epistemology that sees meaning as equally embedded in the organic body as in culture, or as situated in both material and semiotic worlds.

Teaching students to think critically about their embodied experiences typically presents a challenge. In embodied writing pedagogies, this is a challenge that can be met at both the material and discursive levels through the lens of situated knowledge. Situated knowledge can be used to develop embodied pedagogies of writing to make them not only more theoretically sound but also more pedagogically generative when enacted in the classroom. Situated knowledge as an epistemology becomes a way to rethink our current writing approaches and situated knowing as the connected practice of generating meaning can help us to work toward changed writing practices—ones that recognize fully students’ agentive embodiment as writers and the material weight of their experiences. As it rejects traditional modes of detachment relates the material and discursive at the level of meaning and enact it at the level of our personal bodies, situated knowledge is what gets made on the page and in the classroom when we engage in embodied writing and teaching practices.

The process of reflection within situated knowing also maintains connections between thinking and feeling. Situated, connected knowers integrate personal knowledge with knowledge from others and weave together reason and emotion, using the insertion of the self in knowledge production as a way to generate reflection and analysis. As a result of the complexity of this localized process of making knowledge, connected knowers have a high tolerance for openness and ambiguity (Belenky 137). This is why situated knowers are after “resonance” and not hierarchy. Viewing situated knowledge through the lens of connected knowing allows us to see how it is both a process of situated knowing as well as situated feeling. This means we must begin to recognize the critical power of our feelings as they are a part of the knowledge we make and record our

writing provides of this. I will turn to the ways embodied writing suggests the futility of divorcing situated thinking and feeling in chapter three: heart.

INTERCHAPTER TWO:

“Your practice is your laboratory” –BKS Iyengar, Light on Life

“In the beginning, there is no substitute for sweat” –BKS Iyengar, Light on Life

“Yoga in English? What?”: Using Yoga to Embody the Writing Process

I take a hard look in the mirror, noting my yoga pants and sneakers. As someone who prefers to dress business casual for teaching, this outfit is a deviation that feels both exciting because it’s freeingly comfortable and a bit scary. I chose these casual-fitted yoga pants carefully, avoiding the skin-tight pair I regularly wear to my own yoga class for easy movement and assessment of alignment. That those tight pants finally claimed a space in my closet is just one indication of how far I’d come in letting go of my body self-consciousness. As a yogi, I understand these actions of giving myself over to my practice—worrying less about others’ perceptions of my body and more about my own sense of embodiment—as a sign of growth. As a writing teacher-cum-yogi about to bring these two worlds together, however, I proceed with measure. I move my arms up and down to make sure my top stays in place. I plan to complete today’s yoga practice with my first-year writing students and don’t relish the idea of them seeing unveiled any part of my body that would be normally clothed. Abandoning body self-consciousness is, I have found, a very slow process. Before I can turn away from my reflection, fear over what I see flashes across my flesh. I wonder if after today’s practice my students will be reminded of what I could never hide but for years tried to ignore in the classroom: my own young, female body. I only have about a decade on most of my students as a

neophyte scholar, and I worry that acknowledgement of my flesh could disrupt my “teacherly” authority, sending the class on a collision course toward chaos. Of course as a yogi, I realize this is unlikely and desire to push through this learned fear until it is a distant memory. This is one of the reasons I have recently embraced embodied writing pedagogy, drawn to its positive body hermeneutic. But, I still can’t keep the old, learned panic from nipping at me.

My students filter into the dance studio of the campus gym slowly. Most have taken my injunction to wear loose-fitting, comfortable “workout” clothes seriously. Two male students, perhaps to suggest their lack of enthusiasm, come in jeans and t-shirts. Everyone looks around nervously, spotting the huge stack of folded blankets on the side of the room, blankets my yoga teacher, Holly, and I and her two assistants lugged up in huge, black trash bags to the third floor. In the nervous energy that accumulated before my students showed up for class, I neatly folded those trash bags and placed them in a pile behind the blankets; the challenge of folding plastic was a welcome distraction. As for the blankets themselves, Holly was adamant that we provide props for my students so as to better accommodate the restorative poses with which we’d start and end class. Indeed, if she’d had her way, we would have moved the bricks and straps from her studio across town to the campus gym as well. This is a feature of the kind of yoga we’d be doing today; Iyengar yoga can accommodate a range of students’ needs and flexibilities by modifying poses using such props. Among other reasons, it is such adaptability that makes this Hatha approach a friendly one for the writing classroom.

Today was the day all our joint planning would hopefully pay off, and Holly and I were committed to giving my students a taste of “real” yoga even as we strived for a structure that wouldn’t be intimidating and that would seem to fit organically into the overall goals of my writing class. My writing students were prepared for today’s “yoga for writers” lab from the day they stepped foot in my course; they knew that their body blogs and our exploration of the physical demands of the writing process would eventually bring us to this day of practicing yoga together as a class. After exploring the importance of our writing bodies for the first quarter of the semester, we would finally be learning yoga so we could experiment with integrating *asanas*, or poses, in our composing processes from this point on. Today, we would be led by a certified instructor, my own yoga teacher, who generously offered to teach my writing class a series of yoga poses we chose together, carefully sequenced and dubbed a “yoga for writers” practice.

By my eyes and their own accounts, which I would read later in their blogs, my students seemed wary as they entered the room. They immediately took in the presence of Holly and her assistants—one male and one female. I hoped the male assistant served as an important reminder for my male students, especially the jean-clad ones, that yoga isn’t “girly” or inherently emasculating. Since young men at my university tend to approach yoga as a form of women’s exercise, I’d previously mentioned that the yoga classes I take right outside of the university’s bounds are populated with just as many male yogis as females and talked about how professional football stars were using yoga as a way to develop body awareness, strength and flexibility. My students and I had eventually come together over the irony that a practice dominated by men in India is so

differently characterized by American youth culture. Noting the assistants, students looked back to me for reassurance as if to say, “I guess we really are doing yoga in our class today.” I smile hopefully at them.

My students look apprehensive, but I believe myself to be the most nervous person in the room. I worry that despite my attempts to prepare them and funnel our class toward this very moment, they will not discover even a degree of embodied awareness today. If they can't make the connections between yoga and writing on their own and through their bodies, I can only pray they won't write me off along with our practice. What if they start to view me as some crazy new-age hippie wasting their time? How can I finish the semester without incident if they no longer respect me or my authority as their composition instructor? An anxious teacher isn't the most convincing, however, so I try to swallow my nerves and smile confidently as they enter the room. One by one, they look to me for reassurance, and I find myself nodding and telling them to take off their shoes and grab a blanket, trying to draw strength from routine. This is, after all, how Holly has run all of her yoga classes and has been my routine as a student of hers.

I hoped that our mindful preparation and organization as well as Holly's evident and serious passion for yoga would help students leave behind prior judgment and mediate their trepidations with a sense of adventure. Holly has a no-nonsense approach tempered by genuine friendliness and a desire to share her practice with others that is infectious and that I am sure will keep my students on task and prevent goofing off. Holly began by asking students how they were feeling, noting that many looked exhausted. I wouldn't normally ask students how tired they are, unless I am faced with a sea of

unresponsive faces and little involvement, so this question surprised me for a moment. Even if I did allow my students to acknowledge their exhaustion, I wouldn't necessarily think to give them a moment to reconnect and revive themselves for the tasks that lie ahead during our class time together. But, this is how Holly started. As my students explained their hectic weeks of athletic practices, late nights studying for tests in the library and writing papers, I began to notice just how much weariness they wore on their faces and the exhaustion with which they seemed to carry their bodies. I couldn't help but wonder how many times in previous classes I'd misread exhaustion for disengagement.

Holly promised that our practice would help with their exhaustion. Already being listened to, they responded in turn and took Holly's instruction to fold up their blankets and to copy her modeling of the first pose, *savasana*, which she showed them by lying on the floor.³⁷ To encourage students' energetic involvement and their full presence during our practice of the poses or *asanas*, we started students in this restorative pose, which is meant to calm the mind and quiet the body. If their responses to Holly's first question were an appropriate gauge, my students were in great need of momentary rest and a stilling of their consciousnesses.



Savasana

³⁷ While a few poses will be discussed and sometimes visually represented within my text, many more will be only alluded to or omitted altogether for the sake of my narrative. I direct my reader to the appendix following this interchapter for a copy of the handout we gave students after their first "yoga for writers" lab. While this handout does not include all the poses students learned in successive labs, it does represent the basic poses we used to create a foundation of yoga for students' writing practice.

Students relaxed into *savasana* with a blanket folded beneath and between their shoulder blades to help open up their chests. In yoga, chest openers are not only meant to be physically restorative, as a way to counter the rounded shoulders cultivated by too many hours in front of the computer or sitting in chairs with poor posture, but are also thought to open up the heart and mind to new ideas. Because yoga sees the metaphoric and physical as interconnected, it is understood that as we open up physically, we are less likely to make snap judgments and are more likely to approach ourselves and others with balance and compassion or non-violence, called *ahimsa*. Of course, on a literal level such balance and openness are important for my students, many of whom never practiced yoga before and would have to be patient with their tight bodies; they would have to let go of debilitating judgments if they found their peers to be more limber than themselves, for instance. Further, on an imaginative level, I hoped students would be influenced by this opening pose to give our practice a fair chance and not immediately judge it as a poor use for a class meeting. Happily, students' sighs as they settled into this pose were a testament to the relief they felt at being given a chance to relax before asked to exert themselves once more for a teacher's demands.

Moving them into an easy, seated, cross-legged pose from *savasana*, we asked students to set an intention or *sankulpa* for their practice, noting that this intention was to guide and give meaning to their movements. We explained that this was like having a goal when writing a paper or a general idea of a topic to be explored. Intentions remind students to listen to their bodies as they move them in new and different ways, promoting focus and giving them a feeling of purpose to take into their practice of yoga—or writing.

Setting an intention is a conscious way to bridge the mind and body's intelligence and can help students learn to connect feelings and thoughts, increasing awareness of both. Drawing inward for a moment consequently helps develop self-reflection and increase flexibility. This practice of reconnecting with ourselves is understood to give measure to our actions, teaching us that we can control our response to stimuli by listening to our bodies and using our energy productively and not for unthinkingly reacting to everything that comes our way. This is a habit we would later use to support curiosity and engagement when thinking about how to integrate outside sources and differing perspectives in our writing.

To move focus toward self-awareness, we coached students through a process of *pratyahara*, or a slow releasing of tension from the body and consequent withdrawal of the sense organs. We chose to include these practices in order to help students develop a relationship with their bodies that would continue throughout our practice, and later, into their writing. The goal of *pratyahara* is not to ignore everything or to tune it out but to develop calm awareness and concentration in the midst of a distracting world. And because yoga views the body as a mediation point between inner and outer, yoked as we are to other bodies and a material world, drawing inward simultaneously reminds us of the other bodies to which we are connected and creates a felt community between practitioners.

Before I can think much about what my intention today should be, one rises to the surface of my consciousness: I must let go and simply enjoy this experience. I want my being and doing to merge in this intention so that I can find strength (despite my initial

nervousness) and clarity, which I will need in order to know how to bring this practice “home” to our regular classroom meetings after today. As I set this intention, I feel it arise from my heart and permeate my whole body. When I practice yoga, I like to think of my intentions as beams of light that reach to the tips of my toes and fingers so that every cell of my being can find a unity of purpose in the movements to come. Today is no different. As I imagine these beams of light warming me and spreading from my inner body to my outer body, I remember that it is this cultivation of strength from awareness and patience that drew me to yoga in the first place.

Students then worked on steadying their breath, engaging in *pranayama*, or breath awareness. To keep things simple, Holly asked them to match their outbreaths and inbreaths so as to even them out, bringing peace and promoting focus for the practice to follow. A basic tenant of yoga is that the breath impacts the mind so while Iyengar yoga approaches *pranayama* as a skill of its own right, a separate limb of the eight-fold path of yoga for which each is to be developed slowly and carefully, basic applications of attentive breathing are incorporated from the beginning of *asana* practice. Awareness of the breath is a hinge on which *asanas* turn. When our breathing is even, our thoughts and our actions can be balanced and directed.

With my eyes closed, I breathe slowly, feeling my in-breaths calm me. I hear my out-breaths mingle with my students’. At this moment, I remember why I told Holly I wanted to practice with my class instead of directing from up front with her or watching from the sidelines. Not only do I want to help model the poses for my students, I also want to testify through my own bodily actions that I am part of our felt community and not an

outsider, directing and watching without participating. And while I stand in the back of the room to keep focus on my students, I hope that our movements together will establish a solidarity and commonality of purpose that will flourish during the remainder of the semester. I hope that we will grow into a contemplative writing community together. For now, I feel I have achieved a moment of connection to my students; here, I am with them in ways traditional class structures often make impossible.



Habits of Yoga Minds and Writing Bodies:

The recently-released “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” identifies eight “habits of mind” integral for college writing students. This report represents a joint effort of both secondary and postsecondary educators to examine what skills, attitudes, behaviors and experiences all students need in order to assume a level of “college readiness” prior to their pursuit of higher education and to determine what they’ll need in order to exhibit learning excellence once enrolled in college. The habits listed are: curiosity; openness; engagement; creativity; persistence; responsibility; flexibility; and metacognition. In addition to knowing rhetorical skills and how to apply them, the Framework establishes these habits of mind as necessary for encouraging students to take an active role in their learning and fostering the kinds of critical thinking that will help them excel as not only as writers but also as college-level learners and literate citizens. By prioritizing habits over discrete skills, this document argues against formulaic or rigidly standardized writing curricula; these habits are necessarily learned

through assignments that engage students in writing for real-world audiences with genuine and not purely assessment-related goals in mind. While rhetorical skills are necessary, the authors of the report suggest, they cannot be successfully developed and deployed by students who are not simultaneously encouraged to develop certain methods of approaching the learning and writing processes. Ways of thinking about writing become just as important as the means of actually doing writing.

This report was released as I was working through an analysis of my students' writing blogs. These weren't just any blogs; they were from the two first-year classes that I asked to participate in yoga labs, like the one I narrate in my opening. My problem wasn't a lack of data; in fact, I had too much, too many testimonials from students who credited the process of using yoga to change the ways they completed writing tasks and thought about the writing process. It felt great to read laudatory comments from students like, "I really wish that everyone got to experience this [method of writing using yoga], because I think it's such a valuable tool." I was left wondering how to transmit the kind of excitement and transformation that lie behind these words to paper for a professional audience I guessed would not share the experience of using yoga together with the writing process. Yet, when I read the Framework, I was struck by the congruity between the goals outlined in it and the reflective remarks my students made about what they learned by using yoga for their writing. Looking at both what writing teachers say we want—at least as represented within this recent document—and what students say they have learned in my classes through their reflective writings *about* writing, I knew that one useful way to work through the hundreds of blogs I had collected would be to show

how an integrated practice of yoga and writing could help sustain and foster the habits set forth in the Framework.

The advantages of putting a well-researched, field document that represents the collective wisdom of composition studies in dialogue with my own and my students' experience of using yoga to rethink the writing process are many, but the one I am the most interested in within these pages is how new pedagogies, such as contemplative, embodied writing pedagogies, can help us reach our goals while encouraging us to examine the means we use to accomplish certain educational ends. I want to suggest that not only does an embodied approach to the writing process using yoga help students develop the habits forwarded by the Framework, but that it uses means that develop them as habits of mind *and* body, penetrating students' lives at a deeper level and giving them a foundation for approaching their educations contemplatively and their writing mindfully. These two words are never used directly in the Framework, but they still penetrate its implicit call for an education that *means* something to students and teaches them to live more attentively in the world, which they can do to a greater degree when they are in the habit of seeing themselves holistically as body-heart-minds.

Curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility and metacognition are all results of engaging students in the embodied writing pedagogy I've been practicing, one that uses yoga throughout the process of writing. Because approaching the composing process through yoga necessarily involves students in a novel process of inquiry that has them asking creative questions about the physicality of the writing and meaning-making process, it piques students' curiosity about how writing

works, what it can do and also about different, culturally-contingent ways of knowing. In thinking about how their bodies shape the writing process and written product, students confront the Western conception of knowledge as removed from the body and complicate this with Eastern concepts of the body-mind exemplified by our practice of yoga, helping them open up to new ways of thinking and being in the world, especially those that are less dualistic. As students notice how simple things like posture affect the meaning they create in their papers, they begin to wonder how knowledge is impacted by even larger material and social factors, so much so that one student of mine developed a theory of situated composing he later reduced to a personal mantra of “where I write is what I write.”

Understanding knowledge as situated helps students flexibly adapt to context, genre and audience and recognize the value in certain writing conventions which can help to foster communication over and through a myriad of differences. Practically, students also learn work with their own embodied differences as writers, figuring out how and when to integrate yoga techniques and exercises in their writing process in order to become more persistent, focused writers who can sustain interest. Sustained interest, students learn, is partly accomplished by learning to be responsible to both their writing bodies and minds, which cannot be easily accomplished in all-nighters that produce a first-and-last draft paper. From a yogic perspective, these lessons of navigating our inner worlds translate to exterior applications so that as students become responsible to their own bodies, they extend this responsibility to other material beings by virtue of their connectedness to them. In the writing classroom, this application starts with students’ classmates. All these efforts represent a new way of thinking about the writing process as

well as a new method of doing writing that includes attention to the body. These changes, finally, encourage students to entertain a level of metacognition about their writing that may otherwise be absent or at least not enthusiastically exercised in classrooms where the reflective stakes are much lower simply because students are allowed to remain within their learning comfort zones. In other words, embodied writing pedagogies that utilize yoga encourage authors reflect on themselves as writing bodies, experience the writing process as physically demanding and recognize the writing product as materially saturated. With these habits of mind and body cultivated and enacted, students in these classes become embodied imaginers.

While I could go into great detail about how each of these eight habits of mind are developed and strengthened by bringing yoga into the writing classroom, I'd like to focus the three that are especially illustrative: openness, persistence and metacognition. These three largely encapsulate the others. Many would agree that anyone open to the learning process would have to maintain a strong sense of curiosity and eagerness to explore new ideas, for instance. The Framework defines *openness* as a "willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world," or a responsiveness to differing and alternate perspectives, using these to inform our own; *persistence* as "the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects," or the ability to follow-through with tasks by applying focus and developing attentiveness; and *metacognition* as "the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge," or the ability to examine the writing process and how it structures knowledge and the contextual merits of personal and/or substantiated

evidence (5). I will use these three habits to examine students' responses about how using yoga to help them become more mindful writers.

Habits of Thinking and Being: Openness

Perhaps the most obvious benefit to our integrated practice of yoga and writing is how it establishes a classroom atmosphere of openness to various ways of thinking and being in the world at large, beyond that with which students may feel the most comfortable, because it is common and known. "Yoga for writers" labs are not standard fare in a first-year writing class at my university and probably not at too many others. Introducing my writing students to yoga is so different, in fact, that they have a hard time piecing it into the learning puzzle of college. So while my students are encouraged to open up the ways they think about writing and practice it, none of their friends or roommates are going through the same experiences in their composition classes, marking my class as the oddball out. When they talk about our class, what can students say to make others understand?

Despite difficulties, I have continued to use these labs and have taken even more steps to better integrate yoga and writing in my classes by bringing in a practice of *pranayama* to start our sessions, for instance. I have not simply charged onward as a pedagogue committed to embodied writing who has found an integrated approach to yoga and writing theoretically-fulfilling; yoga has become a means of literally embodying the writing process and teaching students to think of themselves as writing bodies. As much as I love theory, my classrooms recursively inform the theoretical side of my pedagogy just as much as the reverse is true. I've continued to mark myself and my classes in these

ways because as a teacher, I have found this integrated approach so meaningful to students that they practice yoga everywhere they write, even in between the library stacks—close to the cubbies in the library at which they type their drafts on laptops—defying social codes for the sake of a better writing process. I’ve simply never had students take so many learning risks nor reap so much understanding about the writing process before. If my students remain willing to do yoga in the library, I am committed to keeping this pedagogical practice accessible to them.

My students’ appreciation of yoga is not immediate, however; their openness to a new writing experience is limited by the immediate academic demands (“Will this get me an A?”) and social pressures they face (“Will this make me look stupid?”). Because I respect *this and want them to know I respect this*, I make it a point to tell students of our intentions from the very first day of class. I explain that I am interested in what changes when we think of the writing process as making both physical and mental demands on us and how we might construct a writing life³⁸ that connects the writing process to our persons as wholes and not just our need to fill pages for assignments. I talk to them about how yoga is being used in K-12 classes and teacher-training programs. I also discuss with them the ways mindfulness-based stress reduction has proven to help students learn better and feel less stressed by the incredibly high demands of college life and academics. These are issues they relate to because they’ve been forewarned of these demands and begin to feel them from the moment they begin their college careers. Even so, I invite

³⁸ I borrow and tweak Wendy Bishop’s notion of a teaching life and for use in my classes. I’ve found that this notion of a writing life helps students classify the novel approaches to writing they encounter in my class. And because it is rather open to interpretation from the start, this term allows students to define what a writing life means to them, giving them a stake in the learning process.

them to come talk to me about their reservations and/ or excitement and ask them to bring me questions or concerns immediately. While our yoga practice will be optional, I tell them I'm going to encourage them to try it, to take a risk with the hopes that it will pay off big for their growth as writers. By the end of the semester, most will have participated and most will agree that it was a worthwhile risk. Taking risks is an essential element of developing an open-minded approach to learning, of course.

Before we do yoga, then, we talk about it a lot and connect it to a larger discussion about the writing process as a physical process of creating meaning. This gives us a reason to investigate writing as a topic unto itself in our classroom, keeping us grounded in that even as we may explore additional theme-based topics for our units. Thinking about the writing process as physically-demanding is new for students, as I explored in my first interchapter. So together, we work through what writing has meant to us, how we've approached the process, and how we've often ignored our physical writing habits. We begin to pay more attention to those. Do we listen to music when we write? Should we? What are the benefits of sitting up straight or writing in lounge chairs or desk chairs or on beds versus at desks? How do our physical locations impact what we write about or how we write? These are all questions my students first grapple with as they learn to pay attention to their writing bodies.

Students note in their blogs find that this attention to their bodies isn't a waste of time; rather, attending to themselves as writing bodies helps them enjoy their drafting sessions more and produce better papers as a result: "Being aware of my body helped during the writing process because when I felt tired and sore from working and writing, I

knew to take a break”, says one of my students, Sasha, in a blog entry. Breaks, instead of becoming a waste of time, become a necessary part *of* rather than deviation *from* the writing process when my students attend to their writing bodies. This recognition isn’t trivial. With this attention comes a healthy dose of respect for how the body shapes the results of our writing sessions, or our writing products themselves. Sasha continues, “[i]f I try and overpower my body and complete too much in one session, I end up with poorly written paper that looks like it was written in a hurry. I am also a lot less creative when my mind and body are tired and need a break.” Seeing breaks as a necessary part of a writing process that respects the ways both the body and mind shape meaning encourages students to approach writing *as* a process, giving them a fresh reason to curtail their typical procrastination, which tends to put unreasonable demands on their bodies.

Sasha, the student I’ve been quoting, details in a later blog that knowing she needed to take many breaks during the writing process in order to respect her body and thereby maintain her creativity and thoroughness helped give her a reason to start writing drafts earlier. She claims that while she always knew procrastination wasn’t what you were “supposed” to do, there was previously something practical about waiting for the surge of energy she got when writing a paper at the last minute; even if it was confused and disorganized, the paper would get done. But developing a corporeal orientation to the writing process shifted her understanding of the effectiveness of this method so that a paper “done well” began to mean more than simply “done” to her. Instead of being quickly written the night before, this student notes that a recent paper for our class “took many different writing and brainstorming sessions to complete as well as two conferences

and peer review.” For this student, being an embodied imaginer means slowing down and listening to her writing body—an impulse opposite from her typical tendency to procrastinate.

This impulse of mindfulness, of slowing down and paying attention, is characteristic of a pedagogy that includes fostering contemplative awareness, like embodied writing pedagogy. Contemplative acts increase the strength of executive control processes such that students who engage in them are more likely to appreciate delayed gratification such as the benefits of rewriting a paper many times, which may reap rewards including more confidence in writing abilities and a higher grade (Roeser and Peck 129). These delayed rewards begin to seem more attractive rather than the instant gratification of procrastination, as we see with Sasha. Research has shown that with continued focus on contemplative awareness this self-regulatory “capacity to inhibit the dominant response tendency is associated with both social-emotional (e.g., better stress management) and academic (e.g., higher SAT scores) benefits” (Roeser and Peck 129).³⁹ In other words, by mindfully attending to her writing self as a whole, a staple of the contemplative arts, Sasha exhibits the ability to change her habitual response to the writing process and open herself to new patterns. And as her mindset becomes open to the process of development and drafting and less closed by the anxiety that fosters her procrastination, Sasha benefits. Overriding her habitual responses by listening to her body not only makes the writing process more enjoyable, less stressful and therefore more accessible on a day-to-day

³⁹ In my research, I am more interested in tracking students’ changing views of the writing process and examining their metacognitive reflections of writing than on the products they produce or on other static demonstrables such as grades. As research on assessment shows, students’ own perceptions of the writing process are better measures of their learning than are exit exams or other product-based measures.

basis, but it also helps my student write more imaginatively and carefully, factors that will make her drafts more persuasive which could (and did) lead to earning higher grades. Extending the amount of time she works to draft her essays also increases her ability to entertain new ideas as her drafts grow and incorporate her peers' ideas and challenges to her thinking brought on by conferences, as her remarks indicate. This ability to listen and respond to others is part of what constituted openness as defined by the Framework.

To expand these beginning insights of writing as a bodily process which started with student speculation on their personal writing habits, we also read articles that acknowledged the importance of incorporating embodied experience as evidence into our writing, a common feature of the product of embodied writing. For example, we read Linda Brodkey's "Writing on the Bias" to talk about how our writing is "biased" by our experiences and ideas even when we don't use the word, "I", directly. Brodkey becomes a way for students to understand the basics of situated knowledge, or the ways their social and material locatedness shapes the meaning they write themselves to. She also helps me frame these lessons for transfer, so students understand that what they are learning in my classroom are lessons about the situatedness of knowledge claims and, therefore, of writing. They begin to understand that there is something fundamental about these ways of thinking about knowledge in all their classes across the many discourse communities they must join as students—even if stylistic functions of writing (as a means to build knowledge) acceptable in my class are not similarly so in their science or engineering classes. Putting Brodkey in play with our own quest to unveil the physical aspects of writing helps them see how the body becomes a marker for the personal in their writings.

