

# CHAPTER ONE: THE WRITING YOGI: LESSONS FOR EMBODIED CHANGE



[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*

Mairs is helpful when thinking about what it means to write “as a body.” In the quote from my epigraph, Mairs acknowledges three major consequences of self-consciously negotiating the writing process as a material endeavor: first, when we acknowledge that writing always springs from our material placement, we add authority and transparency to our compositions, no matter how explicitly our content references our body; second, in this process, we necessarily move beyond the rules and structures of “conventional academic discourse;” and third, this movement engages us in a feminist endeavor that disturbs the ways patriarchal power is enforced by a malestream tendency to erase the writer’s materiality in order to create an illusion of objectivity. To write as a body in the ways Mairs describes means disrupting the objectification and marginalization—in other words feminization—of bodies in the academe. No longer is distance from the body a prerequisite to truth; instead, proximity lends persuasiveness.

To understand embodiment as a central facet of feminist composition pedagogy, we must follow the lead of writers like Mairs and accept our bodies as flesh and text. In this chapter, I argue that contemplative writing pedagogy is the best means of achieving this goal while remaining mindful of the consequences of attending to writing bodies. Mairs is an example of a writer who has a greater than usual awareness of her writing body. The quote I use to open this chapter is from her *Waist-High in the World*, which in title and content fronts this author’s literal perspective on the world, her embodied and partial “perpetual view, from the height of an erect adult’s waist” (1996, p. 16). Mairs enacts a method of embodied writing in her text such that situatedness and perspective are always understood as material and connected to her writing body; notably, they are not

simply convenient metaphors for theorizing.

Mairs' perspective is literally one from the margins because her voice resounds from the seat of her wheelchair. She explains the consequences of this "waist-high" positioning:

"[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 (1996, p. 59)

Sitting waist-high in the world isn't a prerequisite for embodied writing, but it does make Mairs mindfully aware of how 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. Ours does too, although we can "stand" to ignore this fact because of our able-bodiedness.

Because bodies and language unfold to reveal each other, Mairs' material reality influences her semiotic understandings and choices. Mairs' recognition of her embodied subjectivity changes how she chooses to reconstruct her world discursively as she finds less value in normative constructions. 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. She 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 open doors (and I get damned sick of waiting in the loo until some other woman needs to pee and opens the door for me). (1996, p. 13)

To deny Mairs' physical reality is to deny her selfhood and her writing body. 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.

Mairs serves as a powerful reminder that while mapping out bodies rhetorically may help us to recognize our cultural construction and the shaping power of language, we cannot lose sight of our very real corporeality. Within the field of composition studies, there are few pedagogical approaches we can easily follow

to reintroduce the tension of the living, organic body as Mairs does within disability studies—and even fewer that respect the kind of embodied self-reflexivity Mairs demonstrates. We can, however, find ways to bring the productive tension of the writing body to bear on composition praxis by approaching this body through the lens of contemplative pedagogy and practices like yoga. Disability studies and contemplative pedagogy may seem strange bedfellows at first glance, but they share a common focus on respecting the body where and as it is. And, just as disability studies was strengthened by overt attention to disability's intersections with gender (a premise upon which Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's work revolves: see, for instance, *Extraordinary Bodies* (1996)), so too can contemplative pedagogies be made stronger for their explicit uptake of feminisms.

Contemplative pedagogies stress embodied self-reflexivity, or the ways the body is an anchor of our self-awareness and can be used as a tool of executing and monitoring this reflexive-reflective attention. The ways contemplative pedagogy forwards an integrative approach to education that addresses students as whole beings, bodies, hearts and minds, leads contemplative educator Zajonc to assert that contemplative educators are “engaged in a revolutionary enterprise” that has the power to radically transform higher education (2010, p. 91). The body is the lynchpin for connection: because the embodied self is partial, she can join others without claiming to be them or erasing their difference. While we tend to approach disability/ race/class/gender as embodied barriers within Western rhetorical pedagogies, contemplative pedagogies see these as bridges to connection. Even when coupled with a heightened awareness of the social dimensions of learning and knowing, what contemplative pedagogies they yet need is a deepened awareness of the feminist nature of such attention. As of yet, contemplative pedagogies are often unaware of the ways reclaiming the body in our classrooms is an overtly feminist act since women typically have been objectified as bodies and emptied as minds in Western culture and education. Consequently, my efforts in this chapter will be aimed at developing a theoretical grounding for a feminist-minded contemplative writing pedagogy that constructs the writer as an embodied imaginer in the ways I outline in my introduction and to the ends of respecting the writing body Mairs pinpoints.

Finding sustainable ways to understand this body, or what remains outside the text, is work that remains to be done on both a theoretical and practical level, according to Sanchez in his recent article on empiricism and identity (2012, p. 236). Sanchez offers a reading of the contemporary moment within composition studies as one that “need[s] more, and different, theory” because “composition's modernist and postmodernist legacies together do not offer enough equipment with which to theorize, examine, and teach writing

in contemporary contexts,” contexts that have us re-examining the role of the writer’s “commonsense materiality” (2012, pp. 235-236). I respond to Sanchez’ call for “different theory” by following Haraway to explore what feminist science studies may offer contemplative writing pedagogy in the way of new, feminist-contemplative models of subjectivity to help compositionists move from theories of writing subjects to “writing yogis,” a necessary first step in addressing the embodied imagination and approaching the writer and her body with mindfulness in the composition classroom. But first, I explain why such a theoretical move is necessary.

## MINDLESS BEHAVIOR

Key to understanding the philosophy of yoga is recognizing its premise that when we cultivate mindfulness of our thoughts and feelings, we can choose our behaviors and move beyond the habitual action-reaction cycle, which dictates how we tend to respond to situations. A re-theorization of the writing subject as a writing yogi, a contemplative writer skilled in embodied imagining, is needed in composition studies precisely because the dominant action-reaction chain that dictates how we approach students’ and teachers’ subjectivity is unresponsive to matter, and mindlessly so. My attempts in this chapter to re-theorize the writer as a writing yogi can be seen as applications of mindfulness from the inside, then, as they pause, listen and respond judiciously in order to create a transformation of self through awareness.

Our mindless or taken-for-granted reaction to matter currently tends to follow the logic James Berlin set forward in his theories of social constructivist pedagogy, reactions themselves to poststructuralist theory. While no longer representative of the cutting edge work in our field, any inquiry into the presence of writing bodies must account for social constructivist pedagogies if only because of the boundaries they have set