Because they've often questioned the ability to gain authority in their writing by simply leaving out personal markers like, "in my opinion" or first-person pronouns, generally, my students relate to Brodkey:

Brodkey wants her reader to see that...sometimes the rules [of academic writing] need to be broken. I began to think about how much this was true, that it is important to deviate sometimes in order to explore new terrain to not only be successful in writing but in other aspects of life as well...I have had a very successful golfing career because I broke some of the rules, tried new things, and was able to learn from them—and this [risk-taking] was the main reason in my growing as a writer this semester. ("Terrain" 2)

The personal and the body collide and mingle in this response. Students, as this example shows, begin to apply their knowledge of other body skills to the writing process, giving them a store of information based on the physical skills they import into my class, like golf. When put into embodied dialogue with what they know and love, suddenly writing becomes a physical process much like their other activities, allowing this student, in particular, to apply the lessons of risk-taking she originally learned on the green to her writing process and the meaning it generates. The degree to which this kind of transfer makes writing more accessible for our students cannot be overstated. Either can the ways my student insists on developing a habit of taking risks because of this transfer, which opens her up for failure but also for greater success.

To advance these insights, we read articles by Nancy Sommers on how writing can happen while “standing,” away from the computer,⁴⁰ while cooking or completing other daily tasks. Writing doesn’t just move us, it moves, my students learn as they open and expand their definitions of the writing process to include the body. These articles make writing seem real to my students because they help demystify the process. The myth of sitting down to a computer allowing words to spill out from the fountain of genius is challenged, and students seem relieved. Despite the fact that the myth has never been the reality of their writing experiences to date, they often import these fantastical views of writing to my class. Ann Lamott’s “Shitty First Drafts” helps to break this stereotype too. And, Natalie Goldberg’s discussion of freewriting as a way to get your body to convince your mind to generate ideas helps students realize they don’t have to wait for their minds to do the leading; that their bodies can help them reach their writing goals too. We also read an anthologized article, “Multitasking Mind” which suggests that college teachers must help students learn to overcome the multitasking minds they’ve had no choice but to develop in our technologically-demanding world. The article looks for possible tools to achieve a transformation of mindless students into mindful ones and ends with the idea that bringing in a yoga teacher to our classrooms might be a good place to start. I tell my students that is exactly what we are going to do, of course. By this time, students are generally persuaded and ready to experiment with yoga—even if they are still nervous.

Usually, there are two primary responses to this nervousness about our upcoming practice of yoga. First, there is a group of students who still feel a bit apprehensive about

⁴⁰ Sommers’ essay is an echo of Tillie Olsen’s “I Stand Here Ironing” as both seek to reflect on the nature of mother-child relationships. In Sommers’ case, the “child” is her writing, certainly an embodied conception.

using a yoga sequence to help develop their skills as writers, even if they are catching on to the idea of embodied writing. Jimmy represented this reaction in a blog post.

Explaining that he discussed our intended and upcoming use of yoga for writing with his friends, Jimmy said that he still found it “a little unusual that we would do yoga in an English class, and everyone I told was like, “Yoga in English? What?” The incredulity represented here is usually a result of students’ ignorance about contemplative practices and their general uneasiness, as teenagers, to do anything that seems “weird” or out of the ordinary. Important to his testimony is Jimmy’s record of sharing our upcoming yoga practice with friends outside the course. Because there is no contemplative educational community outside the bounds of our class at my university, Jimmy’s peers have no way of understanding our mission and only Jimmy, for whom the process is new and relatively untested, can explain. For the benefit of students like Jimmy, I tell my students that our yoga practice will be a common language for us to share about the physicality of writing and the ways we create meaning through it. In the best case scenario, we will become a more reflective and receptive community of learners precisely because of our involvement in contemplative practices and the ways our openness to new methods of writing bonds us. Indeed, “practice of yoga...together as a school community may engender effects on felt belonging and felt membership that facilitate students’ motivation, learning, and achievement in school” (Roeser and Peck 130). This sense of belonging, normally so transient and hard to predict in any one classroom, is one of the many benefits of integrating contemplative disciplines into our own.

The other reaction I most commonly receive is excitement, although not necessarily for the yoga practice itself. In many cases, my students are excited for a simple break

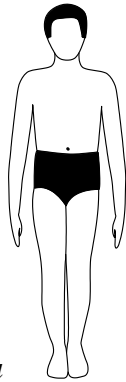
from standard, college class routine. The fact that we won't be having a traditional class and will be doing something out of the ordinary is thrilling to students who show up to hear classmates' and teachers go through the same motions day after day. Sharing in this spirit, a student remarked, "My first day of class I was told that we were going to be doing yoga to help us with the writing process. 'YOGA?!' I thought. I guess so, why not try something new? After all, college is about new experiences and adventures" ("Terrain" 2). Because this craving for something new is rarely captured in our normal classroom activities, it can lend new excitement for learning and passion for writing within our students. Aside from benign skepticism or interest in a new adventure, every semester there remains a handful of students who have practiced yoga on their own and are seriously interested in our integration of yoga and writing because of their appreciation for this contemplative practice. These students often note how their bodies crave movement, even or especially when learning: "I always move my legs. I have a hard time learning, listening to anything if I'm not moving. I learned to read while spinning in a circle. It just helps me." I've found this last group of students to be in the minority, even if they are also the fastest-growing segment in my classes. Every semester I see more students who've voluntarily practiced yoga, sometimes inside and often outside of the classroom, prior to their experiences in my course. These students help to sway some of the more resistant simply by their positive presence and willingness to bring these two worlds together.

Despite initial apprehension, many students develop an embodied understanding of yoga after practicing it. For instance, one student responded that after class, "explaining [to inquiring friends] the reasons why we did yoga actually opened my eyes

to the connection my professor was trying to make between the body, mind, and writing. Yoga required physical flexibility and strength....Writing is somewhat the same way...One can't get frustrated with how their first draft ends or how there are minor errors throughout the writing process.” This student’s comment mirrors research that learning new skills is best prompted by the adoption of learning mindset geared toward openness, which can minimize the negative effect of stress and enhance feelings of calm by regulating negative emotions (Roeser and Peck 129). Other responses included: “[Yoga] does fit in with the rest of the classes so far. Yoga is about being in the moment, which is what you have to do when you write. If your body is loose but awake, your mind will be too...Yoga can help us write because it helps us focus our mind and body on the task at hand.” Unity of body and mind as well as newfound applications of focus are common themes among students’ reactions at this point.

Students in these comments are alluding to the ways our “yoga for writers” practice encouraged them to listen to their bodies and see them as sources of learning and meaning. In other words, these students implicitly state how yoga can promote self-monitoring during the writing process which can be used to better process new information. In their article on the advantages of adopting contemplative educational practices in traditional learning settings, Robert Roeser and Stephen Peck argue that these practices cultivate conscious awareness of the self within an ethical-relational context. They specifically acknowledge how practices like yoga and meditation help students develop skills of self-monitoring which can help them stabilize new information in memory and can promote the “complexity, coherence, and clarity of students’ developing subject-matter knowledge” (Roeser and Peck 129). My students link the lessons of self-

monitoring to the writing process through the yoga poses we teach them. For instance, *tadasana*, the first standing pose Holly and I taught as part of the “yoga for writers” required students to stand straight with their shoulder blades pressed into the back and widened in order to sink their shoulders and create space in their back-body.



Tadasana

This pose amazed students because it was as simple as standing up straight, but in ways that made them aware of how difficult such a simple action can be when done with awareness of the body. When they concentrated on their bodies in this pose, students discovered that they shifted their weight between their feet and swayed with the movement of standing, something they hadn't noticed before. Holly encouraged them to accept this movement as normal but to take it as a reminder of how important it is to attend to one's body in yoga and in writing, for without attention to this movement, we cannot learn which side we favor and cannot begin to compensate in order to balance ourselves. These corrective actions are less about dominance over the body, which could lead to injury in yoga, and more about working *with* the body, understanding it in order to make adjustments that entail a working together of flesh and brain. These ideas are reflected in the student responses above.

This example from our “yoga for writers” practice also shows how yoga teaches writers self-compassion, which is a quality upon which the contemplative arts are built. In their article, Roeser and Peck also argue that teaching students to exercise self-compassion helps them “take a kind, non-judgmental, and understanding attitude toward [themselves] in instances of pain or difficulty rather than being self-critical” (Roeser and Peck 129). Given that so many of my students describe the writing process as painful and that we often use dissonance to talk about learning, such an attitude is essential in our composition classrooms. In our yoga labs, students learn that mindful awareness of how the body sways despite our best attempts to stand up straight with balance means that stability isn’t a fixed quality and that we must be plastic in our approach to strength. Students can translate this to the writing process as a lesson in working with their bodies rather than overpowering them. From there, it is a short leap to also accept the fluctuations of the world and our environments in our writing habits so that incorporating “sway” as opposed to rigidly sticking to one idea to the utter exclusion of other points of view is not a sign of failure. The embodied lessons of one pose like *Tadasana* serve as a living metaphor for how our yoga practice can serve us as writers, reminding my students to approach their bodies and other bodies with openness, listening to all sides before hastily making a movement in their writing.

Two additional benefits of self-compassion include greater feelings of confidence and competence among student writers and an increased, intrinsic desire for growth and improvement. College students who exhibit self-compassion are found by Roeser and Peck to focus more on their learning and improvement as opposed to their performance in comparison to others. Studies that Roeser and Peck drawn upon in their article on the

advantages of contemplative pedagogies show that students who developed self-compassion through such acts of awareness are more likely to approach setbacks with a positive mindset and to correlate academic failures less with their sense of self-worth. Self-compassion is specifically correlated to students' understanding of moment-to-moment fluctuations in perception, taught by poses such as tree pose, *tadasana*, and their increasing ability to become aware of habitual responses in order to redirect them and "create a calm and clear mental context from which to act" (Roeser and Peck 130).

One of my students echoes these research findings in his response to our yoga practice: "Not only does yoga make the body feel more focused, it relaxes the mind more than anything I've ever done outside of running...[Yoga promotes] self reflection and can yield clarity and bring the body and mind closer...I feel that the most important thing that yoga shows us is that slowing things down and having alone time can really clear the mind and body and increase writing efficiency." Collectively, my students' responses highlight the ways writers began to equate awareness with a body-mind connection and began to see their ideas as stemming from the material framework of their bodies: "Tree pose...[is] my favorite. It's my favorite because for some reason I can balance pretty well in it and it represents balance in your life, which I'm working on, starting with my writing." Students began to place their imaginings in a body and open up to new ways of thinking about and doing the writing process.

Habits of Mind and Body: Persistence and Sustained Interest

Persistence, as defined by the Framework, entails commitment. It requires students not only to be open to new ways of thinking about the writing process and new

ways of managing their composing sessions but also to follow through with these tasks over the course of the semester. The first lesson of persistence students learned when using yoga for their writing was that they must frequently practice both processes together for noticeable gains. After our first “yoga for writers” practice, blogs requesting students’ initial responses (some of which I shared above) and a subsequent class discussion, I asked students to begin using yoga in their regular writing sessions. We also started our practice of in-class *pranayama* which I will detail in my next interchapter. It was important that students practiced this integration during class time and that they also applied themselves as writing bodies outside of class, for it was during these times that they executed the bulk of their writing.

I had already been asking students to complete a weekly writing blog wherein they documented their writing process for our class and, if they desired, for other classes as well. I asked students to use this writing blog as a space to think through not only the content of their ideas but also the ways they were approaching writing tasks and how this was changing given our class’ focus on the physicality of the composing process. With yoga now added into the mix, students used these blogs to keep themselves accountable to their “yoga for writers” practice, as long as they were using it (for those not, I asked for some other sustained physical practice like running or regular walking to take its place⁴¹). I requested that students continue to practice the poses introduced by our yoga

⁴¹ In both classes, I gave students the option of using another physical practice in place of yoga. Giving students the autonomy of choice was a lesson in responsibility and also gave them nothing to react or rebel against, since our practice was a suggestion rather than an inflexible requirement. Perhaps because of this flexibility, most of my students did choose to use yoga; I’ve only ever had two students who used another physical practice in place of it. And, even these students still sometimes used yoga during their writing sessions and always joined in for our classroom-based yoga labs and breathing exercises.

teacher before, during and after writing sessions.⁴² It was important that students see our yoga labs not as deviations from our class work, but rather as connected threads by which to explore the idea of embodied writing, which we talked about in terms of creating a writing life that recognized the potential of their bodies as much as their minds to create meaning in their papers.

So rather than seeing yoga as a supplement to their writing, I challenged students to think of moving their bodies as an integral part of the composing process, in line with the ideas about the embodied process of meaning making we'd been tracing up to this point in class. One of my students found this integration helpful and notes this in his final writing reflection. He states, "When I'm stuck, I can stop to breathe or [do a] pose instead of staring desperately at the computer screen. Through the break I can relax and write longer and better without the added frustration. In fact, it is not so much a 'break' as it is part of the physical writing process. I can honestly say yoga has helped me develop as a writer." Part of the way yoga has "helped" this student is by developing his persistence as a writer, which the Framework lists as entailing the kind of commitment to an ongoing writing task that my student here demonstrates. My student is successful as a writer because he exchanges desperation over the long-term nature of the writing process with short-term productivity guaranteed by yoga "breaks." These breaks, he claims, become a part of the writing process because they help him reengage his attention rather than disengaging it as we might imagine a television break would.

⁴² See the appendix to this interchapter for the sequence of poses taught.

With such enthusiasm, students began to apply both the physical poses of yoga as well as the embodied principles these poses make clear to their writing and thinking-about-writing practices. Noting his personal goals in using yoga for writing, one of my students, Kevin, stated in a blog that growing in his abilities as a writer was equally important to committing himself to the idea that such growth takes time. This was a remarkable insight for this particular student who was a highly motivated second-language learner who desired a native speaker's fluency from the moment he entered my class as a first-semester international student. Yoga gave Kevin a new model for this kind of progressive thinking:

All I need to do to get better at a particular pose or my flexibility in general is that I need to at least try my best. My pose will be the closest to the one that instructor demonstrated in my best ability. I think it is same in writing. There always will be better writers than me or anyone in the classroom. There will be the best example on particular writing style or the way to write well in general. I am not saying it is impossible for anyone to get that level, but it will be pretty darn difficult. However, if I try my best...I can say that is a great achievement.

Kevin recognizes that persistent effort, trying his "best," may not make his writing process perfect or help him flawlessly execute our "yoga for writers" sequence but that perfection need not always be the goal. Rather than encouraging students to be dismissive of their efforts, learning limits by listening to their bodies' resistances seems to help them set realistic goals that keep them motivated to write and learn.

Another student agrees. She states that using yoga is progressively teaching her that persistence in writing is more about recognizing when her body and mind need more time to grapple with difficult ideas than it is about pushing forward in ways that leave her burned out and ready to quit: “When writing does not go well, I will stop and do some yoga to relax my body and mind, rather than forc[ing] myself to go forward.” If the Framework suggests that persistence is about learning to “follow through, over time, to complete tasks, processes, or projects” and “grapple with challenging ideas, texts, processes or projects” (5), my students’ testimony reiterates the ways healthy persistence can be supported by engaging students in embodied writing processes.

My students are simply echoing the research done on how yoga can help support learning functions and positive attitudes toward challenges. Contemplative practices like yoga have been shown to help students develop “motivational mindsets” (Roeser and Peck 129) that give them both concepts and scripts to use when navigating their abilities and any setbacks to their goals. That is, because “contemplative practices require the mastery of challenging mental and physical skills (e.g. sitting silently and watching the in-coming and out-going breath or maintain a particular physical pose), engagement in these practices...provides numerous ways of understanding oneself and one’s attempts to learn and be resilient during the process of learning” (Roeser and Peck 129). When students like Kevin see writing in terms of yoga, they keep in mind how they must notice gradual improvement in writing as in *asanas* and that flexibility—whether conceptual or literal—is hard won and slow to develop. Such delayed gratification keeps writers motivated and interested at the toughest parts of the writing process such as when they

are slogging through yet another set of revisions from a conference or a peer review session.

Sustained interest, of course, also relies heavily on students' ability to maintain focus on their writing projects and stay attentive to the meanings that spiral from their successive drafts. My students note that yoga helps them learn to refocus amidst distraction by giving them a place on which to re-center their thoughts: their bodies. "I have noticed the days I do yoga, my concentration is 10 times better and noises while studying do not bother me as much" says one student. She claims this is because she feels more of a whole piece and less frazzled, a feeling that often leads her to mindlessly seek out distractions that would take her away from the labor of writing such as going on Facebook or turning on her television. The focus my student mentions here is an example of what might be called mindfulness, or the ability to choose what to react to or how to deploy awareness of our environments. That they even *have* a choice is new knowledge for many of my students.

Mindfulness doesn't just encourage focused attention on the experience of writing at any given moment, it also helps writers find peace within themselves when they feel weary or worn out. Whether we practice mindful breathing as we move through yoga poses or as we sit quietly and solely focused on our breath, "[o]ur resentments, angers, regrets, desires, envies, frustrations, and feelings of superiority and inadequacy" fall away...Of course they return, but the remembered experience of peace acts as proof that these obstacles are not insurmountable; they can be detached and disposed of (Iyengar 97). And when they are disposed of, we can refocus on our goals. Holly specifically

talked to students during our yoga labs about how they must remember the peace and balance they created within themselves by engaging their bodies and quieting their minds; for, if they could remember this, they would be assured that that place was never too far away. Yoga teaches students that embodying their imaginings of focus and peace place helps them to reenter it. This is why another student, weary and about to completely lose focus, practices yoga in the library, where she happened to be writing her paper:

I was working a long period of time with no breaks on an assortment of assignments, not because I was in a rush just because I had the time. I studied to the point that I couldn't concentrate and my body just felt like I needed to walk around. Since it was a crammed library day I did not want to lose my spot and I was still leery of leaving my stuff around, I went in an aisle of books and started [doing yoga].

That my student was willing to risk being seen doing our yoga for writers routine in the stacks loudly speaks of her belief in its efficacy for her ability to sustain focus on writing.

The need for her mid-library practice can be summed up by one of her classmates' responses: "The yoga rituals bring in a focused, calming energy that allows me to expand upon and spread out my writing. I find I can actually write for longer periods of time if I incorporate different exercises throughout the writing process." With such comments, my students demonstrate that they have learned a united and calm body and mind are necessary for awareness and that yoga can aid them in cultivating such calm attentiveness while respecting their bodies' stakes in the process. Indeed, research shows that "the practice of focusing awareness on a single object (e.g. a physical pose, the breath)

promotes sensory inhibition and a ‘relaxation response’...and can cultivate nondirective, open, vigilant, and receptive forms of awareness” (Roeser and Peck 128). Because yoga helps students develop mindfulness, it can increase the quality of their attention which will have a direct impact on their success as writers. Students respond to these gains because they often combat debilitating stress and mental anguish over the writing process that interferes with their ability to focus on the task at hand. As my one student states, “My personal writing pain comes in the form of focus.” But yoga helps this student to relax and therefore to brainstorm more ideas for her writing: “I was trying to brainstorm over the weekend and I laid [sic] on the floor and put my legs up and thought. My roommate thought I was crazy, but I think I actually like what I thought up. I was relaxed and when relaxed, it’s easier to connect to my body and mind... Hopefully my narrative will benefit from this connection and ease I felt while brainstorming.”

Habits of Mind and Body: Metacognition

The data I’ve collected from my classes convinces me that approaching writing through yoga, a contemplative act of mindfulness, has the ability to increase writers’ embodied awareness of themselves and the world in which they live because it places their writing bodies at the center of the composing process and not at the periphery. In turn, student writers are more attentive to the other bodies to which they are connected by virtue of their shared materiality, prompting both self- and other-awareness. In other words, yoga helps students develop a corporeal orientation to themselves, others and the writing process by making them *mindful* of the ways their bodies help to create the meaning in their papers both through their experiences, which shape their perspectives

and the evidence they cite to support their arguments, as well as through the physical dynamics and demands of the writing process itself. In the contemplative tradition, mindfulness is used to describe awareness of the present moment and attentiveness to experience, “observing and attending to the changing field of thoughts, feelings and sensations from moment to moment—by regulating the focus of attention (Bishop et al 9). Developing mindfulness allows writers to become aware of and then monitor their thoughts and feelings. With awareness, they can begin to regulate their thoughts and emotions in productive ways that transcend automatic habits and thoughtless reactions. Practices that cultivate mindfulness like yoga are not simply relaxation techniques then, but are “rather a form of mental training to reduce cognitive vulnerability to reactive modes of mind that might otherwise heighten stress and emotional distress” (Bishop et al 6). For instance, restorative poses such as *savasana* encourage us to become aware of our feelings of restlessness, imbalance or rigidity in order to help us release and relax into an attentive calm we might not otherwise achieve if we never consciously attended to those feelings.

Because mindfulness engages students in monitoring their thoughts and redirecting them, it can be understood as a metacognitive skill, or one that engages students in thinking about thinking (Bishop et al 11). The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing defines metacognitive abilities as including the ability to analyze epistemology, or the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking in ways that puts it in dialogue with “cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge” (5). In writing courses, metacognitive acts not only draw students into an analysis about their

thinking processes but also about their writing practices and the ways writing creates meaning (and doesn't simply reflect it), encouraging them make epistemological conclusions about context, place, form and audience—or, most simply, the situatedness of meaning. This attentiveness to situatedness is a direct application of our yoga practice and is embodied every time students make choices about which poses to integrate from our yoga labs. Students are encouraged to apply the embodied knowledge they gain from the integration of yoga and writing strategically and mindfully based on their needs, developing physical writing habits are best for them: those who find a practice of restorative yoga poses helpful to promote focus and clarity are encouraged to use this as a prewriting strategy; others who find more energetic poses helpful to generate ideas are encouraged to use them. And all are encouraged to mix and combine these methods since their bodies and minds are dynamic and therefore unification of their energies can proceed in different ways on different days.

Because they are both involved in generating new knowledge about the visceral and situated nature of writing and in contextually applying these ideas to their own composing processes, students who practice yoga and writing together are, I would argue, thinking metacognitively all the time. Using their blogs to spur this learning simply enforces this kind of thinking; writing about writing leads to thinking about thinking. What's more, because students approach such metacognition from an activity of mindfulness, they more readily assume a learning orientation “characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance” which is a staple of a mindful mind (Bishop et al 9). The return on this orientation is open acceptance of writing bodies, for instance, and a growing

acceptance of the physicality of the composing process. Students' blog responses further enact what we might understand to be the three primary elements of metacognitive thinking: planning an approach to a given learning task, monitoring comprehension and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task.

Approaching writing:

As I've shown in my previous sections, consciousness of how the body bears on the process of making meaning changes how students think about and complete writing tasks; students confront the ways they may have narrowly categorized the writing process as a "brain activity," a conception that previously encouraged mindlessness in regards to bodily influences on their writing. Now conscious of their writing bodies, they begin to attend to the shaping powers of materiality on meaning and on meaning making processes such as writing. For instance, a student notes that a regular practice of doing yoga for writing helps him "get ideas for writing. Had I forced myself to sit and write in front of a laptop, I doubt if I would come up with ideas so easily. Had I limited myself only to the mental aspect of writing, I would never have enjoyed writing at all. Who would love writing if he has to sit for three straight hours and struggle to write his papers? This is the reason I become obsessed with writing overnight." This student examined the motivational mindset he takes into the writing process and found that yoga helps sustain motivation because it gives his body a release from the stress of staring at a blank Word document for hours on end. His reflective response represents the ways he has learned to use yoga specifically for brainstorming, which has worked so well that he has become "obsessed" with the writing process as a result of our class. If metacognition

entails being able to notice changes to ways of thinking and to adapt execution of the writing process in order to respect these new ways of thinking, then my student here demonstrates this ability.

Students also began to do the metacognitive work of unpacking how their body's intelligence transfigures the meaning, and not just the transmission of ideas, in their writing. As students begin to link the means by which they create the most effective writing sessions for themselves, they also see how yoga can help them reconceptualize the writing process as the above testimony notes. The metacognitive act of thinking about writing spurred on by our yoga practice and supported by our classroom discussions helped another student in this way as well. He states that he began "to see writing as an animating physical task rather than a monotonous mental chore." He reports in a blog post that this changed his relationship to writing, as he began to understand both how the process of writing was physically demanding in ways he hadn't typically respected, as all-nighters meant to finish papers ignored up until their due dates confirmed. New understandings of the writing process, of "writing physically" as he calls it, also bred new ideas about meaning creation for this student. Reassessing the content of his writing, he remarks that even when he isn't writing in first person, his ideas "originate from what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we feel, with everything being alive and activated." Conceiving of writing in this way brought my student not simply motivation for process drafting but also increased respect for the ways knowledge is sensory and visceral.

Monitoring comprehension:

While I already explained the ways mindfulness activities such as yoga help students to develop a self-monitoring mindset to the end of increasing their attention in my section on persistence, this mindset also applies to the metacognitive processing that these activities encourage. As they explore their changing approaches to the writing process in their blogs, students must also come to terms with how changes in their execution of the writing process are positively impacting their understanding, or their ability to better comprehend ideas in their papers as well as the concept of writing itself. One of my students who exhibited a strong reaction to the way she understood writing as a result of our embodied yoga-composing process questioned the masculinist bias of standard forms of academic writing and composing as her awareness of our alternate means of writing grew. She began to understand that seeing the writing process as embodied is a liberating, feminist conception even though this was never explicitly covered in our class. She noted in her blog that understanding her writing as physical and using yoga as a composing tool helped her become more aware of her body as a writer and gave her a newfound respect for how important experience as evidence was in her writing and how “remember[ing] how our bodies affected our emotions” could help her draft a more persuasive argument. While these new recognitions specifically “help[ed] when writing more creative pieces”, they also gave piqued her interest in hybrid, critical arguments that required recounting and analyzing personal experiences alongside other forms of substantiated evidence. These kind of inclusions are “something that we don't usually do, we usually compartmentalize our minds from our bodies and even parts of our body from our body as a whole” according to my student. She goes on to say, “and this happens more with women; women tend to be partialized.” Because this student thinks

“it’s harder for women to think of their bodies and minds as wholes instead of individual parts”, she believes in the liberatory potential for these embodied writing practices. For this student, the embodied imagination is necessarily a part of a feminist epistemology which changes her understanding of how certain choices in writing lead to the creation of different ways of knowing and being in the world.

Other students note changes in their understanding of writing on a smaller scale, in terms of their confessed weakness. A weakness many students’ metacognitive remarks coalesce around is the value of focus and the means to sustain attention, which is helpfully developed by our practice of yoga and also understood when they see yoga as process of problem solving. From this particular metacognitive vantage point, one of my students admitted that “Yoga gave me a way to see inside my writing. My writing can be extremely jumpy from time to time. Yoga paired with the breathing exercises helped minimize the jumpiness...with my improved focus, my papers began to make more sense and stick to one topic.” Another male student found similar inspiration in the ways yoga required a wholeness of focus and said he could apply this to the meaning created in his writing: “When writing [the second paper] I kind of answered each point individually, and I think next time I’m going to try and avoid doing that. Instead I’ll try to make [my analysis] more focused and connected so I’m not just answering one part and then another.” That yoga can help my students “see inside” their writing and can help them describe the process of creating drafts that exhibit cohesion and clarity testifies to the power of contemplative acts to bring about metacognitive awareness of the writing process. Yoga gives writers new methods to plan the writing process and work through

the stages of writing from drafting to revising. It also helps them monitor their understanding of audience, as the latter student response I quote indicates, exhibiting a sense of mindfulness about how audience, purpose and organization are connected.

Self-evaluation:

Finally, yoga writing can give students a new method for self-evaluation, or evaluating their learning progress and determining their process toward completing writing goals. My student Sarah said, for example, “The whole process [of using yoga for writing] has also brought me to see writing on a grander scale,” because yoga exercises allowed for “self-evaluation” when writing. Yoga has helped her become a more flexible thinker and writer, according to Sarah who also notes, “I think that emotionally, I got a lot more relaxed about writing, and that is growth.” Sarah continues her self-evaluative reflection and states that yoga helped her see how writing should be like “a person on a page, and that’s not perfect.” What this means to her is that rather than hiding from ambiguity in her writing, she should embrace it: “confusion can be shown in the paper, though not by confusing the reader, and instead by asking questions about the world and our being...though initially chaos may ensue from the lack of concrete knowledge, the ultimate result of imagination and exploration of self will be incredible...Then we can continuously redefine ourselves without fear of change, without fear of loss.” While Sarah’s formulation may be one of the more direct and perceptive I’ve received, her classmates responses rally around the shared understanding that by alleviating anxiety and prompting self-evaluation, yoga helps student writers successfully cope with ambiguity at the level of meaning making in their writing. That yoga becomes for

students a new way of understanding writing as well as a series of practical tools to help them cope with these negative emotions of writing is telling of the lessons students can potentially learn as writing yogis, which have both imaginative as well as lived consequences.

Sarah is not alone in her growth. In a classmates' blog, another female student states that to “accept something as imperfect because it doesn't have to be perfect yet is growth. To be able to know that you can improve in the future [as a writer], and to be able to find your own flaws and then smooth them over is growth. I don't understand how I was never able to do that before. My writing process is so much more relaxed, so much less tearful, when there is less pressure on me to make it perfect, and I never really realized until this year that the majority of that pressure was not placed upon me by my teacher or peers, but instead by myself.” This revelation transforms my student's attitude toward writing and learning and releases the intense pressure she felt when writing previously—so much so that she confided in me shortly after writing this blog that for the first time, she enjoyed writing and hoped to find more ways of making it a part of the fabric of her life.



I am pleased, my students are about to finish their first “yoga for writers” lab with Holly and they look happy and at ease. No one walked out and I’ve enjoyed this more than I can put into words. I move along with my students into a cross-legged

position at Holly's request. She explains to my students that yoga practices end with bringing our hands in namaskar mudra, which is a prayer position that aligns the hands under the breastbone. She explains that we bring our hands together and say the phrase, "Namaste" as a way of honoring each other and ourselves. She asks us to say this word with conviction and with a sense of self-knowledge of what we can achieve when we are aware.

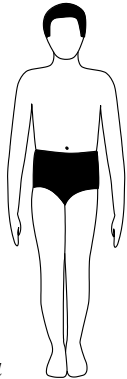
Namaste.

INTERCHAPTER APPENDIX:

Iyengar Yoga for Writers⁴³

Before writing/at the beginning of yoga/ writing practice:

- Set a *sankulpa* (intention) for your practice
- *Pranayama* (Extension of the breath)
- *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the sense organs)

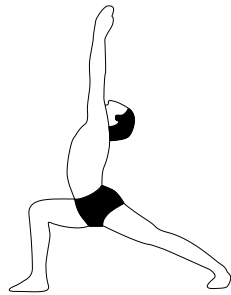
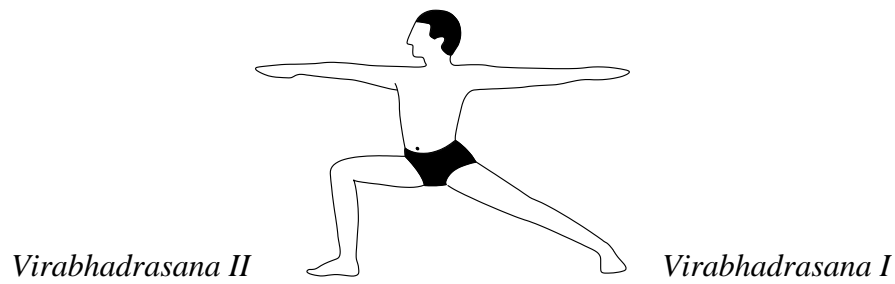
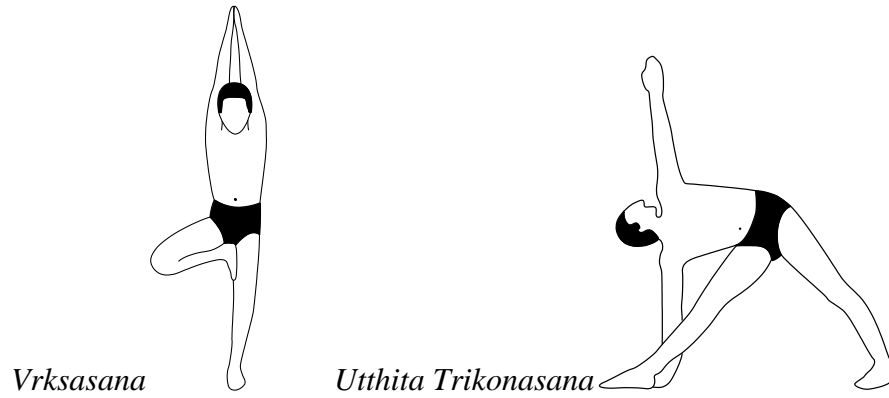


- *Tadasana*

When you get stuck, can't concentrate or need a break:

- *Urdhva Hastasana*: from above, extend your arms overhead
- *Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana*: from above, interlace your fingers, turn your palms away from you and stretch your arms overhead

⁴³ This handout was co-composed by the author and her certified Iyengar yoga instructor, Holly Walck, who graciously taught the “yoga for writers” labs referenced in this paper.



Benefits

Physical: Create stability, develop strength and stamina, correct deformities in the spine, legs (ankles, knees, hips) and shoulders.

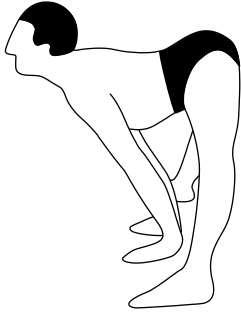
Mental/Emotional: Improve concentration and focus

When you need to think through counter-arguments or expand your perspective:

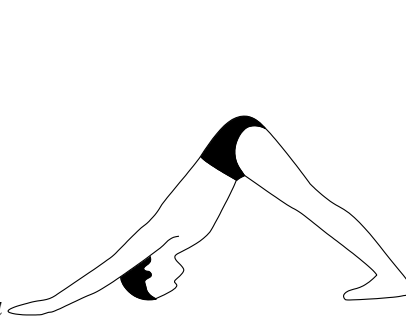


Parsvottanasana

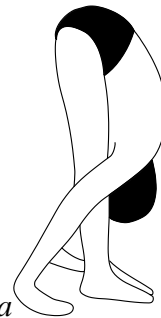
Prasarita Padottanasana



Adho Mukha Svanasana



Uttanasana



Benefits

Physical: As above and relieve fatigue

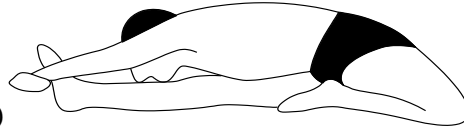
Mental/Emotional: Build mental stability and clarity

When you come back to revise a piece of writing:



Dandasana

- *Padangustha Dandasana*: from above, extend arms up overhead, then bend forward from the hip crease and hold the outer edges of the feet.



Janu Sirsasana (4 stages)

- Sitting upright, extend arms overhead, then fold forward from the hip crease and hold the outer edges of the foot, then bend the elbows up and out to the sides to take the abdomen and the chest to the thigh and the forehead and chin to the shin.

Benefits

Physical: Lengthen the hamstrings; create extension in the spinal column, open the organic body; relive fatigue; relieve stress

Mental/Emotional: Relieve fatigue; quiet the mind

Ending a writing session:

Savasana

- Lie down on the floor and rest deeply.
- Ujjayi I, II, III (I=becoming aware of the breath, even breathing; II=deepening the exhalation, normal inhalation III= deepening the inhalation, normal exhalation)

Benefits

Physical/Mental/Emotional: Encourage integration and acceptance.

CHAPTER 3: HEART

“These are suspect places” Mina Loy

“It is difficult to speak of bodily knowledge in words. It is much easier to experience it, to discover what it feels like.” B.K.S. Iyengar, Light on Life

Situating Feelings in Embodied Composition:

Danielle: In a writing response, Danielle confides that she lost her father a year ago and that thinking about herself as a writing body is making her pay more attention to her feelings than she has since allowed. She writes that while it is hard for her to do, she knows she needs to be more aware of what her “body is saying” since it seems to directly affect the meaning and tone of her writing, according to her own analysis of previous blog entries. She knows I’ll be reading this response, so I wonder if I should comment directly on the emotional impact of her statements, openly discussing her grief, or play it “safe” and respond just to the analysis accomplished in her writing, maybe with a reminder of student counseling services tacked on at the end?

Maria: We are out of time in the Tuesday meeting of my honor’s writing seminar, and I am returning my students’ graded papers. Maria grabs hers when I call her name and immediately flips to the final page. Because I anticipate her unhappiness, out of the corner of my eye I watch her reaction. Her open disappointment doesn’t last long; she soon catches herself and walks back to her desk to slowly gather up her possessions. When her classmates have left and I’m erasing the board, Maria approaches me to say she

knew she didn't do well on the paper before she handed it in. She begins to cry and looks to me for consolation. I try to comfort her verbally, but her tears only quicken their pace. I feel for this student so that even though all the reasons I shouldn't hug her pass through my mind, I do anyway.

John: John hasn't been participating in class since we started our gender unit. When I return the quick writes from last class, he sees my comments encouraging him to develop the reasons why he has given his truck a masculine name as he works toward a longer draft. John responds by throwing his paper across the room, classmates looking on in amazement. Just as shocked as his peers, I wonder how I should respond to John's anger.

Jim and Laura: Two of my most dedicated students from a first-year writing class approach me at the conclusion of our final class meeting. Both express their gratitude at what they've learned over the semester and claim to have begun to see themselves as writers as a result of the class. Jim shakes my hand and leaves. The emotional expressiveness he's been taught because of his gender feels acceptable here. However, Laura looks at me, pauses, awkwardly looks away and then says, "OK. Well, thanks again." I understand that the pause was the space for a friendly embrace or words of affection neither of us can muster. As it is, we both feel unable to navigate our roles and our mutual appreciation. I can't help but feel a sense of loss.

Michelle: It's the end of the semester, and my colleague and I are reflecting on the highs and lows. Michelle remarks that after attempting to let down her guard this semester, she is going back to teaching behind a "wall" of defense. She claims that while she developed stronger relationships with students this semester, she felt too vulnerable to their

classroom critiques and too conscious of her shortcomings as a teacher. “I am sick of hearing their feelings anyway,” she notes, “when all I want is for them to develop their critical thinking.” While I want to speak up and agree that some emotional boundaries are healthy while others are decidedly not, I can’t form the words because I keep wondering if feeling, like cake, is really an indulgence we can simply refuse to allow into our classroom diets.

These experiences collected over the last few years of my teaching lead me to read with interest feminist theorist and educator Allison Jaggar’s comment that

[t]ime spent in analyzing emotions and uncovering their sources should be viewed, therefore, neither as irrelevant to theoretical investigation nor even as a prerequisite for it; it is not a kind of clearing of the emotional decks, ‘dealing with’ our emotions so that they not influence our thinking. Instead, we must recognize that our efforts to reeducate our emotions are necessary to our political activity. Critical reflection on emotions is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation. (Jaggar 164)

I appreciate the convergence between politics and pedagogy as a compositionist, encouraging me to read Jaggar’s statements, which come in the midst of her own reappraisal of emotion, with a practical twist. Adding “pedagogical” to “political” to her comments drives home the implications Jaggar’s charge has for my writing classrooms. Through Jaggar, I accept the ways my writing pedagogy is as bound to manners and

means of emotional expression as it is to ways of thinking—and my responsibility to attend to both.

As a result, what drives me in this chapter are the following two questions regarding the visibility and availability of feeling in our pedagogies: How do we articulate the constructive work of emotions in our classrooms? And, how do we make them publicly available to ourselves and our students? Jaggar's charge can be understood as an indictment of the practices of so many pedagogies within composition which all too often seek to do a kind of naïve "clearing out" of emotion by exerting fierce control over it so that the "real work" of reason and critical thinking can take place. If we don't exert this kind of control over emotion, we tend to either ignore it altogether or encourage emotion but see it as ineffable or excessive and therefore beyond the domain of writing instruction. The problem with all three approaches is that all perpetuate the devaluation of the body in composition pedagogy and practice. By fearing the body's messiness, which we commonly understand to masquerade as emotion, we fail to articulate the meaningful work of feeling in the writing process and the writing classroom.

The dismissal of emotion in our field may be canonized most infamously in Bartholomae and Elbow's *College Composition and Communication* debate. I go to this essay precisely because it has been called upon so frequently in our scholarship. As part of our disciplinary fabric, this debate elucidates the ways a general aversion to emotion is naturalized in composition no matter where one might fall along the "great pedagogical divide." In the debate, Bartholomae indicates that the means by which critical, constructivist teachers help students unpack the master narratives that dictate the meaning

they ascribe to their experiences is by “being dismissive” of students’ personal *and* affective lives. Compositionists reviewing the debate tend to collapse the latter category of affect into that of the personal following Bartholomae, but this deters extended analysis on emotion from the start; feeling need not be seen as a simple handmaiden of the personal, even if the two are certainly closely related. To turn to the debate is to see how Bartholomae uses his comments on a student’s essay about her parents’ divorce to explain his stance on emotion in writing:

In the course I teach, I begin by not granting the writer her ‘own’ presence in that [divorce] paper, by denying the paper’s status as a record of or a route to her own thoughts and feelings. I begin instead by asking her to read her paper as a text already written by culture, representing a certain predictable version of the family, the daughter, and the writer. I ask her to look at who speaks in the essay and who doesn’t. I ask her to look at the organization of the essay to see what it excludes. And I ask her to revise in such a way that the order of the essay is broken—to write against the grain of the discourse that has determined her account of her family.

(“Response” 85)

The analytical process prescribed here is attractive because of the ways it ignores the messiness of emotion. Rather than entertaining this student’s feelings about her parent’s divorce, Bartholomae concentrates on the logic of discourse and text in order to train his student to bypass her feelings. He pushes her to focus the intellectual impact, or to discover the ways she is culturally-written, by unpacking how her reaction to her parents’

divorce is predictable and socially-scripted. While coded as a request, Bartholomae's suggested process of revision reveals itself to be a set of commands that the student must follow in order to be validated; calculated critical thinking will merit her acceptance into the academic discourse community while reflections on her emotions will not. Denied her emotions and her "'own' presence", she is literally a no-body, or a brain removed from the particularities of her embodied, emotioned experience. Critical distance means distance from the body and its emotions.

I understand Bartholomae's desire to engage this student in rhetorical analysis and why he separates this from the work of feelings; in many ways, it reflects our rhetorical roots and the classical rhetoric's separation of cognition and affect. Because I've been trained as a critical constructivist, I've too found myself wanting to treat expressions of student emotion, written and exhibited in person, as performances to be overcome in order to get to the "real" analysis of cultural texts. As some of my opening scenarios show, I didn't always welcome emotion in my classrooms or know how to generatively respond to it. For a long while, I followed in the footsteps of my own teachers who seemed to want no part in the muddiness of emotion which could mess up the clear waters of the classroom. But this dismissive stance was never a comfortable one for me. I always understood on some level that attempts to seal out emotions from the writing classroom are leaky at best—precisely because the "presences" we teach in the classroom, however written by culture, are just as surely tied to situated, emoting bodies.

This means that Bartholomae's student may indeed rewrite her divorce essay to reflect the cultural narratives at play to appease her teacher, but if she rewrites to erase

her emotional presence in the paper, she may also damage her ability to draw a sense of agency or lived meaning from her writing. Her real embodied presence matters—in both senses of this word. Such revision may consequently hinder her ability to see knowledge as lived and situated. In turn, she may never learn how to use writing to bridge her personal development to her public persona or to navigate the competing identity narratives as “good student” and “good daughter” that will follow her well outside Bartholomae’s class. As Karen Paley argues in her ethnographic study of social expressivism, “Instead of trivializing the social significance of the essays students write about their families or claiming that they are written by culture, we need to do some difficult psychological work” (*I Writing* 19). Avoiding this work by draining away an author’s affective investments may risk promoting a view of the rhetorical process as simply a matter of “doing school”, aping the teacher’s voice instead of defining one’s own as a means of constructing and communicating situated knowledge that reflects embodied realities.

Elbow’s alternative in the debate offers little relief. While he may seem more sympathetic to this student’s family narrative at first, his expressivist answer also avoids the difficult psychological work of authorizing and analyzing the emotional nexus of this student’s narrative. In response to Bartholomae, Elbow suggests that writing confidence should take precedence over entry into critical discourse, especially in the early stages of writing. To take this into account, Elbow claims he would “give [the divorce paper] no response at all” (“Response” 91). Taking a U-turn from Bartholomae’s position, Elbow defines emotions as private by positioning them outside classroom discourse—maybe

even outside of discourse entirely—and assumes we can validate student writers without actually engaging in the fabric of their affective lives and experiences.

While I agree with Bartholomae's commitment to investigating the social construction of this student's narrative and Elbow's concern for her growing confidence, I argue against the efficacy or even possibility that this student could rise above her material placement in a real home and a lived family unit that has been sundered by a divorce and all the feelings that accompany this event—any more than the student whose story opens this chapter could keep her grief over her father's death from seeping into her writing. We must acknowledge the impossibility of rising above our material situatedness as writers if we understand knowledge to arise from our feeling bodies as epistemic origins. Acknowledging the body as an epistemic origin entails accepting the ways we learn in and with our flesh and how embodiment is consequently integral to the way we produce and understand meaning.

To wit, embodied writing teachers must reevaluate the significance of student emotion. Instead of responding to the expression of feeling with ignorance or dismissal, we must teach students how to use their feelings toward a stance of "critical being" in the world and to understand awareness of them as a skill for their writing. We should be able to respond to the emotional import of the writing process, affirming students' feelings as part of the local knowledge they make out of personal experiences even if we simultaneously help them position these affective experiences within a cultural-material web. Jaggar indicates that hopes for transformation are futile if we do not entertain seriously emotion and the ways in which our political practices are inscribed with feeling

as much as thinking. Similarly, any pedagogue interested in student growth and self-conscious of her pedagogy's political agendas must consider the role of feeling in learning and meaning making. As the first scenario in my opening especially shows, critical reflection on emotions is not an option in embodied writing pedagogies; it is mandatory. Feelings and bodies are enactments of our materiality, so they are both necessary to reclaim it.

In this spirit of inclusivity, I refuse both the closure of defining feelings as entirely linguistic *or* organic and of delineating between cultural affect, psychological emotions or physiological feelings as some have done before me (see Damasio, Micchiche). Instead, I borrow education theorist Meghan Boler's comprehensive definition of emotion as "in part sensational, or physiological: consisting of the actual feeling—increased heartbeat, adrenaline, etc." and "also 'cognitive' or 'conceptual': shaped by our beliefs and perceptions. There is, as well, a powerful linguistic dimension to our emotional awareness, attributions of meanings, and interpretations ("Feeling" xix).⁴⁴ Boler's holistic definition appeals to me because it recognizes the organic body's shaping of emotion as well as the ways our feelings are always situated within a culture and a specific material placement in the world, a double gesture maintained by embodied writing.

⁴⁴ While Boler provides a holistic definition of emotion in line with my treatment of it here, she does prefer the term "emotion" to "feeling" while I use these interchangeably in order to underscore the social as well as bodily ways in which emotions are navigated and shaped. Boler chooses emotion as her primary term because it functions within our everyday, ordinary language and because she fears that feeling's scholarly alignment with the sensational will restrict her attempt to bridge the cognitive, moral and aesthetic domains of emotion theory within philosophical psychology and philosophies of education (xix-xx). An example of the separation between feeling and emotion to which Boler alludes is Damasio's preference to denote the "private, mental experience of an emotion" as a feeling "while the term emotion should be used to designate the collection of responses, many of which are publicly observable" ("Feeling" 42).

One way embodied pedagogies work toward a positive and integrative stance toward emotion is by adopting the embodied imagination as a pragmatic method of inquiry in order to recognize how social responsibility and personal awareness are interconnected. To review, the critical skill of embodied imagining evokes three large thematic umbrellas, all of which require the imaginer to join thinking and feeling to achieve:

1. Conscious awareness of ourselves and of others. This is built on the contemplative premise that becoming aware of oneself will allow for a companion awareness of our communities. Awareness here unfolds to reveal relationality and positionality, so that we must be simultaneously self- and other-directed. Working toward awareness cultivates a practice of mindfulness, which entails being in the present moment and practicing embodied self-awareness.
2. Balance and flexibility. Cultivating balance requires letting go of cultural indictments to ignore the body and thus its feelings. We must also learn to balance the weight of our knowledge and experiences against the openness of possibility so that imaginative stretching becomes a source of intentional doing.
3. Hope and openness to change. Based in both self-determination as well as the social need for change, a habit of imagining will lead to a habit of transformation. In yoga, the image for this is a lotus heart. Like the flower, the heart must be open to change in order for growth to occur.

Each chapter in this project has been guided by the combination of these principles and this chapter will be no different. Here, I will focus on how teaching students to develop

awareness of their feelings as writers helps to enact the possibilities of the latter two points within a feminist-contemplative embodied writing pedagogy.

In what follows, I hope to examine the theoretical and the practical consequences of making emotions pedagogically visible in the writing classroom by teaching our students the skill of embodied imagining. Feminist theory within and outside our disciplinary bounds creates an exigency for such visibility within embodied writing pedagogy and anchors my investigation of how we might enable students to become passionate, embodied imaginers, constructively engaging their emotions instead of simply managing or dismissing them. I will turn to Haraway once again in order to add to her definition of situated knowledge a corollary dimension of situated feeling to give us ways of addressing how emotions impact writing and a method with which they can be theorized within composition studies. Finally, I will suggest how we can engage our students in a situated process of feeling by teaching them an emotional flexibility that establishes feeling as part of the body's agency and reclaims it as a teachable skill with social effects. In simple terms, I argue that we must teach students to be yogis of their feelings. But first I will turn to the tendency to manage emotions, an impulse driven not only by our canons of scholarship but also by the teaching lore of our field. My discussion of emotion will, in the end, lead me back to the embodied imagination as a space wherein students' emergent body identities can be made agentive and the negotiation between situated thinking and situated feeling can become a means of making meaning and self-determination within the praxis of embodied writing.

“Feeling Lore”: The ‘Problem’ of Emotion in the Practice of Teaching

Aligning criticality with thinking and consciousness with discourse has often had the unfortunate effect of maintaining the displacement of affect from the process of learning to write. Early critiques of this displacement focused on an essentialist-cognitive model (see Alice Brand, for instance) but these have fallen out of favor. Through the recent work of Laura Micchie, Susan McLeod and Lynn Worsham, among others, attention to emotions has become less a hallmark of well-meaning but misguided expressivist or essentialist endeavors and more an accepted field of study for critical pedagogues interested in social conditioning. This has helpfully brought a new wave of attention to emotion within composition studies but has often done so at the cost of entertaining the body as an agentive emoter, a feature of embodied writing pedagogies. What remains surprising it is that with a surge of new scholarship on the discipline and maintenance of our affective lives, the traditionalist contrast between reason and emotion continues to resonate in our teaching practices and the lore surrounding our discipline. If lore reflects a physical enactment of our theories, our teaching literally embodies the dismissal of emotion, and with it the body, from our classrooms.

If we understand lore to account not only for the dissemination of knowledge in our field, but also the production of it, as Patricia Harkin calling upon Stephen North does (“Lore” 125), the persistent denigration of emotion as reason’s inferior (female) mate is extremely concerning. If our rituals and practices of teaching writing do not account for the emotional experience of writing, learning and meaning-making, we do ourselves and our students a great disservice and justify the suppression of the body in composition studies. “Bringing lore to light” (Harkin “Lore” 138) can show us what works in the classroom and give needed merit to the embodied labor of teaching, but it

also exposes the fault lines between our practice and developing theory—in this case, how recent efforts to theorize constructive models of engaging students’ and teachers’ emotions as part of the work validated and valued in the writing classroom have not yet revolutionized these classrooms; classrooms that in reality may be producing counter knowledge more in line with our canonized scholarship than with recent, progressive theories of affect. I argued in the last chapter that our experiential knowledge in the form of situated knowledge can be used as a means of making critical the integration of personal, experiential evidence and social analysis in the embodied writing classroom. Here, the lore regarding the validity of emotional experience in pursuits of learning is a negative example of how collective accounts, themselves a kind of coalitional, situated knowledge, are always at work in our teaching spaces.

What I am pointing to here is the disjuncture I see between new approaches to understanding emotion in composition scholarship, as this is an area of recent attention, and the embodiment of these theories in our teaching practice. I was reminded of the distance between our practice and our theory in a recent conversation with a colleague whom I believe is a very motivated and engaging teacher. As we were shared tales of memorable classroom experiences, nostalgic at the end of yet another semester, my colleague noted that she recently had a student cry in her presence. When I asked her how she responded, she looked confused and claimed that she “ignored it and did nothing” as if that were the only appropriate response available. Others on the periphery of our conversation nodded in a kind of compassionate agreement with her. She seemed shocked to hear me tell stories of teaching encounters that validated and perhaps even encouraged student emotion. I shared with her the details surrounding the second

scenario from the introduction of this chapter during which I chose to hug my student in distress. I also shared yet another recent experience wherein I invited another student on the verge of tears over his performance and extenuating personal circumstances to my office to talk through his feelings.

My colleague's surprise is understandable when placed against the larger backdrop of my department. Regularly included on the litany of instructors' complaints is students' insistence on bringing up their feelings in class. I hear often an echo of "I don't care what my students' feel; I just want them to think." When I hear this frustrated response, I must admit that I hear teachers' emotion, unacknowledged, short-circuiting valuable moments of potential learning so that rather than feeling empathy for the teacher, I tend to feel sympathy for the students. It has always been curious to me the ways this complaint hides the ways students *are* articulating analytical thinking—using the language they have at hand, which often includes emotive discourse—but aren't being heard. Teachers' tend not to listen because of their own indoctrination in and gatekeeping of dominant pedagogies reliant on emotion's absent-presence, to borrow Worsham's language. Too, what we hear is often filtered by our clichéd understanding of students' limited analytical powers. As Dawn Skorczewski observes in her analysis of student writing, students' beginning written discourse is often a hybrid blend of cliché and critical analysis ("Responding to Cliché"). Just as often, these clichés are tied to the language of emotional expression because of the limited means our culture provides us to express feelings, especially in learning environments.

I am interested in what changes when we begin to listen seriously to and engage with student emotion, viewing it not only as a readily-accessible discourse for them as a feature of ordinary language but also as a legitimate, embodied and critical engagement in the learning process; as a staple of the embodied imagination. When we begin to legitimate emotion, it seems to me that we open up our discussions of critical thinking to include feeling and thereby start to carve out new means of emotional expression, pulling it back into the ordinary language of classroom talk. This is exactly what needs to happen in order for embodied writing pedagogies to live up to their promise of engaging in livable theory and pedagogical practices. To begin, we must, however, recognize the limitations of our current practice.

A telling example of a failure to listen to students' emotions can be found in an "Observer" article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* which was published September 25, 2009. I choose to examine this response piece in depth precisely because I believe it showcases the kind of lore that shapes our classes and, generally, our interactions with writing students. This editorial contains so many of the same critiques of emotion I've heard in the local teacher talk in my department that it serves as a tangible distillation of this talk, allowing me to respond in a more sustained way than if I were to follow the fragments of conversations I've collected over the years. I have no interest in an *ad hominum* attack on the teacher of the *Chronicle* editorial to which I turn; rather I am interested in using his (emotional) argument to highlight the ways in which the lore surrounding feelings remains in stark contrast to the recent theoretical work being completed by established compositionists (Worsham, Michiee, McLeod), drawing on feminists like Jaggar and even neurobiologists like Damasio on the importance of moving

away from patriarchal divisions of affect and thought which are more mythic than realistic in nature. As a result, I have chosen not to include the author's name in the body of my text although a full citation can be found in my references. My choice, while it may result in sometimes awkward narrative structures, points to how this author echoes a tradition of teacher talk surrounding the feeling rules within learning environments, making the representative nature of his statements more valuable than his particular identification with them.

As a collective example of lore, the article serves as a frame for the issues I am concerned with in this chapter and I will use it as such, dialoguing with it by contrasting it to embodied rhetorics and pulling in rebuttals made by other compositionists concerned with the constructive engagement of emotion. In rather stark contrast the response rate of similar editorials published in the *Chronicle*, this article has drawn very few comments and most indicate agreement with the author—only one comment seriously questions the author's treatment of feelings.⁴⁵ The lack of dissent over the article's fearful and dismissive treatment of emotions in higher education may, I fear, indicate the ways we have continued to cordon off emotion from learning and refused to productively and

⁴⁵ As of 6/27/10, only 17 comments were posted online, most indicating agreement with the author. While a comprehensive review of these comments is beyond the scope of this text, the tenor of the responses maintains a disdain for emotion and the desire to purge it from our classrooms. For instance, one commenter says, "There seems to be an epidemic—at least in my classes—of this emotional "meltdown" among students, re. critical thinking and writing. So while I enjoyed this article, I do wish we could find more feasible "quick" (and lasting) fixes to this serious problem." The much-outnumbered commenter who speaks most loudly against the article remarks, "Given the animosity and patronizing attitude with which the author and so many of the commenters' approach their students, I'm not surprised that their teaching methods are faltering. Consider that your students' emotional responses are valid, and find a way to channel them into passionate critical argumentation. Logos is necessarily accompanied by ethos and pathos because it's a human endeavor."

constructively address it in our practice even as it begins once more to rise to the surface of concerns within our theory. Perhaps teachers' own feelings of fear are stunting the transfer.

Addressing the disjuncture, I'd like to use this article to examine three key justifications that writing teachers use to dismiss emotion from the "proper" terrain of the classroom before developing conceptions of emotion that engage hope rather than fear. While there are certainly arguments to be made about others, I have sought to condense these for the sake of space and in light of the ways the following categories tend to envelop many others. Overwhelmingly, we feel that:

1. *Emotions are personal and private*: validating emotions is akin to valuing solipsism in our "generation me"⁴⁶ society. This fear is rooted to the traditional critique against expressivism and counters the first theme of the embodied imagination that becoming aware of oneself will allow for a companion awareness of our communities;
2. *Emotions have no meaningful place in learning interactions and therefore only cause trouble*: while unavoidable in personal or family relationships, they can be successfully disengaged in learning environments like the writing classroom or writing center. If they are attended to, the instructor foolishly invites the instructor-student relationship to morph into a parent-child one. This belief echoes constructivist pedagogical concerns over meriting the individual and the local over the social and the culturally symptomatic even

⁴⁶ See Jean M. Twenge's *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (2007).

though the family can be seen as a microcosm of the social sphere.⁴⁷ This triggers a fear of emotion that denies the balance the embodied imagination seeks and suggests that distance from our emotions prompts critical thinking rather than seeing the possibility for growth and change that occur when emotioned discourse is allowed and approached skillfully in the classroom;

3. *The value of emotion is primarily therapeutic not hermeneutic:* which means, finally, that as inherently private, emotions are best dealt with privately in therapy with trained psychoanalysts—not writing teachers in the public domain of the classroom. This fuels a disdain of so-called confessional narratives, a term often overused to denote any text that relies on an incorporation of emotional discourse. Such a critique misrecognizes the ways in which the body is an epistemic origin of knowledge by situating thinking and feeling in the quest toward meaning.

What joins these classic reasons to keep emotion locked out of the classroom is a traditionalist discourse that naively assumes we can and should separate reason and emotion since critical thinking doesn't require both processes as mutually constitutive. While I don't advocate a view of writing teachers as therapists or parents, I do believe emotions are always present in the writing classroom—for, where there is reasoning and analysis, there is emotion.⁴⁸ To know *is* to feel. Simply put, emotional expressiveness deserves our explicit attention for its embodied entanglement with meaning and the ways in which it inflects our writings and learning encounters. Writing teachers need to

⁴⁷ As a therapist turned compositionist, Karen Paley recognizes the value of the family narrative and uses this line of thought to fuel her reappraisal of expressivism in *I Writing*.

⁴⁸ See Antonio Damasio *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999).

understand how to constructively incorporate public space for feelings in their pedagogies and to navigate the emotional encounters they are bound to have with students.

The Management of Student Emotion:

The author, a writing instructor and writing center director, of this *Chronicle* editorial, “Freshman Comp Tantrums,” provides us with a variety of scenes to illustrate how his students’ “uncontrollable” emotions shut down their ability to think critically and analytically. That these emotional experiences are flippantly referred to as “tantrums” in the title, either by the editor or the author himself, reveals the negative value placed on students’ affective lives. In the author’s words, what binds these students together and crystallizes his problems with them is “immaturity. They were displaying emotional reactions that had nothing to do with the college tasks of developing critical-thinking skills. They had never been trained to respond critically, were unable to contain their emotions, and thought all their interactions revolved around them” (B24). His critique and the portraits of the students in question tell a story of teaching lore that needs to be questioned if we are to engage constructively students’ emotions and respond to the recent scholarship that places feelings in the center, and not the periphery, of the composition classroom and related spaces and places of writing instruction.

The author opens with a telling picture of a freshman composition student, Devon, whom he tutored at the writing center: “Devon’s face flushed. His lips began to quiver. A tear formed in the corner of his right eye, and he wiped it away with the back of his hand before hastily shoving his paper into his book and standing up. ‘I’m leaving now,’ he

said” (B24). What caused such a response? The author tells us that Devon’s “tantrum” resulted from an instruction to ignore his emotional response to the article questioning gender training on which he was writing his paper, an article that deeply offended him. This author, working as a tutor, tells Devon that there is no room for an emotional reaction in his writing because it would not be in service to academic discourse, “it had no place in an academic paper,” even if it could be shared in a phone call with his mother (B24). Equating emotioned writing with “diatribes,” the author shares the description of critical analysis he gave to Devon as that which “while it may begin with an emotion, is a practice that requires keen observation, sharp reflection, cold-hearted logic, crisp reasoning, icy discernment, and cool evaluation” (B24). And when the author finds out that Devon has indeed called his mother after his disconcerting tutoring appointment, he says he is “stunned” to find out that Devon’s mother validated her son’s ideas as “good and right” (B24).

Feminized and Ostracized

There is much I can say about the reaction to Devon’s emotion. To start, this response is heavily gendered as it is plainly a feminized construction of a male student who can’t “handle” the intellectual machismo of heavy, academic “weight-lifting” as well as the emotional labor provided by his mother. Worsham argues against the Western tradition of separating the affective and cognitive realms in “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion” precisely because it fuels the unrecognized emotional labor of “tending wounds and feeding egos” (Bartky) which maintains patriarchal systems from the family to the composition classroom. In this tradition, the

excess of emotion is embodied by women who become metonyms for the passions of the body, freeing men to take on the rationalist subjectivity of the “modest witness” as covered in my first chapter. This abjection creates a division such that “[e]motion [is] not alone on the ‘bad side of the fence—women [are] there too” (Boler xv).⁴⁹ And when men display emotion, as Devon does here, they jump that fence. Devon’s tutor responds to the violation of dominant “feeling rules”⁵⁰ which dictate what counts as appropriate reception and expression of emotion within a given learning culture, such as postmodern, critical pedagogy,⁵¹ which Worsham argues, schools emotion as much as it does thought.

If this example highlights the double dismissal of the feminine and the emotional as they become metonyms for each other, it is especially interesting given the nature of Devon’s assignment. The instructor-author notes that the article so offensive to Devon is Paul Theroux’s “The Male Myth,” which challenges the confining nature of Western stereotypes that construct a hetero-sexist masculinity wherein “real” men must “be stupid, be unfeeling, obedient, and soldierly, and stop thinking” (293). The irony of Devon’s effeminate narrative persona placed in dialogue with the instructor’s stated respect for Theroux’s work in the same article highlights not only the latter’s gender anxieties but also the ways in which our theory both uncovers and veils, creating gaps in our practice at the level of our bodies. In real, bodily ways, our allegiances sometimes remained

⁴⁹ On this point, it is worth note that Bartholomae’s discussion of emotion in the C’s debate is focused on an example of a female student, showing how a dismissal of emotion in the writing classroom is inherently gendered in ways to which we may remain rather unconscious.

⁵⁰ I borrow this phrase from Peter N. Stearns’ *American Cool* (1994).

⁵¹ Worsham notes that postmodern and critical pedagogies have much in common, such as their “remasculin[ization] of the pedagogical subject” but are differentiated by what they critique: “[C]ritical cultural studies seeks to unwork the power/knowledge relation that produces the objective conditions of domination and exploitation; experiential cultural studies focuses on experience as the medium through which the conditions of domination and subordination are articulated and resisted” (“Postal” 251).

divorced from our practices as teachers. Like my colleague, the instructor here reveals a central premise that could be called a primary, pedagogical feeling rule in the academy, one that equates validating students' emotions with promoting solipsism rather than critical analysis. The instructor says this much in his damning critique when he equates the sharing of emotion with the self-indulgence of thinking all "interactions revolved around" the students in question in very much the same way Bartholomae equates validating feeling with championing student self interest.

No doubt, part of our job as writing teachers is getting students to think about diverse audiences and differing worldviews. I relate to this instructor's struggle to engage students in productive encounters with difference, as many might. In this struggle, teachers often expose their students to manners of writing and discourses that can reach a variety of audiences with differing viewpoints based on class, race, gender and varying life experiences to expand students' thinking. In the words of my previous chapters, we should attempt to teach students to pay attention to the ways in which they are situated and to the differential positioning of others. This opening process allows them to see the limits of their own point of view and the locality of their knowledge. As I discussed in chapter two, embodied writing pedagogies are engaged in the process of investigating knowledge as situated. But to do so responsibly, these pedagogies begin from a position of acceptance of and respect for students' positionings as well as their own understanding of and response to these.

Because he isn't being similarly validated by this instructor, limits are likely all Devon sees. Devon's emotionated response points to a high probability that he feels

alienated by the article on which he is to write and then doubly so when his response is shut down by this instructor. Whether he is conscious of it or not, Devon's very body may feel vulnerable since the Theroux text makes him question his embodiment of masculinity (a process that threateningly doubles back when his tutor too questions the appropriateness of his gendered performance). Like so many students, Devon struggles to engage with an argument that puts his identity at risk and such vulnerability naturally prompts his emotional expressiveness in his writing and his writing appointment. Dismissing Devon's emotionated response is not only negligent but is potentially dangerous to his growth and learning attitude and may discourage critical engagement and investment. Because both his grade and his body are "on the line", disengagement will only deepen the divide between his body and his mind. Without a forum in which to explore his embodied, emotional response to this text, Devon may not be able to use his feelings constructively as a way into the text; instead, he may feel viscerally locked out and may intellectually shut down.

When teachers do not provide psychological support, students will rush to friends and family as Devon does. These are valid sources of support for our students. Even so, such moments also provide teachers points at which we must be adept at our own emotional flexibility, balancing our fear of student emotion with our knowledge of writing as a process of working though and responding to our feelings. Devon reminds us that dialoguing with difference as a writer is both a critical and an embodied emotional experience, a double gesture the author-instructor of this editorial wouldn't support as he suggests that a writer cannot be emotional and critical at the same time—a view that necessitates an untenable division between the body and mind. A "clearing of the

emotional decks” is called for by this instructor. In consequence, he views Devon’s inability to control his emotions as a weakness which compromises his agency as a writer and thinker as opposed to an agentic and intentional embodied response that can be skillfully deployed to make meaning and generate writing.

By labeling Devon’s emotions as private, the instructor makes them unspeakable and unnavigable. In Worsham’s view, the ways in which emotion has been disciplined to remain “just beyond the horizon of semantic availability” so that we are taught a limited means of emotional expression and identification is a primary form of “pedagogic violence” meant to uphold the status quo (“Postal” 240; 232). Devon’s feelings become a “phantom limb” he must learn to suffer in silence (Worsham “Postal” 247-51). The violence of a sundered limb highlights how we are unable to “adequately apprehend, name, and interpret [our] affective lives” and thus are left to view emotion as a private, dangerous and mysterious threat to public reason (“Postal” 240). While Worsham reminds us of the difficulties of discussing emotion with students given our limited vocabularies, I wonder what the outcome of this tutoring experience would have been had Devon been guided to use his emotional reaction to generate meaning in his textual analysis, which is necessary when we recognize the shaping power of the body. Simply asking Devon questions about the emotions the article provoked, how his body responded viscerally and why he thought the text prompted certain physical reactions and not others could have gone a long way in this tutoring appointment.

Instead of suffering in silence, Devon could benefit from exploring his emotions as a writer, questioning their cultural placement as well as their connection to his lived

experiences as equally valid. He could also be guided to become a careful reader, looking for places in the offending text where the author's emotion inflects his argument as well using these inflections to understand that where there is reason present, there is emotion as well. Such guidance could show Devon to use emotion as a critical, embodied lens and teach him to view it as a powerful force and not just a subjective bias that shuts down critical thought or interrupts learning. The most effective pedagogies are ones that provide students cognitive and affective support; "[b]y creating learning contexts to address learners' emotions and thereby lessening defense, instructors can help students make more conscious and therefore more powerful composing choices" (Chandler "Fear" 67). The development of their writing is on the line.

Furthermore, even though I respect attempts to push writers to think beyond themselves, I have a hard time reconciling this instructor's notion that there is no place in academic writing to state one's offense at/toward a particular argument or another text, since our journals are full of such moments (see Tompkins, "Me and My Shadow" and Hindman "Making Writing Matter" among numerous others). Perhaps the instructor is here referring to the generic academic discourse that is sometimes taught in composition classes as a gesture to learning the rules before you can "break" them so that a professional writer may "write on a bias" (Brodkey) whereas students cannot. Elbow describes this view, critically, in terms of "hav[ing] to learn to write like E. B. White before you can learn to write like Gertrude Stein. Picasso couldn't have been a cubist if he hadn't learned to draw figures" ("Reponse" 71). Mastery first, personal creativity second. The author of this *Chronicle* article describes an absolutely frigid reasoning process

(“sharp”, “cold”, “crisp,” “icy”, “cool”) that certainly corroborates this picture of academic discourse as more a mythic ideal than a practice engaged in by people living in real communities, dialoguing with one another.⁵²

What the author of the *Chronicle* article misses here, of course, is the ways in which a “clear and coolheaded” approach toward writing is just another emotional stance so that he is merely valuing certain emotions over others as opposed to advocating for the dispassionate argumentation he seems to think possible. Haraway reminds us that the myth of dispassionate investigation is a holdover from the positivist tradition which presumes objectivity is possible through the scientific method, which is thought to filter out the subjective emotions and values of individual investigators (“Situated” 155). Rather than voicing from an invested, personal stance, we take on the role of speaking *for* the world, denying the need to voice *with* it. As similarly scientific, academic discourse is seen to provide comparable distance and objectivity in the humanities.⁵³ To see this article through Haraway is to see how this instructor desires that Devon become a modest witness when, in reality, this is a mythic position, not an embodied reality. Haraway reminds us that the insistence on modest witnessing is one that sees the body as a problem, a deterrent from critical thinking and knowledge making (*Modest* 24) not an aid to it. Remove the feeling body and we are suddenly “endowed with the remarkable power to establish facts” (*Modest* 24).

Emotions and the Role of the Personal:

⁵² This kind of “cold-hearted logic” is also dangerous in that it may reproduce models of adversarial argumentation. See Tomkins, “Fighting Words” and Tannen *The Argument Culture*. Joseph Harris critiques Bartholomae’s notion of the discourse community on these grounds as well.

⁵³ See my discussion in chapter one of the problems with viewing academic discourse as objective.

It is this myth of modesty that Jane Tompkins tackles in “Me and My Shadow” as she calls for us to give up the pretense of the disembodied and impersonal voice in our writing and accept the real body, “the human frailty of the speaker...his emotions, his history” that supports the writing persona as well as the “moment of intercourse with the reader—acknowledgement of the other person’s presence, feelings, needs” (Tompkins 1085). Far from simply advocating a “touchy-feely” pedagogy, Tompkins highlights the importance of paying attention to feelings as they reflect our socio-historical placement in order to understand how they shape our values and perceptions of reality—and thus, the voices within our writing. Our continuing preference for impersonal academic discourse over Tompkins’ brand of hybridized personal narrative-cum-argument exhibits our underlying fear of emotion, a fear that ultimately denies students the possibility of passionate investigation and argumentation.

Personal writing, the kind of writing I can only assume the author of “Freshman Comp Tantrums” would find unacceptable, is, of course, an established method of validating the self as a thinking *and* feeling being, if not necessarily an embodied one. For, as I’ve said, the expressivist subject is disembodied—such that the mind/soul is often identified with the personal over and against the body, which becomes a mere fleshy vehicle for the psyche. Enacted through our writing, the “I” of personal writing seems to be more an individual mind’s expression of itself than an embodied “I” that expresses a writing body. My notion of writing bodies is differentiated by its insistence on a level of conscious awareness of our writing bodies; we certainly always write as bodies, but few of us are ready and willing to claim them. A conception of writing bodies is focused on how writers experience their embodiment as both internal and external,

allowing space for the integrity of individual embodiment. Individual embodiment is certainly dynamic and situated, but this situatedness does not preclude the experience of interiority; indeed this experience is often mapped through an exploration of feeling and affect.

Despite a tendency to disembodiment experience at the same time that it is claimed, expressivism has a history of honoring writers' attachments and feelings and recognizing the constitutive link between affect and thought. As Peter Elbow has argued, "[b]ecause personal writing invites feeling does not mean that it leaves out thinking; and because it invites attention to the self does not mean that it leaves out other people and the social connection" ("Forward" 10). Joining feeling and thinking is just one of the many ways Elbow has attempted to "embrace contraries" in his career. Expressivism, despite its shortcomings, allows us to see how situated knowing and feeling are interwoven. So while expressivism may work upon entirely different epistemological tenets than embodied writing pedagogies, both approaches share an appreciation of thinking and feeling as coauthors of meaning.

Public and/or Private

The author and instructor in question in the *Chronicle* article denies that emotions should have such a public pedagogical role. His denial highlights an additional fear that acknowledging emotion encourages a role transfer from teacher to parent, inviting a level of intimacy that prompts confession. After relating Devon's emotional "outburst," this instructor discusses two additional instances of anger expressed by previous students to show the rampant epidemic of these so-called tantrums. The first involves a male student

in his writing class who refused to discuss a paper because he disagreed with this instructor's definition of freedom and the second was upset when this instructor suggested she complete an alternative assignment on Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* because of an absence. It seems this female student disliked the Atwood novel so much that she believed the assignment to be an unfair punishment. The instructor has less to say about his male student's display of anger than his female student, which may validate the ways in which this emotion is gendered in patriarchal systems so that male anger, even when undesired as in this case, is understood as righteous whereas female anger is considered selfish and is dismissed.⁵⁴ It is nonetheless worth note that the author makes visible a display of female anger even if the difference between representing it and validating it remains. Noting how her offense surprises him given his understanding of her as a good student prior to this "tantrum," the instructor describes his female student in this article as acting "like a 3-year-old who's been handed a bowl of spinach" (B24).

As his gendered infantilization of this student shows, I'd like to note how this instructor re-imagines himself as her parent. In doing so, he throws a line back to Devon's mother's response, insisting that to accommodate student emotion is necessarily to situate ourselves as nurturers. Much of this fear seems to be rooted in the ways emotional labor has been seen as a feminine task or the fear that when we "receive the language of the student and attempt[t] to work with it" as Elizabeth Flynn recommended years ago, we will feminize our role as teachers, which is a different stance than the feminist one I am advocating here (Flynn "Learning to Read" 54). Listening to and

⁵⁴ In her 1989 essay, "Anger and Insubordination," Elizabeth Spelman, beginning with Aristotle's discussion of anger, points out that the prohibition on women's anger maintains their subordination and encourages their silence in patriarchies.

genuinely validating this students' anger does not necessarily entail passive acceptance or simple validation; however, it does require us to follow-up on these attitudes by asking her why a particular text provokes anger, encouraging her to use that emotion to generate a response that is not only critical but also impassioned. A balanced reaction can mitigate the instructor's fear that he may not be "teaching students but...raising overgrown kids. I would have never guessed that teaching would come to feel like being in a dysfunctional family" (B24).

If we ignore the ways emotion is always present in student-teacher relationships, we might conclude as this instructor does that attending to student emotion is a sign of a defunct classroom. But, if we accept the reality that since the teacher-student relationship is interpersonal, it is always a sticky site of feeling. Lad Tobin suggests this when he investigates his anger at reading male students' personal narratives which rely heavily on gendered stereotypes. Rather than simply dismissing these narratives as uncritical and cliché, Tobin remarks, "if I can be patient enough to withstand the initial angry response many male students have to my authority and the initial angry response that I in turn have to their behavior, I often find that a different student and different narrative emerge" (Tobin "Personal" 173). Tobin's recommendation presupposes a teacher who is not only patient, but one who is also aware of his/her own emotions and the affective nature of the classroom environment. In simple terms, to take Tobin's advice seriously means we must be aware that our resistance to and sometimes denial of student's feelings is an emotional reaction based in our own embodied discomfort. Like Tobin's initial responses to his students, when we respond to students' anger or other emotions with incredulity like the editorialist-instructor in question does, we only reinscribe a privatized understanding of

emotion as better left to personal affairs and not as a viable resource for public rhetoric. In so doing, “we become resisting readers, unable or unwilling to read behind and beneath the conventions” (Tobin “Personal” 163).

Dawn Skorczewski’s advice regarding teachers’ reactions to student cliché might, in turn, be helpful to consider here. In her analysis of students’ struggles to stitch together old knowledge with new, often prompting them to use easy clichés in their academic writing to the frustration of their teachers, she remarks that “critical thought [may be] a kind of safe house for us in the same way that cliché can be for our students” (“Responding” 234). In other words, we judge our students’ conceptions and expressions of self based on the ways in which we have ourselves been taught to mistrust personal and emotional language in favor of the discursive certainty of the poststructuralist self. Acknowledging the limitations of this model of subjectivity and replacing it with a notion of writing bodies via embodied writing pedagogies may encourage us to revise our pedagogical rules that dismiss emotion and encourage us to view awareness of our emotional positioning as a teachable skill in the writing classroom. Simply recognizing the clichéd manner in which we approach student emotion is a step in the right direction: “the teacher who acknowledges the beliefs she brings to the conversation is equipped to listen to her students more carefully than the teacher who holds her beliefs so closely that she can no longer see them as beliefs” (“Responding” 236).

The flippant ending of the editorial I’ve been covering reveals the author’s inability to do just this. As such, it highlights one more, related fear regarding the presence of emotion in writing pedagogy. If emotions are understood as the private, sole

property of the individual and not situated, embodied knowledge, then they are better left for the therapist and not the teacher. The author accommodates this viewpoint by closing his piece with a self-consolation that even if he can't teach students to "respond critically" perhaps another teacher will. As for him, "if nothing else works, there's always therapy" (B24). No matter if it makes us uncomfortable to investigate it, the teacher-student relationship shares much with the psychotherapist-patient relationship even if there remains important differences.

Tobin also explores writing teachers' deep anxieties over therapeutic models of teaching and claims that there is much to be learned from these models as they make use of the unconscious and highlight the workings of interpersonal relationships. He notes that these relationships are both dyads contingent on an authority figure and establish certain hierarchies of power that invite transferences of emotion such that the student may unconsciously seek a kind of parental relationship with a teacher (Tobin "Reading" 341). Because these dynamics are inevitable, Tobin advocates awareness of them as opposed to naïve denial simply because we find such emotional terrain frightfully unnavigable as compositionists. It's not as simple as hoping that if "we don't talk about this, it will go away" (Tobin "Reading" 342). While he never suggests that writing teachers think of themselves as therapists or encourage their students to do so, he recommends analyzing the ways we "meddle" with our students' emotional lives as we teach them and the ways in which they meddle with ours, as the risk lies not in the emotional experience occurring but in failing to acknowledge and deal productively with

these experiences (Tobin “Reading” 342).⁵⁵ This is about understanding our reactions to students in order to help them analyze their emotions—not necessarily to help students therapeutically work through personal traumas.

Ultimately, though, the therapy model is itself handicapping as it encourages us to think of emotions as private and cognitive, often by specifically connecting them to unconscious drives. As she searches for suitable modes of inquiry to investigate the role of emotions in education, Boler, from whom I take my definition of emotion, argues that psychoanalytic models tend to overemphasize the master discursive categories of desire and the unconscious, leaving these terms rather empty and haplessly detached from the actual practice of teaching. Instead, she argues for “complementary theories of emotions as they shape our material experience” (*Power* 16). I agree with Boler’s deployment of alternative, materialist rubrics for emotion, even if I go to embodied writing praxis when she goes to history and educational philosophies. Recognizing the material situatedness of emotion productively complicates the view of pedagogy as therapy since it introduces the matter of the classroom, namely the texts or physical objects of knowledge represented by the text (Boler *Power* 17-18) as well as the materiality of bodies, all of which challenge the dyadic nature of the therapeutic confessional session with an inherently more public and fleshy structure.

⁵⁵ Wendy Bishop agrees and advocates this kind of awareness and reminds us that psychoanalytic discussions about writing may never be comfortable ones for writing instructors but that they do point to the reasons why we teach writing in the first place, to help students uncover something about themselves and about the world in which they live (“Writing In/As Therapy”).

If this article reflects the problems with our current methods of schooling students' emotions, it too suggests the ways we can resist these methods by substituting a feminist politics of emotion that encourages passionate, embodied engagement instead of the "malestream" critical distance we tend to promote from inside critical, postmodern pedagogy. Next, I will examine how the feminist embodied writing pedagogy I have been developing throughout this project reclaims feelings as part of the primary pedagogical work of the writing classroom, offering a hopeful alternative through the embodied imager's capacity for emotional flexibility and understanding of feelings as situated. That is, my answer to these justifications and their underlying fears is the embodied imagination which connects personal awareness of our bodies, emotions and our identities with the social responsibilities to respect embodied and felt difference as well as the ways in which we are inextricably connected to a larger material world and therefore responsible to others (as well as ourselves) in the flesh.

Solving the 'Problem' of Emotion Through Situated Feeling:

In chapters one and two, I have tried to tackle situated knowing and feeling separately in order to develop a theory of situated knowledge for the embodied writing classroom; however, this separation is more reflective of the linear nature of writing than it is an indication of their status as separate faculties around which we can draw definitive lines. To privilege the materiality of emotion as that which charges our flesh with agency, I move to define feeling in terms similar to those I used to define knowing in the last chapter. The overlap is unavoidable when we understand feeling and knowing as

companion composers⁵⁶ of situated knowledge. If our knowledge is shaped just as much by our embodied feeling as our thinking, we must pay attention to both as creative forces in our writing. Building on chapter two's discussion of situated knowledge as that which gets made on the page and in the classroom in embodied writing pedagogy, I am interested in seeing emotions as "situated feelings," marked by their corporeality as well as their social positioning, which creates a web of material situatedness from which we write. Parsing the definition of situated knowledge in light of this chapter's focus on emotion entails seeing situated knowledge as comprised of the two inexorably tied processes of situated thinking and situated feeling such that an embrace of the material via this feminist epistemology brings the fleshy person back into view and testifies to her role in the construction of what is thought *and* felt. Situated feeling provides a theoretical model with which to counter the negative treatment of emotion in our pedagogies, as demonstrated in the last section, and a means of increasing our limited vocabulary of emotion in composition studies.

To review from the last chapter, Haraway defines situated knowledge as a feminist epistemology based on "particular and specific embodiment"⁵⁷ ("Situated" 190) so that the body as an epistemic origin is seen to produce "partial, locatable, critical knowledge sustaining the possibility of webs of connection" in meaning making ("Situated" 191). It is worth repeating the differences between understanding knowing and feeling through the lens of feminist situated knowledge as I do here instead of either

⁵⁶ Haraway's term for interdependent species that shape each other in significant ways is "companion species." I discuss this co-constitutional model of subjectivity in my first chapter.

⁵⁷ For my purposes, I will focus on Haraway's notions of human embodiment. For the ways in which our embodiment is complicated by animal-machine hybridity, see Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto."

claiming a mainstream, postmodern situatedness as has become routine among social constructivists or claiming subjective knowledge as expressivists have done. The key difference among all three positions hinges on the role of the body. Constructivist pedagogies rely on “malestream” postmodern definitions of situatedness as the contingency surrounding all meaning, based on our placement in discursive systems that structure what and how we know. But by focusing on the subject as linguistic, these pedagogies have typically closed out matter. Alternately, expressivists like Elbow and Tobin have championed personal knowledge as a product of the individual in the world, but they tend to see this individual in terms of his/her psyche, too easily disconnecting the mind from the body.

Haraway’s version of feminist situated knowledge deserves our attention for the ways it strikes a balance between constructivism and expressivism, moving beyond both pedagogies’ inattention to the body. Situatedness from a Haraway-ian lens mediates between the expressivist and constructivist positions in that both the social construction of knowledge as well as the embodiment of our meaning making is taken into account. We aren’t searching for the truth of the psyche or of the text but instead for responsible local knowledge that doesn’t remove the knower from the known or cancel out the possibility of extralinguistic meaning. Attention to situatedness is meant to underscore just how central our embodied experience is; how knowledge, like the body, is always locatable and always partial. Indeed, situated knowledge rests on the subject’s fleshiness, on her inherent embodiment as part of the organic world. Embodiment in this formulation takes on the meaning of “dynamically embedded” not “statically bound.” Haraway defines situated knowledges as “marked knowledges” (111) meaning that they are

projects of knowing from the “somewhere” of the embodied subject as opposed to the “nowhere” of traditional empiricism or the “everywhere” of postmodernism (188-191). Alternately, Haraway advocates a strong embodiment in which the body is not just a window for knowing the world but is the house that structures all mapping of the world. In the broadest way, we might even say that embodiment is knowing in this paradigm.

Embodiment is also feeling. The web-making process of situated knowing is one of “passionate construction” according to Haraway and “resonance, not...dichotomy” (“Situated” 194-95). As a critical and reflexive practice, situated knowledge thereby enacts what has been conventionally referred to as connected knowing in feminist literature. Sociologist Belenky defines connected knowing as “involv[ing] feeling, because it is rooted in relationship...[but also] involv[ing] thought” (Belenky, et al 121). Because it invites feeling and sees it as critical and necessary to meaning, connected knowing advocates the epistemological stance of the “passionate knower” (141). The passionate knower is a version of the embodied imaginer, or one engaged in situated knowing and feeling; one who is critical *and* emotional at the same time, recognizing that it is impossible to rise above the material self.

The embodied imaginer who understands meaning-making through the lens of situated knowledge is then engaged in a process of situated feeling and thinking. In this process:

1. Feeling is seen as an agentive force of the body, not simply a rhetorical construct and therefore not entirely reducible to language even if it is reciprocally shaped by it.

2. The body is the origin of both feeling as well as thinking. Both processes must be interwoven to create responsible, local knowledge.
3. Our understanding of feeling is primarily experiential but our common embodiment, which can be seen as a promising and constructive “limitation,” produces certain schemas of feeling that are shared so that we can connect to others. Thus, it makes sense to talk about the interaction of bodies and cultures wherein both shape each other.
4. Situated feeling establishes a “webbed” orientation that allows for the creation of connected knowledge, which rejects traditional modes of detachment and seeks to relate the material and discursive at the level of meaning and enact it at the level of our bodies.
5. As such, situated feeling prompts one to understand one’s limits and one’s partial perspective, encouraging a recognition of embodied difference and the need to build coalitions among others differentially positioned.

As these five central premises of situated feeling show, definitions of situated knowledge from the last chapter are not balanced unless they account for the interweaving of feeling and thinking. Situated knowledges are, in part, marked by feeling since it both places us in a material body and spatializes us in the world. Situated feeling highlights the ways materiality and discursivity are tangled in our webs of meaning, making it impossible and particularly senseless to separate them. We are left, then, with a view of emotion as equally embedded in the organic body as in culture, or as situated in both material and semiotic worlds. Viewing emotion through situated feeling necessitates that we give up the closure of defining it as entirely linguistic or naturalistic. It similarly hampers any

attempts to define emotion, feeling, or affect separately, encouraging my interchangeable use of these terms.

I choose “situated feeling” instead of Laura Micciche’s more performative “rhetorics of emotion” because the latter too often establishes the body as a discursive marker, denting its agentic materiality. Despite a weaker focus on the body than I might like, Micciche has done much recent work in composition studies to make emotions visible and intelligible, and her book *Doing Emotion* makes as an exciting counterstatement to a mainstream alignment of emotion with persuasive, pathetic appeals in line with classical rhetoric’s valuative positioning of *pathos* beneath *logos* and *ethos*—despite its seeming equal weight in the rhetorical triangle. Aligning emotion with a social sense of “doing” leads Micciche to differentiate “emoting,” which she defines as the individual expression of feeling, from “rhetorics of emotion,” or “emotion as a performative that produces effects. To speak of emotion as performative is to foreground the idea that emotions are enacted and embodied in the social world...[and that] we *do* emotions—they don’t simply happen to us” (*Doing* 1-2). It is with the latter, the doing of emotion, that Micciche is concerned.

Micciche’s work raises fruitful questions about how embodied writing pedagogies might take up the meaning-making potential of situated feeling. While not aligning her work with embodied pedagogies as directly as I am, Micciche acknowledges the connection between research on emotion and the body, citing neurobiological evidence that we come to know our emotions by the ways in which we embody and experience them (*Doing* 19). Research on both bodies and feelings therefore often share similar

exigencies. Consequently, what binds Micciche's and my undertaking of emotion is the need to address emotion's fullness, seeing it not simply as a way to move an audience (a persuasive aim) but also as a dynamic generator of meaning (a generative process). When viewed as a situated act, emotion's meaning and value for writing need not be understood in a strictly personal sense, and it can therefore be understood as teachable and necessary for critical narratives.

Micciche is as resistant to understanding emotion simply as a quality of the private mind as I am, since it is this kind of commonsensical view that has led to emotion's devaluation. For this author, our understanding of emoting as an ineffable, private expression of feeling has blinded us to the relational conception of emotion as circulation. It is the concept of emotion as private that propels the lore evident in the *Chronicle* article I covered and leads Bartholomae to argue that expressivism, the pedagogy most aligned with the validation of feeling in writing, promotes sentimental realism by encouraging writers to see their compositions as "true stor[ies] of what [they] think, feel, know and see" ("Response" 69).⁵⁸ Whether or not the body is our focus, we must begin to see feeling as both social and personal if we wish to reanimate our studies of it and hope for its inclusion in our pedagogies.

⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Bartholomae expands this argument regarding the dangers of ignoring the social construction of our ideas and feelings and claims, "it is wrong to teach late adolescents that writing is an expression of individual thoughts and feelings. It makes them suckers and, I think, it makes them powerless, at least to the degree that it makes them blind to tradition, power, and authority as they are present in language and culture" ("Reply to Stephen North" 128-129). Bartholomae's classic critique highlights how emotion, conceived of as private, is put at odds with what is inherently social (language, power, authority) so that focus on feelings is necessarily a focus on the personal as foolishly removed from the public realm. But Bartholomae's critique must change if we begin to give weight to "emotion as a rhetorical, performative enactment" (*Doing* 42) which would ostensibly fit into his paradigm of social constructivist/ discourse community pedagogy. Even if emotions as experienced personally, by an individual body, they are also social constructions, according to Micciche.

Following Bartholomae's focus on the social, Micciche understands emotions as "emerging relationally, in encounters between people, so that emotion takes form between bodies rather than residing in them" (*Doing* 13). A relational, constitutive understanding of emotion underscores it as a rhetorical "technology for doing" ("Doing" 14) as opposed to a private reaction or a persuasive tool for consumption and not production. Micciche uses the view of emotion as circulation, "emotion takes form between bodies rather than residing in them" (*Doing* 13) to avoid the privatization of emotion that constructivists target. Resisting the view of emotions as tools used to manipulate reason, Micciche instead forwards a notion of emotions as constructive *acts* of meaning by drawing from Sarah Ahmed's work on emotions in politics.

To understand what sets Micciche's approach apart from the classical canon of work on emotion, the distinction to press is the way emotions are here seen as always present, acting as constructors of meaning by binding individuals together in economies of value. Emotions, as such, are not simply passive tools of provocation. We cannot choose to "add in" emotions since they are always already present making meaning and shaping values, social bodies and beliefs— whether or not we attend to these dynamics. For her, what we have failed to see is how the *performance* of emotion is what connects individuals in social groups, making feelings powerful measures of group realities. Micciche calls the effects of emotion's relational circulation "stickiness" after Ahmed. Stickiness accounts for the ways in which signs are positioned as objects of feeling so that they accumulate specific, affective values which attach to them through narratives and discursive structures like metaphor (*Doing* 27). While not exactly the same, Micciche's stickiness and my situatedness share a webbing impulse; that is, both terms

connect the individual who feels to a larger network of material subjects and objects by the web-spinning of language as it works like the spider, creating its web between the solid substances it deems suitable.

I have no desire to argue against the social construction of emotion or to conceive of emotion as ineffable, since I am working within a model of situatedness myself, but Micciche's primary focus on the social body over the individual body marks the point at which our approaches diverge as she goes to rhetorics of emotion and I to situated feeling. In making the claim of sticky relationality within rhetorics of emotion, Micciche strives to underscore the ways in which we perform feelings based on certain cultural scripts or feeling rules and casts her lot with the group over the individual per se. For her, the performance of emotion as socially saturated is where the hope for transformation lies. This is plainly evident in Micciche's instructive example of how emotions bind together individuals into a social body when she turns to how composition's identity metaphors attach particular emotional valences to the field. In particular, Micciche explores the negative emotions of subjection, what Wendy Brown calls a "wound culture," as that which binds together the theory, the practice and the teachers within composition (*Doing* 28). Micciche's point is that composition's emotioned response within a rhetoric of subjection reproduces its marginalization in a cycle that might be understood as a self-fulfilling prophecy. To break this destructive cycle, Micciche claims we need a new emotional identity for our field and offers the process model of "performative composition" which derives from Butler's notion of gender as a repeated performance of "stylized acts" which solidify into an identity that seems natural (*Doing* 44).

Micciche's stake in the performance of emotion takes its cue from Butler's definition of gender. For Butler, gender is "a corporeal style, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (*Trouble* 177). Gender is not "in" us but is rather an externalized effect: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (*Trouble* 33). If, like our gender identity, composition's identity as wounded only *appears* innate, but is rather naturalized through certain performances, there is room to remake the field and thereby invite new performances and positive understandings of its emotional culture. Through our emotions, compositionists have the power to adhere to the affective status quo or to take action and reenergize our emotional metaphors, thereby changing the social dynamics of the field. The bulk of Micciche's book consequently focuses on composition's current emotional culture and the ways in which it can be re-envisioned, offering much constructive criticism along the way.

However, as I explored in chapter 1, when Butler extends her performance theory to sex, the body becomes a sign emptied of its materiality.⁵⁹ To testify to the social construction of sex, Butler encourages us to see matter as "a process of materialization

⁵⁹ To be fair, Butler struggles with the materiality of the body and writes *Bodies that Matter* in response to the critical reception of her treatment of the body in *Gender Trouble*. In an effort to be responsive to her critics, she claims, "surely bodies live, and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these 'facts,' ... cannot be dismissed as mere construction" (*Bodies* xi). Even so, Butler does dismiss these facts of materiality when she later claims that "bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (*Bodies* xi) and therefore lay no claim to materiality outside of discourse. To leave open the possibility of matter in excess of language is too dangerous for Butler who wants to question the organic nature of our gendered performances, a questioning that can be derailed with divisions between the naturalness of sex and constructedness of gender. Preferring closure on these debates, Butler ends up denying the materiality of sex along with gender, seeing them as cultural, linguistic performances. But, in my view to lose the body to social construction seems no better than earlier paradigms wherein it was lost to naturalistic biology.

that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface” (*Bodies* 26). The body therefore becomes more a sign or “effect” than a real physical presence. While I share Micciche’s desire to move from a cognitive model of emotion as interiority, I believe shifting to exteriority disallows the body’s hold on emotion and thus devalues situated feeling as I have defined it. Within feminism, I go to Haraway precisely because she refuses to etherealize the body. Even if we read Micciche generously so that the body does not entirely disappear, it does seem to acquire the status of yet another “object of feeling” that *accumulates* sticky affect rather than *produces* it, so that the body is often better understood as a stage for the performance than an agent of it.

So while I find useful her conceptualization of emotion as sticky circulation, the trouble spot for me in Micciche’s definition of emotion is the binary established by her placement of “rather:” again, “emotion takes form between bodies *rather* than residing in them” (*Doing* 13, emphasis mine). This binary is reflected in her desire to divorce emoting from rhetoric of emotion, a division I find unnecessary since there is no analytic of emotion, no performance of feeling, without individual bodies emoting; the personal body’s expression and shaping of feeling must occur within rhetorics of emotion or we would have nothing to analyze since our linguistic and conceptual schemas of emotion most certainly rest on our physical experiences of them. Situated feeling, as I have conceived of it with Haraway’s help, provides an alternative that generates a fuller analytic of feeling which sees emotion as residing in bodies as well as moving between and among them.

Placing emotion only between bodies may work to uncover a construction of affective meaning in social groups like the discipline of composition studies, but it seems less helpful in developing a praxis of embodied writing wherein the individual expression of situated writing bodies is equally as important to the making and exploration of meaning through composing as it is to understanding collective, affective economies in composition. Micciche's focus on the top-down circulation of emotion may avoid the essentialist charge, but it also seems to place more emphasis on discursive, rhetorical movement than sticky bodies as agents of rhetoric themselves. For instance, the emphasis on social bodies over against individual bodies, which rhetorizes rather than actualizes flesh, is supported by Micciche's proposed classroom activities such as when students are asked to read and record a section of a teacher-chosen text where emotion language seems present. Students then record and perform this section for classmates, opening class dialogue on the movement of emotion, thereby unearthing the stickiness of emotion as it pulses through texts and between the bodies of writers, readers and audiences at large (58).⁶⁰

What this activity teaches students about the construction of identity in the production of emotion is certainly valuable, but the student's own writing body seems lost here for the performance of the author's. Rather than using only the projected personae of authors, I'd like to see the student read his or her own written text. Such reading could lead to productive discussions about how emotion is flexibly situated depending on the reading and the reception of a text. This reading could show how our

⁶⁰ Micciche does acknowledge in her book that she is still developing pedagogical practices that invite the "rhetorics of emotion" into the classroom.

reading is also contingent on the emotion that “stuck” to the original composition by the way of style, tone, language and even the embodied memory of the writing to which the author is privy; in reserve, it could perhaps where there is an unexpected disruption, creating an emotional dissonance for the author of the text which may or may not be felt by other readers. These additional exercises could show students that there is movement and stickiness in situated feeling, what I earlier referred to as differential positioning, but that there are also times of dynamic rest in positioned bodies; that feeling isn’t just *in* language, it is also *in* bodies.

To argue for both is in line with the kind of strong embodiment that Haraway advocates through her feminist conception of situatedness. She argues against the Western philosophical tradition of separating reason from embodiment and for a feminist tradition that accounts for our materiality. Haraway gives us a theory of situated knowledge in which the body is not just a stage on which cultural scripts like gender are played but is more like a sage actor who improvises as much as she follows a script, changing the play as it unfolds. By adding situated feeling to this theory, we can see that we simply could not conceive of emotions if we did not first perceive them as residing inside us and as essential to the ways in which our fleshy bodies navigate the world. Our experiences of embodiment include both interiority and exteriority, reminding us that feelings can be viewed as part of the body’s extralinguistic agency without negating the role our culture has to play in our shaping. Recognizing the body’s role encourages us to learn to develop an awareness that speaks with the body and not always for it rather than treating it as an object to be mastered.

Bringing Theory to Practice: Situated Feeling through Emotional Flexibility

Western conceptions of the body have tended toward devaluation and dismissal of our flesh. However, Eastern practices are able to sustain the development of such somatic awareness where our own cultural practices may fall short. Yoga, like composition, is at heart a praxis or an applied philosophy. Because it is a practice of doing, one that enforces process and practice just as writing does, yoga harmonizes well with the tenor of writing rhetorics especially that of embodied writing. What may matter most to embodied writing pedagogues is that yoga also takes the body as an epistemic origin so that embodiment becomes the means of knowing, feeling and making sense of the world and not just a physical enactment of social forces. Locating ourselves in our bodies, or developing a corporeal orientation that can translate to our writing, is a skill useful on the mat and in the classroom. A corporeal orientation insists on viewing knowledge as situated and therefore suggests that just as we are positioned by our material situatedness, the places and spaces our bodies occupy, we are positioned also by our feelings, which can be seen as negotiations between the agency of our bodies and the social circulation of affect in society. Yoga implicitly recognizes not only the theory but also the practice of situated knowledge.

As I explored in my first and second interchapters, the practice of yoga can provide compositionists new theoretical lenses and practical methods to teach students how to create an embodied writing process. My central premise there was that yoga can show students on both a metaphorical level as well as an embodied, pragmatic one that our materiality helps shape the meaning we make in our writing. It follows that body

awareness is a skill that can lead to more successful and generative writing sessions as well as a deeper understanding of the meaning-making process. And while I could potentially follow any Hatha yoga tradition to develop my argument, I concentrate on Iyengar yoga, a branch of Hatha, because of my experience with it and because of its core value of adaptability based on student needs and abilities.

I've argued that embodied writing pedagogies seriously engage in a feminist epistemology of situated thinking and feeling. These pedagogies are consequently invested in getting students to practice creating connected knowledge, or a mode of knowing that is personal even when the object of knowing is not (Belenky, et al 21). In contrast to separate knowers who experience the self as autonomous, connected knowers experience the self as always in a webbed relation to the material world and to others. Yoga theory and practice ultimately follows a similar connective impulse; it seeks balance and integration; it recognizes difference but does not see it as divisive. When placed within embodied writing pedagogy, the knowing facilitated by yoga can be seen to result in the formation of connected, situated knowledge that sees diversity as a generative force balanced by a commonality of flesh. Our bodies literally and conceptually provide the structure for the awareness, respect and mediation of difference.

Part of this awareness entails being receptive to our and others' situated feelings, which is a skill teachable in the writing classroom and necessary for students' lives outside of it. Far from promoting solipsism, attending to situated feeling attunes us to others and to the outside world of matter as it underscores the physicality of our knowing processes and the idea that understanding is itself material, not simply cerebral, in nature.

Rooted to our bodies, we are also connected to other forms of matter. Calling to mind many of yoga's themes of interconnectedness, philosopher Richard Shusterman argues that we feel our bodies in relation to other bodies of matter: "One cannot really feel oneself somatically without also feeling something of the external world. If I lie down, close my eyes, and carefully try to feel just my body in itself, I will also feel the way it makes contact with the floor and sense the space between my limbs" (70). Of course, the practice of *asana* asks us to make sense of these feelings, both sensational and emotional, in order to better understand ourselves and the world in which we live. In my yoga class, these feelings also help build a sense of community that links individual bodies together as we move and breathe in harmony, often unconsciously synchronizing our actions and drawing a sense of strength and solidarity from each other even as we move through *asanas* on our own mats. Together, these ideas testify that a turn to the self does not close out others, but can indeed make us more aware of our relatedness to the larger world of matter.

My experiences as a yogi suggest how I might bring such a focus on situated feeling into my writing classrooms. Using yoga as a creative guide, I'd like to suggest a pragmatic approach to attend to feelings within embodied writing pedagogy, one that provides a positive hermeneutic and gives viability to their instructional inclusion. I argue that we should strive to teach our students emotional flexibility, or to be yogis of their emotions, in order to engage them in producing the thinking and feeling processes that will lead to situated knowledge. Doing so affords students the agency to negotiate their embodied realities in relation to the reflective discourse on experience we encourage them to develop as part of the process of critical analysis. It stands opposed to asking

them to somehow transcend these realities for the sake of a disembodied textual-social analysis or simple appropriation of a new discourse community. Emotional flexibility is part of a feminist process of critical engagement and inquiry that does not cancel out feeling and focuses more on a holistic notion of critical being than just critical thinking. In working through a new notion of emotion through flexibility, I am hoping to address the problem Worsham articulates in “Going Postal,” that we will continue to struggle with emotion’s inclusion in our pedagogies until we refuse to allow it to remain “beyond our semantic availability” (240). A means of talking about emotion may just give us the impetus to work through its effects in our classrooms and a language to share with our students. If situated knowledge can help guide our theories, emotional flexibility can give us a means of talking about emotion in the classroom.

Developing Flexibility on the Mat:

In his definitive book on yoga, *Light on Life*, Iyengar targets two complementary skills necessary for the development of flexibility through the practice of *asanas* or poses: “extension,” attending to our inner space, and “expansion,” reaching out toward others and the unknown beyond us. Both acts are situated within a personal body but teach this body simultaneously to be inner-directed and outer-directed. Extension and expansion are interrelated actions because to reach out and create new space, you must first understand your own locatedness, or be aware of your center, what we might otherwise call personal situatedness. Extension is attention to our immediate space, focusing on being *in* the personal body. Actions of extension include centering oneself through reflection and developing awareness of one’s thoughts and feelings. In other

words, this skill includes reflection on the processes of situated knowing and also situated feeling, insisting on a personal attentiveness that joins the “sensitive awareness of the body and the intelligence of the brain and heart...[together] in harmony” (Iyengar 29). Extension asks us to marry the thinking and feeling postures that permeate the doing of a pose and is practiced attentively when both means of expression are balanced. Feeling in this equation may be understood as, in part, sensational, a slowing heartbeat and steady hands, as well as emotive and conceptual, such as feelings of peacefulness and receptivity.

While vision isn't unimportant here, it does get dethroned from its typical position of authority since yoga recognizes the limitations of sight. Increasing flexibility through awareness “is different from seeing with your normal two eyes. Instead you are feeling; you are sensing the position of your body” (Iyengar 29). Feeling can indeed be more powerful than sight because it exchanges the receptivity of two outward-looking eyes for the awareness of the entire sensitive body which folds in on itself (through extension) as well as out toward the world (through expansion).⁶¹ When practicing warrior III, for

⁶¹ That feeling demonstrates the folding back or doubleness of our embodied selves has also been theorized by philosopher Merleau Ponty. Calling this the “double sensation” of feeling, he has said: “Between feeling (the dimension of subjectivity) and being felt (the dimension of objectivity)...a gulf spanned by the indeterminate and reversible phenomenon of the being touched of the touching, the crossing over of what is touching to what is touched...In the double sensation my right hand is capable of touching my left hand as if the latter were an object. But in this case, unlike an object, my left hand has the double sensation of being both the object and the subject of the touch” (qtd. in Grosz 100). The continuous flux of positions here, what Haraway might label our “differential positioning” within the material world, shows the reversibility and thus companionate nature of the acts of feeling/ touching and being felt/ touched. This position of openness to the world does not mean that the subjects and objects of feeling are reducible to each other—the right hand is not the same as the left, but that they must always be understood as embracing one another (103). Ponty’s notions of reversibility without reducibility correspond to Haraway’s notions of companionate composers who too must be seen to make each other up in the flesh while retaining their own integrity. In other words, each is “significantly other” to one another.

instance, I cannot see the leg I lift behind me as my body as leans forward and I balance on the other leg; nor can I always see if my outstretched arms are parallel to the floor—if I try, I lose my balance. Instead, I must learn through practice to feel the positioning of my leg behind me and understand how to maneuver my body in space. To find balance, I need to be aware of the sensations of the pose, the emotions the pose calls up and the ways my intellect processes this bodily input. It's a bridging of body, brain and heart so that I experience myself as dynamically rooted, since the means of this bridging changes moment-by-moment as I take in the outside world with my in-breath and release with my out-breath. The acts of extension root us in the personal body, helping us understand our immediate material-semiotic placement and provide a path toward self-determination, but they are not to be completed alone.

Expansion complements extension because it reaches beyond the self's perceived center. The body unfolds and energy flows outward. Actions of expansion include the experience of creating spaces in new directions; an opening of the inner body and expanding to the experience of the external. Using a concrete example of expansion to show how it works together with extension to promote awareness and increase flexibility, Iyengar states, "When most people stretch, they simply stretch *to* the point they are trying to reach, but they forget to extend and expand from where they are. When you expand and extend, you are not only stretching *to*, you are also stretching *from*. Try holding out your arm at your side and stretch it. Did your whole chest move with it? Now try to stay centered and extend out your arm to your fingertips...Did you notice the space you created and the way in which you stretched from your core?" (Iyengar 33-34). This

created space is the space for new ideas and transgressed boundaries. We experience our limits differently when we expand; for when we only extend, we may feel limited by the length of our grasp. But, when we also expand, we recognize that we can stretch out much further than we first thought. We actually create more space by being aware of our bodies and centered in them as opposed to simply reaching out with no thought as to the embodied origin of that movement.

In warrior III, expansion encourages me to reach my leg out from the center of my body, but extension reminds me to ground the stretch in the resistance I create by pressing my tailbone into my pelvis and not simply to reach out my arms as far forward as possible. A lesson I relearn each time I practice is that mindlessly reaching out without conscious extension will push too much weight on the balls of my feet and not enough on my heels, making me tip forward. Without a balanced sense of self, I cannot reach toward the unknown. Instead, I must feel my arms create space against the resisting pull of my leg in the opposite direction as if I were pinching a rubber band with two fingers and attending to those fingers as much as the feeling of pulling the rubber band in the opposite direction. This pose makes me understand the importance of feeling centered in my hips and middle body so that I can reach beyond the center without losing myself for the sake of the movement itself; it's a conscious action. Attentive form makes this pose a freeing experience at the same time as a rooted one, dependent quite literally on the stability of my standing leg as if it were a tree trunk sinking roots into the earth—an imaginative visualization I often use. Literally and metaphorically, this kind of movement increases flexibility at the same time that it demands we remain accountable to our flesh.

Emotional Flexibility in the Classroom:

Extension and expansion are useful terms to use when working through the kind of emotional flexibility we might guide our students to develop as part of the embodied rhetorical process. Teaching emotional extension would entail helping students extend awareness to their emotional states as they write and the ways in which their bodies speak through their feelings. Students can be guided to articulate their situated feelings and the personal knowledge that has been shaped by and helped to shape those feelings in turn. In my classes, I've used semi-private and private blogs as low-stakes journaling spaces wherein students can express their feelings and explore them in relation to what we are learning in class as well as the meaning they create through their writing. They can also reflect on the emotional endeavor of the writing process itself. As I detailed in an earlier chapter, completing a regular *asana* practice as part of the composing process itself also helps students tune into their feelings, sensational and emotional, in order to garner a better sense of what they take into their writing and how certain topics may incite feeling responses that they pass on to the page. These actions of turning in do not encourage self-centeredness. Reflection on personal emotional states develops flexibility and not simple solipsism because students can learn to move beyond crippling self-consciousness and concentrate on exploring how they feel and not just what others might be thinking, such as their peers, or how they believe they should think, based perhaps on what the authority-figure in the room thinks. This validates students, giving them agency to make sense of their experiences in light of others' and guarantees a rhetorical process invested in the creation of new knowledge and not an exploration of already-formed ideas by published authors, experts.

It is precisely this agentive impulse that generates Hindman's argument in "Making Writing Matter" wherein she argues against the theoretical status quo that insists our rhetorical realities are more important or genuine than our embodied realities. In this article, Hindman uses her own lived experience as an alcoholic to argue against such already-formed "expert" ideas that our identities are ideological constructions that interpolate us into certain master narratives. Instead, she insists she is unwilling to transcend the body she knows has a reality outside of discourse; that the rhetoric of alcoholism helped to define an embodied reality she was living long before she ever stepped foot into an AA meeting and began to accept their language of recovery. Hindman concedes that when she constructs herself as an alcoholic, she is submitting herself to a discourse, but she argues that this is an empowering choice, or a "way I could hope to escape the deterministic and bleak physical aspects" of being an alcoholic (99). In other words, in choosing to control what it means to be an alcoholic and taking the language that labels to make it enable, Hindman creates a kind of embodied agency within language. Her body is a source of agency and power, allowing her to escape the dominant yet negative understanding of alcoholism and to recognize the role of her flesh in making meaning and, especially in this case, in the process of revision (ie. her revision of the alcoholic's identity narrative). To the extent that we see our own students as "recovering alcoholics" who abuse the comforts of the status quo by ignoring the ways in which they might be interpolated by their cultures and societies and relying too heavily on emotional discourse as opposed to alcohol, we may treat them as Hindman fears: as pawns of ideology who need to be taught to appropriate the theories of experts in order to complete smart social analysis. Incorporating attention to extension may encourage

students' development of an emotional flexibility that validates their embodied feelings. In turn, they can enter into discourse communities as bodies with resistances, the first of which is feeling itself.

Even so, to balance this act of understanding feeling as residing in us, as a part of our corporeal fabric as embodied beings, we also need to teach students to see emotion as that which connects them to social structures, or how affect works *in between* cultures and individuals in addition to *within* individuals. That is, how feeling spatializes our body in relation to other bodies in the world by web-making through connections. As a result, feeling is a tangible way to localize our knowledge-making practices. When we see feeling as an enabling marker of local knowledge, we attend to how our affective relations to the world are mapping practices that materialize in the social interactions of bodies, which disturbs easy categories of private and public and inner and outer. In turn, we begin to respect the ways we should accept the openness of their definitions, which will always refuse hard and fast delineations. Finding comfort in closure is an act of unbendingness or inflexibility.

Emotional expansion is useful here because it pushes us out in new, sometimes uncomfortable ways and gives us ways to suggest how the social circulation of emotion between bodies works. This entails giving up control, prompting a flexibility of thinking and feeling with others and beyond the insular self. Vulnerability becomes a strength of those who reach out and increased self-awareness is often an unexpected outcome. Famous yoga instructor Rodney Lee states this eloquently saying, "I believe we're doing yoga so that we can be strong enough to be fragile ... I don't think yoga is to keep you

from feeling fragile. I think it's to enable you to be consciously fragile but still feel like, 'I'm fine with this fragility' (4). Teaching students to consider seriously their classmates' ideas helps to achieve this end. I've had previous students play Elbow's "believing game" with a peer who dissented from them in a written response to a reading, asking them to write back to their peer in ways that attempted to respect the dissension and work with it as opposed to simply negate it. Even more so, introducing the embodied imagination as a method for the process of inquiry in composition studies, one that takes its lineage from feminism and an Eastern tradition of yoga that challenges hierarchical dualities and seeks integration at its core, may show students how to stretch themselves without denying or hurting their imagined selves in the process.

INTERCHAPTER 3:

Om, shanti, shanti, shanti. (Om, peace, peace, peace) – Yoga mantra for peace

Shared Breath: Using Yoga Breathing to Work Toward Mindful Writing

“Alright, everyone knows what to do by now,” I say. “Be sure to sit up straight in your chair and plant your feet firmly on the ground, letting that connection give you a sense of stability, like how you feel in tree pose, rooted and steady.” Some students shift with these words, but many stay still, already practicing the attentiveness we’ve been cultivating over the past few weeks. They have learned that being relaxed and being attentive are not separate states but can be coupled for greater awareness, and they are using their bodies to achieve this harmony.

“Now, close your eyes softly,” I tell them, noting with pleasure that a handful of students had closed their eyes well before my verbal prompt. “Bring the lids together, touching but not squeezing them, so you feel the horizon of your sealed eyelids. With this action, let the pupils of your eyes begin to migrate slowly toward the back of your head.”⁶² I look out and see my twenty writing students with their eyes closed, waiting patiently for my next verbal cue to continue our classroom practice of mindful breathing, also known as *pranayama* in the tradition of Iyengar yoga.

“Scan your body for tension and release it. Allow your shoulders to drop away from your neck and observe your tongue. If it is pressed up onto the roof of your mouth,

⁶² The verbal prompts I’ve reproduced here are faithful to the same I used to guide my writing classes in meditative breathing. They represent an amalgamation of standard yoga exercises advocated in such books as *Yoga: A Gem for Women* (2002), my yoga teacher’s efforts and my own at devising breathing exercises to use in my classroom based on the traditions of Iyengar yoga. The prompts also reflect the changes I made to our original versions as I experimented with my students.

relax it down onto the floor of your mouth. Relax your lips, from right below your nose all the way down to your chin. Let the inner walls of your throat spread away from one another, so you feel the hallway of your throat becoming wider and wider. Tune your ears inward, and begin to listen to the sound of your own breath.” For a few moments, I pause to relax and listen to my inhalations and exhalations, collecting my thoughts and readying myself for my instruction and our imminent class discussion. With some effort, I let go of everything beyond the present moment of sitting in front of this class, my eyes closed, breathing with my students. As I hear our breaths mingle, I feel bonded to my students and peaceful, removed from the rush of morning meetings and lesson planning that began my day.

“Pay attention to your breath, the inhalations and the exhalations, without trying to change them,” I say after a long pause without opening my eyes. “Let your breath be perfect, just as it is, right in this very moment.”

“Now, based on how you are feeling today, choose which breath is right for you. If you are tired, work on our three-part inhalation, sharply inhaling to your lower, middle, then upper ribs. Pause after each inhale and once you reach the top ribs, release your breath in a steady exhale. If you are stressed and anxious, begin to deepen your exhalations, so they become longer than your inhalations. See your inhalations as “small” and your exhalations as “big.” You can try inhaling for three slow counts and exhaling for five slow counts, if this helps. If you are feeling fairly balanced already, simply concentrate on smoothing out your inhalations and exhalations, making them soft and quiet.”

“Allow your inhalations to give you energy and your exhalations to expel all the worries and stresses of your day. Find peace in your breath.” I look for peace in my own breath as I give students a few moments to find a similar calm in themselves before guiding us back to regular breathing. “Let your breathing return to normal, but keep it smooth and calm. Keeping your eyes closed, pay attention to your feelings of peace, awareness and steadiness. Resolve to carry these into the rest of your day. The peace you feel now is yours to return to at any point; you just have to remember it and work toward it once again. Similarly, if you have found focus and awareness now, you can find them again within.”

I end the breathing exercise by asking my students to invoke a goal they are ready to embody: “Now, take a minute to set an intention for yourself. Your intention could be grounded in the learning goals you have for our class or for all of your classes today. It may even encompass your social and academic lives. What do you hope to accomplish today or this week as a writer and a learner?” I am silent as I set my own intention and let students set theirs.

“Now that you have set it, remember to revisit your intention later today and perhaps even later this week. Use it as a guide for your behavior and a check point for yourself. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.” I ask my students to turn to few moments of freewriting as a way to continue our observation of quiet mindfulness and to begin directly applying it to our writing. After a moment to find our voices, we begin the day’s lesson with renewed energy and focus, plunging into our classroom work with mindfulness.



Reaching Out and Within:

At the start of this chapter, I share a version of a guided *pranayama* I've used in my first-year writing classes. *Pranayama* is the Sanskrit term for our meditative, focused breathing practice. While this practice could potentially stand on its own and be deployed independent of other contemplative acts, I've used *pranayama* in conjunction with the "yoga for writers" practice I discussed in interchapter two, allowing me to target two of the eight limbs of yoga in my embodied writing pedagogy. Coupled with attention to movement through practice and integration of *asanas* or poses in the writing process, I used attention to the breath as a way to start each class session of my most recent composition class, calling attention to students the importance of attending to our writing bodies while also enfleshing the concept of the embodied imagination through our integrated practice of writing, *yogasana* and *pranayama*. Practically, *pranayama* becomes an easily-deployed tool in writing pedagogies because it can be practiced in short bursts, without any special props and can be executed in small classrooms. Space becomes a greater (if nonetheless worthwhile) challenge when attempting yoga in the writing classroom.⁶³

While my opening depicts a healthy practice of *pranayama*, one easily accepted by my writing students and myself, this wasn't always so. When I started these breathing

⁶³ I've largely overcome this problem by taking my students to dance studios in our campus' gym to accommodate our practice of yoga poses; however, this necessary movement away from our home classroom highlights just how inimical our writing classrooms are to moving bodies. The very spaces of our classes inform our students how active their bodies may be and assert that active bodies and active minds occupy different and divisive spaces.

exercises with my students, I felt guilty. I worried that our breath work would compromise our time to complete the day's work. Admittedly, I was already devoting class time to "yoga for writers" labs and targeted, in-class practice of certain poses, but adding another element—and a daily one at that—seemed like it might encroach upon our learning routine. Even though I was committed to integrating contemplative practices of yoga in my classroom, I didn't want my students to "lose" anything for the sake of their inclusion. So at first, I kept a close eye on my watch and tried to take attendance while I guided my students through their breathing. This multitasking seemed to validate any time "lost." However, it problematically relied on a banking model of learning that implicitly valued multiplying skills over changing attitudes and also encouraged a rather hapless application of mindfulness that ignored the irony of attempting to cultivate awareness of the present moment by dividing my attention rather than focusing it. If I couldn't stop multitasking, what right did I have to ask students to? Was my move to take attendance while engaging them in *pranayama* any better than their attempts to watch TV or check Facebook while writing assignments for our class? Just as my students were slowly convinced of the effectiveness of mindful breathing through continued efforts, our classroom breathing gradually taught me the importance using contemplative practices in transformative as opposed to additive ways.

I was already witnessing a transformation to the learning culture of my classroom due to our practice. Breathing with my students was organically changing the pace of my teaching from a sometimes frantic push to just-get-one-more-lesson-learned-reading-completed-writing-workshop-done to a more balanced and measured tempo. While I still felt the urge to push forward as the semester rolled along like a rock down a hill, I was

learning the difference between acknowledging the presence of these urges and acting on them—much as I have learned to label my thoughts *as* thoughts in order to put them aside during my personal practice of sitting meditation. Indeed, the whole class seemed to adjust to our measured pace by more frequently entertaining silence as a strategy for thinking.

I often noticed my students, perhaps in part following my lead, pausing to reflect over ideas in comfortable, thoughtful silence. The silence that characterized our breathing exercises was spilling out over into our other classroom practices, such as the discussions upon which I build my lessons. When I was quick to push students to talk before they were ready, they would often correct my lack of mindfulness with the simple query, “Can you give us a moment to think about this?” That this question was even posed by my students showed a *growing into* engaged silence and a newfound respect for it in our classroom; these queries were rarely, if ever, posed by students in my classes where such mindful breathing was not a part. *Pranayama*, it seemed, was teaching us all how important reflective, quiet thinking was in the writing classroom—and it was reminding me how infrequently such “active” silence is allowed to reign. Before bringing yoga and breathing to bear on the process of teaching writing, it didn’t occur to me that students might need to be taught how to create generative and reflective silence within the space of our classroom, a kind of silence I value in my own writing process and a kind of silence students don’t often entertain—largely because they don’t have to since their teachers, peers or iPods easily fill in the void with voice. To construct a simple binary between the silence of mindfulness and the mindless voices of digital technology is not what I am after, but the increased volume and pace of our lives and, thus, classrooms is

certainly ever the more reason to find means of refocusing on the present moment and reducing distractions, especially when we are engaged in the process of writing.

Since the beginning of that first semester of bringing *pranayama* into my classroom, I have come to see time for reflective silence and breathing at the beginning of my writing class' meetings as equal in value to our time for discussion or in-class writing, and I participate as fully as I can while still prompting my students.⁶⁴ Mindful breathing and practiced silence, in other words, have become part of the work of my writing classroom, reminding me and my students how important it is for writers to cultivate a habit of reflection and a writing life characterized by awareness if we hope to use the writing process not only to communicate but also to learn about ourselves and the world in which we live. The attentive awareness that *pranayama* fosters applies equally to the goals of mindful living and also mindful writing, the kind of writing that can support an education vested in the principles of social justice and courses driven by feminist, embodied writing pedagogies. It also helps support the “yoga for writers” practice I explored in interchapter two.

Breathing Our Way Toward Emotional Flexibility:

By utilizing these contemplative acts as writing tools, my students grow to become yogis of their thoughts and emotions. That is, our classroom practice of mindful breathing helps my writing students develop an emotional flexibility they can use to become more generative and reflective writers who are strong and resilient in the face of negative emotions and thoughtful and compassionate in their attempts to understand and

⁶⁴ At times, I ask students to try a completely silent breathing session without verbal cues from me. Because the majority of students express their preference for my guided prompts, I more frequently guide students. I understand their preference personally because I too enjoy guided *pranayama* in my yoga classes.

utilize the meaning potential of feeling in their composing processes. Mindfulness starts, after all, with the practice of paying close attention, a skill we deem necessary for successful writing. While we already insist writers apply such attentiveness to their subject matter, using the skills of close reading and analysis, we should also include increased awareness of the feeling body as the writing subject and the material origin of meaning. One way to respect the body as an epistemic origin is to become more aware of and responsive to our feelings as writers—“gut”/ ideational, psychological and physiological. *Pranayama* asks writers to develop this corporeal orientation and trains them to attend to feeling via the breath.

Mindful breathing consequently becomes an integral practice for instructors who want to forward embodied writing pedagogies that seek to rejoin the meaning-making potential of both thinking and feeling as they come together in the physical writing body. Imagining and enacting writing as a situated and embodied process by attending to the breath specifically invites students to think about how the body is integral to the composing process and how the relationship between thought and emotion shapes the tapestries of words and meanings writers create. Our feelings, whether inspired by the ideas and memories about which we are writing, generated by the writing process itself, or produced by our body’s responses and organic intelligence, energize our writing. I like how founder of the yoga tradition that bears his name, B.K.S. Iyengar, puts it: “The very word, inspiration, meaning both to breathe in and to grasp a feeling in the form of an idea, expresses the way the brain is charged during inhalation” and reminds us of the body’s role in meaning creation (75). Iyengar accounts for what compositionists might call felt knowledge, or the ways invention is embodied, and presents a basic tenant of

yoga in his formulation: breath, or *prana*, as life force and energy. According to yoga, focusing on *prana* makes us attentive to our feelings (and thus able to reshape them) and stabilizes our mind by bringing it back into dialogue with our body, connecting us with the rest of the material world, in turn. In the simplest terms, *prana* situates us.

And because *prana* is never still but rather flows between all material objects, this situatedness is dynamic. The very act of inhalation confuses boundaries between self and environment, insisting on an interrelatedness of all matter. Inhalation, therefore, literally opens us to new possibilities and ways of being and thinking that are in constant flux, teaching us patience in the face of change. Like catching our breath outside on a windy day or grappling with the evolution of meaning over the course of successive writing drafts, we must learn to be responsive to our ever-changing environments. If situated knowledge, at its best, is attuned to the ways our social and material placement locates us in the world in particular ways, then *pranayama*, or the practice of focused breathing and awareness, represents how we both surrender ourselves to our environments and also how we exert ourselves on these environments as we filter them through our bodies, changing them. By the deceptively simple act of breathing, then, my students learn to embody and enact the reflective and reflexive inquiry at the heart of the embodied imagination and to apply this to their own writing processes. And, they learn that these processes are intimately connected to feeling. Feeling in this equation may be understood as, in part, sensational, a slowing heartbeat and steady hands, as well as emotive and conceptual, such as feelings of peacefulness and receptivity for the upcoming discussion and lesson.

In my last chapter, I suggested we trade talk of emotional intelligence for emotional flexibility. Daniel Goleman has served as perhaps the best-known popular theorist of emotions in education and the workplace through his theories of emotional intelligence. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman claims lineage in Howard Gardner's theories of multiple intelligence but faults Gardner for focusing on cognitive elements in his categories to the exclusion of feelings. Goleman defines emotional intelligence, calling it a subset of Gardner's personal intelligences, as an individual's awareness of her own and others' emotions toward the ends of self control and the management of emotional encounters with others. To prove the importance of emotional intelligence, Goleman spends much time working through case scenarios to highlight the benefits of addressing emotional abilities in the workplace and in education. He believes emotional intelligence acts a corollary to IQ so that while the latter is seemingly out of our control, working to "master the emotional realm" (xiii) provides "a better chance to use whatever intellectual potential the genetic lottery may have given to [us]" (Goleman "Intelligence" xii). Emotions thus become a skill of the capitalist who seeks to profit as much from his financial relationships as his personal ones.

Goleman helpfully introduced a new wave of attention to emotion in education theory, even if he hasn't had quite the same resonance in composition studies. But rather than accept Goleman's definitions of emotional intelligence, there are many reasons why I chose instead to conceptualize emotional flexibility. First, although he admits that the emotional and the rational often work together in harmony, Goleman ultimately sees them as "two minds" that work as "semi-independent faculties" ("Emotional" 9) which problematically gives the impression that comprehension can sometimes be devoid of

emotion. Second, Goleman's theory tends to ignore difference and focuses more on promoting assimilation in a cookie-cutter, male-dominated world. His is a world of capitalists seeking to gain as much ground as possible, which unfortunately reduces emotional intelligence to the level of a commodity. Here, gender is ignored often along with other factors of situatedness including class and race. Goleman's lack of attention to difference and diversity showcases emotional intelligence as a site of social control where the gains lie in "creating 'smooth' and efficient worker relations" according to education theorist Boler ("Feeling" 61). She adds, "The equation of emotional intelligence with self-control evidences the fact that the emotionally intelligent person is still the *man* of reason" (Boler "Feeling" 61). The attention to emotional literacy brought about by Goleman is ultimately too problematic for inclusion in our writing pedagogies.

Emotional flexibility becomes a viable alternative that authorizes feeling at the same time it considers those feelings in the context of outside perspectives, ambiguity and possibility. Indeed, traditional models of inquiry and critical analysis can be made stronger by being coupled with feminist acts of emotional flexibility. Too often the structure of "claim plus reasons" that rules academic argument seeks a kind of hollow closure and encourages our students to "play it safe" with surface-level topics that may or may not complicate, challenge or confirm embodied beliefs and values. Just as often there remains little room for students to explore ideas threatening to their identities which are tied deeply to embodied beliefs and feelings. Within feminist embodied pedagogies, however, emotion becomes not simply a subject of critical inquiry, but also a process of inquiry itself. Teaching students to trace in their writing the entanglement of feeling and thinking and encouraging the development of emotional flexibility may prompt them to

entertain new viewpoints seriously without the threat having to divorce from their flesh by either capitulating to expert ideas or uncritically staying rooted in their own when faced with others' points of view.

Mindful breathing becomes a practice and a tool for teaching emotional flexibility in the writing classroom because it turns such attention to the writing body, asking students to become aware of how the body feels and what the body does in order to develop writing habits that apply the strength and flexibility of the yogi to the writing process. Here, the body is used as a hinge for new ways of *thinking* about writing and new ways of *doing* writing, or actually engaging in the process of composing. Instead of a brain in a vat, student writers in this paradigm are best understood as body-heart-minds who use their physical beings as writing laboratories, or as lived sites for the practice and research of the writing and meaning-making process. The writer as an integrated whole is at stake; learning is therefore best measured by gauging transformative effects based on growth of the whole person (compassion, awareness, relational thinking) in addition to performative effects based on discrete skill sets (focused papers, empathy and even-handedness with source material).

Even if it isn't standard practice to pay attention to the breath during the writing process, understanding meditative mindfulness as a primer for the learning process isn't as esoteric as it may have been even a few years ago. With the proliferation of yoga retreats for writers and the rise of contemplative education and organizations that promote mindful pedagogies in higher education such as the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society, many educators have accepted the ways processes that promote contemplation and mindfulness, such as meditation and *pranayama* (which is a

kind of meditation focused on the breath rather than on a mantra), can be successfully deployed as part of a holistic learning process that links the body and the mind.⁶⁵

Appreciating the breath “as it is” while learning to direct its energies toward where one wants it to be is pragmatic in the writing classroom, in particular, because it teaches students that they must start where they are, or that acknowledging their present reality is necessary to move forward toward new embodied imaginings which unify the body’s desires and the mind’s energies. On the page, these paired actions represent a fusion of the critical and the creative which characterizes the most socially-viable and personally-fulfilling kinds of writing our students can produce.

Consequently, increasing awareness of our materiality and the viscosity of meaning as well as the need for balance as writers are the first positive consequences of practicing *pranayama* in the writing classroom. This is where I will venture next. I will then move, in turn, to two additional benefits of this practice, which comprise the additional consequences of emotional flexibility for student writers: developing focus and attentiveness and learning to cope with negative emotions such as fear, stress and anxiety which allows for less threatening forms of self-evaluation and a corresponding increase of risk-taking in the learning and writing processes and a greater ability to deal with ambiguity and emotional dissonance. These consequences are recursive like the writing process itself, making it difficult to separate them in any definitive ways, although I try in the pages that follow for the sake of comprehension.

Breathing Our Way Toward Balance and Awareness:

⁶⁵ See, for instance, the list of publications on the Center for Contemplative Mind’s website <http://www.contemplativemind.org/resources/publications.html>, especially “Toward the Integration of Meditation into Higher Education: A Review of Research.”

Flexibility is literally the ability to bend without breaking; similarly, when applied to our emotions it is the ability to balance the weight of our emotional response and the need to accommodate others'. Yogis can only stretch as far as they can maintain balance; stretching without minding our own positioning will cause us to fall over. Likewise, I previously qualified emotional flexibility by insisting it included two complementary skills that encouraged equal application of reaching within and without in order to maintain harmony between balance and stretching. Here, I argue that the practice of mindful breathing engages student writers in and brings them through the paired skills of emotional flexibility, extension and expansion, that I developed in my last chapter. In *Light on Life*, Iyengar explains that extension requires attending to our inner space, or our center, and expansion requires reaching out from our center toward others and the unknown. The literal core of both acts is the center; extension moves inward to the center and expansion moves outward from the center (33-34).

These acts of emotional flexibility, needed to engage in an embodied rhetorical process, share much with what feminist Nira Yuval-Davis has recently called the “rooting” and “shifting” functions of transversal politics. Yuval-Davis credits feminists in Bologna, Italy for the cultivation of this democratic, feminist political practice based on three interlocking concepts: standpoint theory’s reminder that because differing viewpoints produce varying bodies of knowledge, any one body of knowledge is essentially unfinished; that even those who are positioned similarly may not share the same values or identifications; and that notions of equality need not be replaced by respect for difference but can be used to encompass difference (Yuval-Davis “Transversal” 1-2). What I like about Yuval-Davis’ terms, “rooting” and “shifting” is

their bent toward movement and their reflection of the skills of flexibility and awareness I approach from yogic mindset. From Italian feminists Yuval-Davis introduces the concept of rooting as a reflexive knowledge of [one's] own positioning and identity” and shifting as “put[ing] [ourselves] in the situation of those with whom [we] are in dialogue and who are different” (Yuval-Davis “Transversal” 3).⁶⁶ Extension and expansion are the writing yogi's terms for rooting and shifting; flexibility is only achieved when we can practice both self/inner- and other/outer- directedness. That these acts are recursive and complementary insists on the importance of first understanding ourselves by locating our center so that an understanding of where we are at any given moment is necessary to reach out toward the new.

This kind of centering isn't solipsistic since the very process of rooting in our center teaches us to shift toward an outside world of which we recognize we are a part, connected by our very materiality. This is because yoga sees all matter, *prakṛti*, including that which makes up the body *and* the mind, as connected, exchanging dualities between body/ mind and self/other for a much more complicated understanding of intersubjectivity and connected beingness. From this viewpoint, acts of both extension and expansion are situated within a personal body but teach this body to be simultaneously inner-directed and outer-directed as it becomes aware of its connected nature by drawing within and reaching without.

⁶⁶ What may seem immediately obvious to my readers is how much convergence there is between Yuval-Davis' discussion of transversal politics and my own use of Haraway's feminist epistemology. The reason for this is the simple one that Yuval-Davis uses Haraway as a touchstone for theorizing transversal politics even though she isn't primarily concerned with her.

Respiration is a prime example of the coupling of extension and expansion, learned at the level of our bodies. During inhalation, our lungs expand and we bring the outside world into our body, allowing it to affect us, often in ways we may not initially predict. As we take in a breath, we literally and metaphorically take in and process the new, or that which we label as “other” because it exists outside of ourselves. If “[i]nhalation engulfs the whole body, expanding from center to periphery” (75-76), then extension occurs in turn: “During exhalation, the tide recedes, drawing back toward the center” (75-76). For as we exhale, we move inward to our center, refocusing on the self, even as that self has been changed and shaped by the new breath circulating our inner body until it too is released and the process begins again. The emotional flexibility created by honing the skills of extension and expansion realize Haraway’s behest that “[w]e need to learn in our bodies...to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name” (“Situated” 190) and may begin to name these spaces. These terms are also reflective of feminist themes of empowerment in ways a traditional vocabulary of emotions in education are not.

Thus, as we breathe, my students and I become more balanced in body and heart as well as in mind. Equanimity within the paradigm of mindfulness is best understood as a compassionate and balanced response, a meeting of extension and expansion, not an absence of feeling. Mindful breathing teaches students to embody this process of rooting in the center and shifting from the center, creating within them emotional flexibility they can apply to their writing. Receptivity and rootedness, like inhalation and exhalation, are parts of a whole process, necessary in equal measure for balance. Mindfulness of and

concentration on the breathing process can teach students valuable, practical lessons they can immediately apply to their writing. In particular, students learn through our breathing exercises that effective writing sessions begin with responsiveness to their current feelings, which may position them as more self- or other-centered at any given moment. Only they can target which of our breaths will balance their emotional states, which is why the choice of breath documented at the start of this essay is so important. On an immediate and instrumental level, the choice of breath gives students a reason to become aware of their current energy level as well as how this relates to their receptiveness to the writing process. Students realize that they are faced with writing deadlines regardless of how energized they feel after a full day of classes to begin drafting a new essay and welcome ways of revving up their energy levels, no matter how atypical these methods may seem at first. As students begin to embody the lessons learned through mindful breathing to their thinking about writing, this developed equanimity translates into a more open engagement with outside sources and alternate viewpoints.

When we first attempted *pranayama* in class together, many students assumed that they were anxious simply because they were in class, so they used longer exhalations to calm themselves. However, using calming breaths when they were more tired than anxious caused them to get sleepy. As one student states, “I found the breathing calming and relaxing, but almost too much to the point where I was lulled to sleep. I came out of the exercise feeling relaxed, but also with a strong urge to go to sleep.” This student later states that he stopped using long exhalations by default and began working with the three-part inhalation to give himself more energy. In navigating the consequences of his

choice, this student learned two lessons: first, that he needs to pay attention to his body if he hopes to be an effective learner and writer, and second, that understanding and navigating his feelings is part of the work he must complete to this end. His breath became a means for this. The same student also realized that not only did he need to become aware of how he felt going into the breathing exercise, but that he also had greater power to reshape his feelings if he gave similar attention to the rest of his body as he practiced. He attributes the success of *pranayama* to how receptive he is to his entire body and not just his breath while performing it:

As we continued to practice the breathing exercises my goal has been to channel the exercises into becoming relaxed and energized at the same time. While I tried to adhere to all the instructions of the breathing, with the first practice during class I found myself still coming out the exercise more sleepy than I had entered...With the last two practices I have felt myself become more and more relaxed and at the same time energized during the class exercise. I think I can attribute it to paying particular attention to my posture during the breaths. By making sure I continuing [sic] to remain in an upright, sturdy position in my chair I find myself gaining a lot more from the breathing. Before I think I would allow myself to unintentionally slouch, or relax in the chair, contributing to my continued sleepiness from the morning. While focusing extra on my posture, I think I have been able to gain more from the exercise.

My student's comment about posture is important for the ways it links the breath, body and mind together as they affirm or form our states of receptivity and rootedness. In slumped postures that allow the body to turn inward, this student found himself feeling so rooted he wanted to distance himself entirely from his environment through sleep. But when he concentrated on opening his body while focusing on breaths that continued this action, he felt energized and more connected to the community of our classroom and receptive to the learning process. In these comments, he affirms the ways his body creates meaning.

Because our students aren't simply completing work for our classes and aren't solely focused on academics as they balance coursework with extracurriculars, jobs and social relationships, the possibility for greater energy is a first step toward increased learning in our classes. While mindful breathing is no substitute for sleep, it is helpful in directing the energy of our physical bodies toward the tasks we want to complete. When depleted of energy before our class or before his writing, another student noted that the three-part energetic breathing, "actually gives me ideas for writing, or simply refreshes me after hours of writing. After [breathing] breaks, I feel energized and usually have better ideas more readily than before breaks." This student reminds us that remaining open to new ideas is a task a peacefully attentive mind can handle with greater acuity than a foggy, sleepy one can. My students even began using our breathing exercises for their other learning endeavors:

The other day, while going to math class, I was exhausted. When I arrived in the classroom, I was just ready to go straight to sleep. I tried the

breathing exercise and it helped. The deep inhalations did give me that positive energy I was seeking. Now I'm not going to lie to you, it wasn't a miracle cure. I didn't suddenly burst out full of energy, ready to conquer the world. But it did help.

This second student, like so many others in my class, found value in applying our breathing exercises his other classes, attesting to how effective he believed they were. Here, the student calls up energy through his breath, in effect channeling *prana* to give him the excitement and confidence he needed to take his math test. This student is likely referring to the effects of physiological coherence, which has been shown to be result of contemplative practices like meditative breathing. “Correlates of physiological coherence include a regular heart rhythm, decreased sympathetic nervous system activation and increases parasympathetic activity and increased heart-brain synchronization (the brain’s alpha rhythms become more synchronized to the heartbeat (Schoner & Kelso, 1988; Tiller, McCraty & Atkinson, 1996; qtd in Tobin 31). In other words, the effects of the physiological coherence brought on by *pranayama* include the calming energy of focus as opposed to the jittery energy of caffeine as attentive breathing it harmonizes the body and drops levels of anxiety. As such testimony shows, students often begin to appreciate *pranayama* from an practical orientation rather than a metacognitive or philosophical one; the energy that mindful breathing gives them is a quality of our practice they value immediately—once hooked by practicality, deeper meanings have time to take root.

By the conclusion of our course, these lessons of balance and harmony permeated not only students’ practical applications of the breathing exercises but also the ways they

thought about the writing process. In a final class reflection, one of my students noted that prior to our class he was reticent to open up to others. He accounts for the new openness he felt at the conclusion of our course as an effect of our embodied awareness of the writing process developed through breathing exercises that engaged him in the acts of expansion outward alongside extension inward.⁶⁷ My student remarks, “I can sense that in some ways I’ve grown more open... Yoga and breathing meditation have helped my focus and made me more open. Hopefully both have made me a better, more intelligent person.” The growth my student accounts for is holistic; in learning to balance his writing body and the outside world, he has greater emotional flexibility that respects his own ideas as well as his audience and environment. My student senses that this growth is a gain for his “intelligence” which would give greater authority to his writing as well as his character or *ethos*, making him a “better” person and therefore, we can conclude, a more believable and persuasive writer.

What is also interesting in my student’s reflection is his simultaneous attention to his developed “focus” on the self and the writing task at hand as well as his openness to others and foreign ideas. By noting both together, my student is actualizing the complementariness of extension and expansion. That he goes on to state in the same blogged reflection, “The learning that has occurred so far this semester because of our practice [of yoga and writing] has driven me to not take ideas and experiences at face

⁶⁷ It may be worthwhile to note that while I talk with my students about centering and rooting in themselves as well as shifting outward toward others, I rarely use the terms extension and expansion in the classroom. While these terms are extremely helpful to me in my research because they allow me to work through the importance of these acts while drawing on the discourse of yoga, they become less helpful in demystifying writing for my students. I try to use as little of such jargon as possible with my students. For me, it is more important that they can do these acts and express them in simple, everyday language than it is that they can express themselves in the same discourses I use in my own writing.

value,” testifies that he applied the lessons from our breathing practice to his writing. The strongest writing he produces, according to my student’s blog, dialogues his “own ways of being” with new ways of thinking. This student hasn’t simply learned the power of using experience as evidence in his academic writing but has also understood the ways he must analyze his own experiences and put them in dialogue with others’ in order to build the most socially- and personally-responsible knowledge, knowledge that respects multiple “ways of being.”

Of course, for some students learning to take in less from the outside is crucial to their development of balance as writers. These students have overextended themselves in the past by being too receptive, causing them to lose their center as writers. These are the students that plead with us to read their ideas and tell them if they are “right” and ask us to just tell them “what we want” because they’ll do whatever it takes to get the “A,” if we could simply quantify that for them. In the past, I’ve found such students to be simultaneously some of my best writers and the hardest to teach because what I “want” is for them to take risks and to uncover their own views in their writing and not to regurgitate what they think mine are. Such unquestioning receptivity is a common problem for students used to echoing the thoughts of others and not investing the time to work through their own ideas either because they haven’t prioritized their own thinking in fear of risking a “good” grade with a safe essay or because they are afraid their thoughts won’t be merited against those of their teachers’ or those espoused by other “experts.” Writing that embodies the risky business of seriously considering another’s ideas by taking them in and testing these ideas against our own experiences and feelings is normally avoided. But, breathing exercises can help cultivate a mind more perceptive

of the need for balance and can support a pedagogy that asks students to engage with their experiences. One of my students remarks explained that his balance directly resulted from what she learned from our breathing exercises and how she felt about her writing produced after these exercises: “Emotionally, I’m much more attached to what I write. I give very personal essays now in a way that I never did before hand. I give essays that while reading back on [them], I don’t feel alienated by [them]. I feel like they a part of me.” Writing has become a means of developing self-awareness for this student.

Additional student reactions to our exercises confirmed that our breathing exercises helped to cultivate an emotional strength and flexibility that supported their efforts to attend to feelings and to respect the writing process as a social and participatory venture. One of my students praised our classroom breathing and her continued, out-of-class practice as helping her overcome the fear of judgment that often kept her too externally-focused when she was writing. She claimed that *pranayama* forced her to “focus inwardly” and to “stop worrying about the judgments of others or trying to cater to their needs/wishes” when writing. Students who imagine themselves writing strictly for teachers who judge their writing with a grade don’t take the time to tune into their feelings because they see them as irrelevant; students who imagine that their writing tasks, while perhaps graded, are also exercises in developing their emotional flexibility tend to see value in connected knowing and thereby find strength in learning to reach out to others through their writing while remaining connected to their material realities. This is not a process of learning to “close our eyes as we speak” as Peter Elbow might advocate (however valuable this exercise may at times) but of balancing an audience’s needs with our own, a writing task that depends on the mindfulness of our emotions.

Indeed, the student I just quoted later goes on to remark in the same blog entry that she isn't interested in only pleasing herself when writing but is interested in better incorporating her audience's perspectives in her writing so they are "persuaded by her ideas" and so that they "make sense" while also learning to be responsive to her own concerns as a writer. This is a common problem for the "best" students who are used to simply giving teachers "what they want" in order to make the grade. Encouraged in these ways, this particular student took a risk with an assignment that followed shortly after this blog and wrote a double-voiced narrative instead of a traditional, claim-driven argument because she felt it better represented her ideas, even if it might be shocking to her audience—including me, her teacher. This is a lesson to claim an authoritative voice in writing so that I'd argue that while my student might not be able to write a doubled-voiced narrative in her biology class, what she will have learned about rhetorical flexibility and the link between form and content will transfer to other classes, making her a stronger writing there as well.

As this example illuminates, these acts of emotional flexibility are metacognitive acts, acts of thinking about thinking, about writing and about being in the world. Every new language gives us new ways of thinking, and yoga does this for my students who are able to revisit and "resee" the writing process as embodied by framing it within the terms of their bodies, emotions, movements and breaths. But what they gain isn't simply a new language, and what we gain as teachers isn't simply some sexy Sanskrit to include in our professional writing; instead, these acts help us to both talk with students in new ways about what it means to develop a writing practice as well as how they might cultivate awareness of themselves as writers and meaning-makers and what the physical process of

composing entails. That is, the embodied practice of *pranayama* urges students to plan generative, body-conscious methods of approaching writing and learning tasks, gives them a method of monitoring themselves as they move through their writing and provides a supportive system of stop-point evaluation more interested in intrinsic growth than extrinsic success, particularly in the form of grades. This shouldn't be surprising since *pranayama* is a means of metacognition itself, as it engages writers in learning to develop a conscious relationship to cognitive and emotional states that allows them to reflect and redirect their patterns of thought and feeling.

The metacognitive act of thinking about writing spurred on by our breathing and yoga practice and supported by our classroom discussions helped my one student “to see writing as an animating physical task rather than a monotonous mental chore.” He reports in a blog post that this changed his relationship to writing, as he began to understand both how the process of writing was physically demanding in ways he hadn't typically respected, as all-nighters meant to finish papers ignored up until their due dates confirmed. New understandings of the writing process, of “writing physically” as he calls it, also bred new ideas about meaning creation for this student. Reassessing the content of his writing, he remarks that even when he isn't writing in first person, his ideas “originate from what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we feel, with everything being alive and activated.”

The same student concludes his blog by echoing a common sentiment of young writers who come to see writing as an embodied process that balances the energies of the body and mind: that it becomes more doable and enjoyable. He states,

since we all tend to get more active and excited about physically involved activities, if we can see writing as part of physical occurrence in our daily lives, then it becomes much easier for us to become passionate about writing. Otherwise, we will never see the beauty of writing and continue to see this creatively enjoyable process as a lifeless duty. For this reason, to perceive writing as a physically animating activity is substantial.

While I quote this student at length for his summative version of this viewpoint, these ideas become a common motivator for students to rethink the value of writing in their lives. When writing is conceived of as a purely mental activity, it too easily becomes a skill of “genius” or particular talent, leading some students to suggest that they simply have no stake in the game, that they have no inborn writing talents. If you can’t be the best writer, you cannot call yourself a writer at all.

However, teaching writing as an embodied process not only starts students thinking about the ways our lives inflect the meaning we create, an important lesson for critical thinking, but also makes the writing process a more approachable and friendly one. Students begin to relate to it as they would their favorite sport and begin to use schemata and frames of reference to other body activities to help them navigate the complexities of writing.⁶⁸ Another student, who was loathe to even label himself as a “writer” at the start of class, captures this revelation:

Even now I am still not a good writer; nonetheless, I have a stronger enthusiasm into the writing process now. In addition, I have also learned a

⁶⁸ See interchapter 1 for an extensive exploration of this learning.

variety of rituals that at least can help me come up with ideas when I am stuck in papers. More importantly, these rituals, specifically yoga rituals and breathing exercises, play a role in my growing fondness for writing since they tend to make the process of writing less burdensome than how I used think it [was].

While still holding off qualifying himself as “good”, here my student begins to decouple external means of success (grades) with enthusiasm for the process and equates the developing role of physical writing rituals such a breathing and yoga as helping him achieve his writing goals while learning to like writing in the process. In these ways, yoga gives him a means of gaining authority as a writer. And I’d venture, following Elbow, that liking his writing will help him revisit and revise it so that he will more likely achieve the status of “good” writer than if he continued to view the writing process as entirely burdensome.

Breathing Our Way Toward Focus:

Breathing not only teaches us balance by unifying the energies of self and the world, but also helps us to concentrate on the present moment and to be attentive to our embodied needs in it. Meditation, whether on the breath, an intention or a mantra, has long been known to increase our powers of focus and concentration. As Iyengar states, “[w]atching the flow of the breath also teaches stability of consciousness, which leads to concentration...The power of concentration allows you to invest your new energy judiciously” (72). By paying attention to our breath, my students learn to focus the energy of the physical body and the mental body, which can result in more productive writing

sessions wherein they feel more in control of the distractions that surround them. The greater their powers of attention, the more likely the success of their writing performance and their motivation to continue writing.

Because students do not always arrive on time to class and because we start with our breathing exercises, we've had to learn as a class how to deal productively with the interruptions not only caused by other loud classes heard through the thin walls of our room but also by our own members entering the room after we've started. When we first started our breathing exercises, my students would open their eyes to see who had entered, later in the semester the majority remained focused on their breath, a demonstrable effect of their learned attentiveness. Not responding to the distraction is an act of agency and of choice that many students never considered prior to the class. Our age of multitasking and my students' almost absolute reliance on technology hides the choice; the cell call may go unanswered and the blinking Facebook message ignored. Part of what students are learning during these classroom moments is the difference between beholding (Hart "Contemplative" 30; 32) what happens around us (ie. noting the noise caused by a late classmate and then letting it go) and attaching to these events (i.e. peeking our eyes open to observe the entering classmate).

Students can apply these lessons to their own bodies as equally as to other bodies. Because breathing rejoins our body and mind and urges them to work together for a common purpose, it is a helpful practice for writers who find their own bodies as sources of distraction. One of my students noted this:

Through the last few weeks, I have been able to concentrate in English a lot more because of the breathing exercises. At first, I had a lot of trouble concentrating. My nose always itched, or I had to cough, or something like that. But after the first few times I learned to tune this out and concentrate on my breathing...I am amazed at the changes that have taken place in my writing since I started this class. I now see writing as a lot more physical and I can really jump right into it with the right combination of breathing exercises and habits. I always look forward to using these methods more while I write papers.

Deciding what distractions are enabling versus those that are disabling is a strategy students tell me they now often use to stay focused on their writing when working in loud dorms or heavily-populated libraries on campus. Mindful breathing itself started as a distraction for some of my students, if only because it made them feel uncomfortable outside of the safe space of the classroom and the privacy of their dorm rooms where no one could judge them. On this topic, a student noted, “I didn't like doing [breathing exercises] in the library at first, where I write most of my papers, because there are a lot of people there. I don't like closing my eyes, thinking about my inhalations, when others are around, it makes me extremely uncomfortable.” The usefulness of the breathing exercises, however, tended to win out over the fear of peer judgment: “I don't mind [breathing exercises in the library] anymore, I just do it; I figure no one cares if I close my eyes for a minute. I mean there are people taking naps in the library, so really a breathing exercise isn't that weird or out of the ordinary there. I feel much more concentrated after the exercise so I'll do it in the library.” Many of his classmates took to

using the breathing exercises in the library or other public places because they valued them so much. They also tweaked our classroom practice to better accommodate the distractions of the library.

For instance, another of my students noted in a blog entry that she took to listening to classical music on her iPod as a way of maintaining her mindful and peaceful state after completing the breathing exercises in the library in preparation for her writing. “I definitely had to do some breathing exercises a few times to help me write. My mind was still moving at 100 miles per hour from class, and it [breathing exercises] helped to immediately calm me down.” Another student agrees that *pranayama* helps promote focus on the writing process, holding at bay the other thoughts that could serve to take a writer off track. She states, “I have used both types of breathing, the steady breathing for when you are tired, and the small breath in and long breath out to fight anxiety...Even if I cannot necessarily feel the energy, it helps me to tune out for the class a lot of thoughts about other stuff going through my head.”

Being in the present moment aids students’ concentration as well. “Mentally, I have found ways to gain my focus and concentration before I write and also during my writing. I now know many yoga poses to do this and also special breathing. These rituals really help me to concentrate and I am able to write continuously instead of getting stuck and frustrated while I write.” This response demonstrates how the inability to focus is often both the cause and the source of the negative emotions of the writing process.

Breathing Out Negative Emotions:

Pranayama teaches writers that where the breath is, the heart will be as well. If emotional stress pulls the body and mind in separate directions, then these moments of appreciating the breath teach students that to alleviate such stress, it is necessary to rejoin the body and mind; the breath becomes a vehicle for this. Iyengar tells us that “[t]he breath, working in the sheath of the physical body, serves as a bridge between body and mind” (*Light* 73). Developing skills to channel the breath in hopes that the mind will follow can help writers cultivate successful strategies for navigating the demands of the writing process, demands that are often emotional and stressful for our students (and ourselves). We know of the linking between body and mind through the breath instinctively as we unconsciously take deep breaths before walking on stage, and we are even culturally reminded of the ways conscious breathing promotes focus when a friend encourages us to “just breathe” when we are in the midst of a trying situation, wondering what course of action to take. Breathing mindfully can create positive feelings and cultivate a quieted and calmed consciousness, ready to create.

Learning how to use the breath to refocus their emotional states is important for students who rush from one class to another, hardly giving thought to the ways their performance in one will impact their successful learning in other. For instance leftover anxiety from a test taken in the class before mine can chip away at my students’ concentration, leaving them to fret more over the correctness of their answers on that test than to learn a new reading or writing strategy during our time together. One of my students notes that these stressors, “like [his] math test...fall away when we breathe at the start of class” allowing him to apply a fresh mind and calmed emotional state to our classroom work. “After each exercise, it’s like all my concerns for other classes

evaporated for a while, and I could focus solely on English class. I feel not totally, but somewhat relaxed. It's a good start for the class."

My student might be alluding to the ways *pranayama* helps in development of mindsets that encourage awareness and acknowledgment of feeling in ways that are enabling rather than disabling. This is an applied skill of emotional flexibility. These "motivational mindsets" contain "scripts for dealing with competence-related setbacks" and "beliefs about the malleability of abilities as well as strategies and scripts for how to cope with inevitable setbacks associated with learning new and challenging things" (Roeser and Peck 129). Feeling itself is not unwanted in the writing process, since with feeling comes motivation; what *is* disabling is when negative emotions like stress and anxiety overwhelm the writer. Because emotional flexibility centers on balancing inner and outer pulls, it can help writers "avoid reactive attachment [to feelings and thoughts]...allow[ing] us to observe the contents of our consciousness rather than simply being absorbed by them" (Hart "Interiority" 33). In the end, this override of unthinking reactions to feelings doesn't so much invalidate their importance as it allows us to better understand them, and greater intimacy breeds emotional maturity. "For example, instead of just seething with anger, the contemplative mind may allow a little more space between the anger and us. We might both have our anger and also notice it—'Look at me being angry, what's that about?'—rather than simply being lost in the anger. To notice, accept, embrace and thereby transform our anger may have significant impact on behavior" (Hart 33).

Intimate awareness of our feelings is therefore a key step in developing an emotional flexibility that will allow writers to develop coping strategies and motivational mindsets that help them overcome negative emotions. Highlighting how this process works by attending to the breath, one of my students shared the following story on his class blog:

Today I was feeling really down on myself and felt as though I needed some type of pep talk. After going through the breathing routine on my own, I actually was able to re-energize myself. Afterwards, the work that I had done was so rewarding that I feel motivated to continue writing. Sometimes if I get myself in a slump I need to remember that just one exercise can help me feel better, help me to be able to focus on homework, and to make me want to continue. This is what's so good about the yoga I do, it has a day to day use. I guess this can count as both emotional and mentally flexible.

This student finds a source of resilience and “emotional and mental” flexibility through his practice of *pranayama*. Meditation and yoga has indeed been shown to “promote the construction of attributions to malleable source of difficulty and adaptive source of coping, particularly when confronting setbacks” (Roeser and Peck 129). It is this adaptive coping my student alludes to when he uses breathing as a soothing and calming exercise, much like a private pep talk. As in the discussion of anger above, this student is able to step back from his depressed mood which seemingly leaves him devaluing his abilities as a writer to ask, “What’s up with that?” An alternative to seeking out assurance from

another, an act that may be stilled by embarrassment, is a conscious channeling of positive energy using his breath. This work to transform his mood increases his motivation such that my student feels emotionally-rewarded by his successive writing.

This example from our breathing practice also shows how yoga teaches writers self-compassion, which is a quality upon which the contemplative arts are built. In their article on the usefulness of contemplative pedagogy, Roeser and Peck argue that teaching students to exercise self-compassion helps them “take a kind, non-judgmental, and understanding attitude toward [themselves] in instances of pain or difficulty rather than being self-critical” (Roeser and Peck 129). Given that so many of my students describe the writing process as painful and emotionally dissonant, such an attitude is essential in our composition classrooms. Two additional benefits of self-compassion include greater feelings of confidence and competence among student writers and an increased, intrinsic desire for growth and improvement. College students who exhibit self-compassion are found by Roeser and Peck to focus more on their learning and improvement as opposed to their performance in comparison to others. Studies that Roeser and Peck drawn upon have shown that students who have developed self-compassion are more likely to approach setbacks with a positive mindset and to correlate academic failures less with their sense of self-worth. Self-compassion is specifically correlated to students’ understanding of moment-to-moment fluctuations in perception, taught by breathing exercises, and their increasing ability to become aware of habitual responses in order to redirect them and “create a calm and clear mental context from which to act” (Roeser and Peck 130).

It is this calm and clear context my students describe: “I definitely used breathing exercises to help calm myself down. I get so stressed and generally I use crying as a release for the stress but in this case, it was breathing exercises that helped me to calm down and get my focus back when I got too overwhelmed. I think it worked...only one instance of tears!” And, “I used the breathing exercises to stay calm when things were not coming together as quickly as I planned. I knew that I was on the home stretch of finishing my portfolio so when I went to the library to finish up little things and compile it in the folder I thought it was only going to take me two hours, but it ended up taking me six. I began to get frustrated knowing that I had other stuff I wanted to get done too, but instead of freaking out and getting frustrated like I did in the past I took deep breaths in and tried to stay calm.” Breathing gives my students the ability to override their habitual and negative responses to feelings of stress and anxiety and helps them find control in their emotions, allowing them to redirect the energy of their feelings in more positive ways.

Students don't just gain emotional maturity and confidence in their abilities as writers by using *pranayama*, they also learn more. When students are better able to cope with the negative emotions of the writing process, they are more open to taking risks in their writing. These risks no longer engender the same kind of high-level anxiety they did previously because students' tolerance for ambiguity is improved as is their ability to grapple with multiple and often competing perspectives. “With the yoga we did I feel that I am becoming flexible,” says one of my students. “With this flexibility I can write better because I can take risks [in my writing]. I think that I've become more flexible [as a writer] because I'm able to explore ideas that I would have immediately discarded in the

past. For some reason, the yoga, the drawing and the breathing have calmed my mind so much that there is no longer a haste in the writing process, I no longer bounce incessantly, I no longer need to pace... The lack of pressure allows me to explore things as opposed to sticking a single idea and pushing it to its extremes, possibly too far, all because my sole goal [in the past] was to write the paper and get it over with.” What this comment alludes to is the way the writer can now attend to multiple ideas, perhaps differing perspectives on an issue so that the single-mindedness of the “extreme” focus on one perspective to the exclusion of all others gives way to a more mindful quest to explore relationships.

This students’ comment alludes to the fear of being changed by the writing process, of inviting in ambiguity of thinking. His comment might get us closer to understanding why Iyengar claims that the unconscious mind is actually hidden in the heart and not the brain as we tend to think. To see our unconscious selves as essentially moved by feeling means that it is through an awareness of our current states of feeling and attention to cultivating practices that allow us to identify and reshape our feelings which will allow for transformation. One such practice is *asana*, according to Iyengar, because it uses the body to relax the mind and another is conscious breathing which can balance our emotions (Life 81). Another is *pranayama*. We accept the ways our emotions affect our breathing, for we easily note how stress shortens our breath, leaving it ragged and shallow, and crying interrupts our breathing, leaving us gulping for air. So it is true with the reverse. Attending to the energy of the breath attunes us to the flow of our emotional states because it requires us to be in the present moment and to judge ourselves less harshly as a result.

In the end, this results in growth, according to my students: “Using the breathing techniques, I think that emotionally, I got a lot more relaxed about writing, and that is growth. To be able to accept something as imperfect because it doesn’t have to be perfect yet is growth. To be able to know that you can improve in the future, and to be able to find your own flaws and then smooth them over is growth... [yoga and breathing] helps to allow me to sit and concentrate and not need to constantly move. It allows me to sit. And write. And put my body into the paper. I can use all my senses to their fullest, and I can use myself and my ideas and my inclinations to truly write a good paper, one that shows my growth.” And, “My muscles are relaxed as well as my thoughts and emotions. I’ve realized that they go hand in hand, and work together in one body. The focus and concentration of one is needed to gain the focus and concentration of the other. Therefore, to grow as a writer is to grow as a person.”

As I have argued, acts of emotional flexibility are directly applicable to the writing process. Students who accept the duality of rooting and shifting more easily accept change and are therefore more likely to see writing *as* a process and complete multiple, global revisions; students who can better cope with ambiguity are more likely to respond productively to their classmates’ opposing viewpoints, may be more open to multiple perspectives in other writings, more accepting of the situatedness of knowledge claims and less likely to ignore such complexities in their own writing; students who are able to face with coping strategies the negative emotions called up by writing, such as fear and anxiety, will not only spend more time and energy on their writing but will also take more risks in their writing, leading to increased learning; and students who develop focus will be able to better tackle in-depth topics in their drafts and feel less that they

need to share every idea they have about a particular topic and more than a single topic thread read from a particular lens makes for a stronger paper. Doing all this from the viewpoint that their bodies and experiences are at stake in the writing process keeps our overly-tested students from feeling alienated by their writing and gives them genuine points of growth that apply equally to their writing and their living, hopefully freeing them from a cycle of assessment-based performance and “doing school.”

CONCLUSION:

Between Breaths:

My yoga practice has taught me to develop awareness of the momentary pause between breaths, a seconds-long space between breathing in and breathing out. There is power in this pause. This organic point of stillness unifies body, mind and heart. When practicing *pranayama* together as a class, my yoga teacher encourages us to pay attention to that pause and to respect it as it brings both silence and anticipation; the stillness between breaths acts as a continual hinge or transition point between lungs filled with air and ready to expel and lungs emptied and awaiting refilling. There is a promise of continued, life-giving movement and renewal in that space, so by fully entering it with awareness, we can learn to appreciate where we are and where we must go.

This conclusion is like that pause. Rather than giving closure to past work, it is more a marker of the future, of the anticipated breath yet to come. As I end this writing project, the place I am at right now is one of temporary rest, not closure. As with any good writing project, this one has left me with more questions than answers. And yet, this pause brings new clarity to my project and reaffirms the importance of my original goal of exploring how the body can be productively introduced in our writing classrooms as a framework for and source of meaning. As I wrote the preceding chapters, I taught and brought my developing pedagogy into my classroom so that it could be made stronger through practice; after all, it is because of my students that my respect for the impact of the body on learning first took root, as I relate in my prologue. And as I taught, I realized that when writers, students and teachers, accept our bodies as epistemic origins, we must

adapt, must change our writing processes and physical habits to accommodate the new awareness we have for the shaping powers of our (and others') materiality. In my introduction, I explain this as a process of becoming an embodied imaginer, recognizing how our bodies are engaged in the process of making meaning in our lives and on our pages and how meaning is constantly revised by our flesh. Embodied imaginers, in touch with themselves as body-mind-hearts, understand the potential in the pause between breaths.

The embodied imagination, as I have coined it, highlights my central concern in these pages with how writers *experience* their embodiment and *practice* it rather than on a semiotics of material or cultural placement, even if situatedness remains been a key term to explore this experience. What has hopefully become clear throughout is how I understand the embodied imagination as a dynamic and constantly-developing faculty. My students have shown me this as has my own practice of yoga. To see this physical-conceptual orientation in terms of gradual development is no small matter for the writing classroom since it means that becoming an embodied imaginer is a process and is therefore a skill that can be learned and taught. When students enter my writing classes, very few see any link between their flesh and their papers—and, at first, they tend to like it this way. They give little thought to how their materiality connects them to a larger world of matter of which they are a part and to which, therefore, they are responsible. They are comfortable with their cultural understanding of writing as brain work not body work, even if this is also a reason why they complain of the pain of writing. When they can't recognize the embodied sources of this pain, they cannot develop appropriate coping and learning strategies.

My feminist-contemplative embodied pedagogy shakes them up by asking them new questions about their writing bodies and encouraging them to explore learning through the framework of their entire being, not just some Cartesian sense of mind. Pairing the writing process with the yoga process gives students a reason to pay attention to their bodies not so they can become better at executing poses in our yoga labs per se, but so they can become writing yogis. What this term means to me is that students can become more mindful writers who, in the process of reflecting on their writing bodies and engaging those bodies in contemplative practices like *yogasana* and *pranayama*, develop a corporeal orientation to their bodies and awareness of the physicality of the writing process. As I relate in my chapters, once students get accustomed to reflecting on the embodied nature of the writing process, they become more adept at embodied inquiry, asking how all meaning is ultimately shaped by our flesh and our embodied point of view.

Growing as embodied imaginers, students begin to appreciate the agentic status of bodies and begin to see how bodies shape language *as much as* language shapes them. Understanding that the body is not simply involved in our meaning-making processes, but that it conditions our system of knowledge from the very start, stands in stark contrast to more common understandings of the body as essential or as a crystallization of cultural forces. This way of thinking is more in line with Susan Bordo's feminist resistance to the "general notion, quite dominant in the humanities and social sciences today, that the body is a *tabula rasa*, awaiting inscription by culture. When bodies are made into mere products of social discourse, they remain bodies in name only" (*Unbearable* 35). When students are bodies in name only, it is too easy for writing teachers to ignore their

differences and homogenize students' embodied experiences—both within and beyond the writing process. When we instead introduce a tension between the physical, organic body and the social body through the corporeal lens of embodied writing pedagogy, we allow for productive complications that transform the ways we think about and teach writing and the ways students approach and engage in the composing process. This tension first gives new reason to allow students to use experience as evidence in their essays; this experience can be used to introduce a fleshy presence to the page by visibly allowing the body to shape it and the arguments made. Our experiences are testimonials of our embodied existence, so their inclusion is a step toward validating that existence and its epistemic potential. But changes to what students write in these pedagogies only account for part of the transformation; approaches to writing change too.

When students can imagine writing as bodily, they can work to inhabit their physical writing space with attentiveness and awareness. In other words, when students are cognizant of the physical demands of the writing process and are given opportunity to reflect on the visceral nature of writing, they can develop habits that integrate the energy of their body and mind toward the goals of their writing sessions. This helps them find ways to alleviate the pain of writing because now the demands of writing but can be touched and felt by the body. This means that in moving their bodies by developing new writing habits, my students can reshape the felt experience of writing.

In my interchapters, I examined these physical writing habits and discussed how students created theories about the ways their physical environments impacted the meaning of their prose. One student, for instance, felt the energy of his dorm room

helpful in early stages of drafting because he felt more creative in this loud, social environment—an environment that distracted him just enough that he worried less about getting his ideas perfect at this early stage and more about simply getting them down. In later stages of writing, however, he found it useful to travel outside with his laptop, even if it meant bundling up, because he found the peaceful stillness of nature inspirational for the clarity he needed to revise his own prose. These are ideas my student may never have explored if he had not been given license to engage in such embodied inquiry. Of course, the integration of yoga with writing becomes the biggest means by which I work to make visible the physicality of writing while also giving students a means to navigate this productively. Yoga is certainly not the only means of achieving this end, but it is an effective way and one I value personally as a writer and yogi myself.

Yoga not only gives students time-honored tools to increase their concentration and motivation as well as to decrease their vulnerability to distraction and levels of stress and anxiety about writing, it also helps them understand the importance of process, so dear to the hearts of writing teachers and so often ignored by our students to our frustration. A student from one of my writing courses that utilized yoga approached me recently to write her a recommendation. In the course of our discussion, she mentioned how much my writing class had changed her. She claimed to love the use of yoga and had continued our integrated approach to yoga and writing even though this was not reinforced by any of her other classes. During our discussion, she commented, “I really found the use of yoga for writing helpful, and I now write several drafts when assigned a paper. Sometimes, I even throw away my early ones if they aren’t any good.” What is interesting about this students’ remark within the context of our conference was the ways

she seemed to join writing as a process and yoga as a way to navigate that process. Her words seem to write an equation for writing that indicate, *if* yoga is added to my writing, *then* I will take my papers through several drafts. I have no absolute answers to address why students tend to equate the two, but I give credit to the merits of contemplative practices of mindfulness, like yoga, that teach students to value notions of continued practice, slow growth, delayed gratification and self- and other-directed compassion and awareness. And while there are certainly many ways to teach writing as a process, students seem to appreciate yoga, perhaps because it also gives them transferable skills and tools to navigate their increasingly overwhelming lives.

Students stress the merits of this transfer early on as they use our yoga techniques before tests in other classes and even before sleeping at night. As I read their essays, I also notice how this embodied model of writing helps many find balance and compassion as writers and persons. Teaching difference as embodied often leads to stronger and more pragmatic understandings of social justice and personal transformation through the formation of an embodied, contemplative ethics. And pragmatically, embodied writing pedagogy tends to better equip our student writers to juggle the incessant distractions and demands of their fast-paced, technology-driven modern lives which implicitly ask them to self-define as brains rather than integrated wholes.

Indeed, the ways that my approach to embodied writing pedagogy both dialogues with recent scholarship on contemplative education and converges with a new scholarly and popular interest in the power of mindfulness, exhibited by the recent boom in studies on mindfulness-based stress reduction for instance, is a path down which I will travel

next. I also hope to continue to gather more student feedback as I bring yoga to more writing classes. While my research interests have always veered more toward the qualitative than the quantitative, since I tend to find stories more powerful and transformative than figures, I do recognize the ways my project can become even stronger in the future by using data from more than the two courses I examine here. But just as when I practice *pranayama*, my goal is not to reach the final breath as quickly as I can, the one that will end my session for the day, but it is to relish in the middle. The middle is where I feel the most mindful and aware.

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Worsham, Lynn. "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion."

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Littlefield Publishers, 2001. Print.

Yuval-Davis, Nira and Marcel Stoetzler. "Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge and

the Situated Imagination." *Feminist Theory*. 3.3 (2002). 315-333. Print.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. "What is 'Transversal Politics'?" *Soundings*. 12 (Summer 1999): 94-

98. Print.

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Lehigh University, May 2011

Major Field: Rhetoric and Composition, distinction on comprehensive examinations

Minor Field: Transatlantic Modernism

Dissertation: "Feeling Bodies: Moving toward a Feminist-Contemplative Praxis of Embodied Writing"

Co-directed by Barry M. Kroll and Edward Lotto

My dissertation explores the consequences of stepping away from pedagogies that deny students' and teachers' embodiments and toward embodied rhetorics that view the body as a lived site of knowledge. Working at the intersections between the somatics of learning, feminisms and writing pedagogy, this project reclaims the role of the personal and lived experience for critical, embodied writing.

M.A., Drew University, 2005

Thesis: "Shadows in H.D. and Wittgenstein: Epistemological and Ideological Consequences of a Poetics of the Public."

B.A., Susquehanna University, *summa cum laude*, 2004

Honors Program; *Major:* English; *Minors:* journalism and philosophy

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

First-year Composition

Feminist Rhetorics

Writing and the Body, Disability Studies

Writing Program Admin. & Writing Centers

American and British Modernism

Modernism and the New Woman

Women's Writing/ Women's Studies

Literary Theory, especially feminism

WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Director, Lehigh University Writing and Math Center

2009-present

Increased total number of student writing appointments 67% during tenure. Responsible for the leadership, management and day-to-day operation of the writing center and online writing lab (OWL) in collaboration with the director. Forged new programmatic connections to ESL department in order to meet the demands of a growing international student population.

Assistant Director, First-Year Writing Program, Lehigh University

2008-2009

Co-taught English 485, a graduate seminar on the theories and practices of rhetoric and composition for new teaching fellows in the writing program. Conducted writing workshops

and colloquia for faculty and graduate instructors on topics such as assessing student performance, developing assignments and using new media.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Fellow, Lehigh University

2006-present

Designed and independently taught courses in both composition and literature, including a dual series of freshman composition, English 1 and 2; honors seminar sections of English 11; and English 100, an upperclassman literature seminar.

English 001: Embodying Writing Lives, fall 2010

Speaking and Writing Bodies, fall 2009

How to Do Things with Words, fall 2008

Culture and Identity: From Doing School to Doing Gender, fall 2007

Reading and Writing Cultural Boundaries, fall 2006

English 002: Eating Bodies, Hungry Bodies: The Narratives and Politics of Consumption, spring 2010

Social Capital, Alienation and Belonging, spring 2007

English 11: The Power of Voice: Finding Language, Exploring Literacy, spring 2009

Us and Them: Defining the Self With and Against the Other, spring 2008

English 100: Flesh and Text: The Body in Literature, spring 2011

Instructor, StepUp ESL Intensive English Program, Lehigh University

Fall 2008

Developed and taught an advanced course for graduate and non-traditional ESL students which integrated speaking, writing and listening skills within a cultural studies curriculum. Used portfolio evaluation.

Tutor, Writing and Math Center, Lehigh University

2007-present; Drew University 2004-2005; Susquehanna University 2001-2004

Completed optional training to tutor learning-disabled and ESL students in the center and participated in the online writing lab (OWL).

Writing Instructor, Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, Lafayette College

Summer 2007

Independently created a syllabus for "Writing the Expository Essay," an intense, three-week summer course for 15 gifted, rising 8th-11th graders on the basics of college-level, academic prose.

Instructor, Harrisburg Area Community College

2005-2006

Created syllabi and defined course goals for composition students in developmental, introductory and advanced classrooms, teaching 10 to 25 students per class. Taught traditional, continuing-education students and ESL students in integrated classrooms.

Teaching Assistant, Developmental Writing Program, Drew University

2004-2005

Assisted faculty in an undergraduate developmental composition course by working individually with writing students. Held weekly conferences with each student.

Student Instructor and Graduate, Pennsylvania's Governor's School for Teaching, Summer 1998, Millersville University
Taught local elementary school students (grades 3-5) in standards-based and interdisciplinary classrooms.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

“‘A Buyer’s Market:’ The Implications of the Student-as-Consumer Metaphor and the Commercialization and Renovation of American Universities.” *The International Journal of Learning*, Vol. 11 (2006). (under Christy I. Ellsperman)

CONFERENCES

“Moving the Sticky Mat into the Classroom: Embodying the Writing Process With Yoga.” *College Composition and Communication Conference*, Atlanta, GA, April 2011.

“Feeling Bodies: The Theory and Practice of Embodied Writing.” *Northeast Modern Language Association*, Montreal, Quebec, April 2010.

“From the Body: The Meeting of Matter and Meaning in Embodied Writing.” *College Composition and Communication Conference*, Louisville, KY, March 2010.

“The Personal is the Academic: Revealing Authorial Investments in Academic Discourse through Embodied Literacy.” *Northeast Modern Language Association*, Boston, MA, March 2009.

“Methods of Reading Difference: Dissonance, Discord and Conflict in the Feminist Composition Classroom.” *Lehigh University’s Feminism in Practice Conference*. Bethlehem, PA, November 2008.

“Compassionate ‘I’ Exchanges: Reclaiming the First Person in Academic Argument.” First Person Narrative in First-Year Writing. *Hofstra University Cultural Center*, “*Who Owns Writing? Revisited: A Conference on the Future of Rhetoric and Composition*.” Hempstead, NY, October 2008. (chaired and presented)

“Storied Arguments: Moving Students from the Rational Arguer to the Personal Voice.” Feminism in the Composition Classroom. *Northeast Modern Language Association*, Buffalo, NY, April 2008. (chaired and presented)

“Critically Reading Rhetorical Technology: Facebook in the Writing Classroom.” *American Culture Association/ Popular Culture Association National Conference*. Boston, MA, April 2007.

“A Shadow of the Personal: H. D.’s Public Poetics” *Northeast Modern Language Association*, Baltimore, MD, March 2007.

“‘A Buyer’s Market:’ The Implications of the Student-as-Consumer Metaphor and the Commercialization and Renovation of American Universities.” *11th International Conference on Literacy and Learning*. Havana, Cuba, June 2004.

“Motherhood and Mothering in *The Secret Life of Bees*.” *Mid-Atlantic Woman Studies Association Conference*, Selinsgrove, PA, March 2004.

ACADEMIC SERVICE AND ACTIVITY

Editorial Graduate Assistant, Northeast Modern Language Association
2008-2010

Provided editorial and administrative assistance to both the editor and the executive director. Assisted in the writing and publication of NeMLA’s newsletters. Researched and wrote articles, edited copy and surveyed members using Survey Monkey.

Undergraduate Committee Representative, Lehigh University
2009-2010

Served as an elected liaison between the undergraduate student body and the faculty, bridging student concerns with faculty needs. Aided in establishing a chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Lehigh.

Graduate Committee Representative, Lehigh University
2007-2009

Worked as a liaison during department self-study and external review. Represented graduate students on faculty committees, collaborating with faculty toward new program initiatives such as changing the comprehensive exam and dissertation committee procedures. Led graduate workshops and town meetings and held departmental colloquia. Coordinated mentor program.

Writing Committee Representative, Lehigh University
2007-present

Represented both writing center and writing program needs in faculty meetings. Petitioned for and instituted a gender-fair clause in the university’s guide of policies and requirements for all first-year writing classes. Served as a member of Lehigh University’s “Williams Prize Essay Contest” judging sub-committee.

Steering Committee, Lehigh University’s *Feminisms*.
2008-present

Provided collaborative leadership of a graduate, student-run group committed to activism and education. Organized and advertised film and reading groups. Orchestrated university-wide fundraising events for local charities, hospitals and women’s shelters. Headed a yearly bake sale committee, soliciting local businesses for donations. Drafted advertising and scheduled faculty, staff and student volunteers.

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**Editor of Living & Arts & Reporter, *The Crusader***

2001 –2004

Recruited and trained new staff members for Susquehanna University's campus newspaper. Researched and published articles and copyedited articles submitted for publication. Assigned articles to staff and team-orchestrated weekly editorial board and budget meetings. Utilized desktop publishing/layout software.

Media, Communications and Fundraising Intern, American Cancer Society

Summer 2003

Composed press releases and acted as liaison between organization in Lancaster, Pa and outside media. Created publications, brochures and media alerts for Save-A-Life Swim, Daffodil Days and Relay for Life programs. Led volunteer projects and restructured the project, Save-A-Life Swim, which raised contributions 12% from the previous fiscal year.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

National Council of Teachers of English

Modern Language Association

Northeast Modern Language Association, Editorial Assistant, 2008-10

Society for Collegiate Journalists

Sigma Tau Delta

HONORS AND AWARDS

College of Arts and Sciences Summer Dissertation Fellowship, Lehigh University, 2010

Teaching Fellowship, Lehigh University, 2006-11

University Scholar, Susquehanna University, 2003-2004

Dean's Honor Award, Susquehanna University, 2004

LANGUAGES

Latin

REFERENCES

Barry M. Kroll, Professor of English, 35 Sayre Drive, Drown Hall, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 18015. 610-758-5624. bmk3@lehigh.edu.

Edward Lotto, Associate Professor of English, 35 Sayre Drive, Drown Hall, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 18015. 610-758-3097. eel2@lehigh.edu.

Elizabeth Dolan, Associate Professor of English, 35 Sayre Drive, Drown Hall, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 18015. 610-758-3317. bdk3@lehigh.edu.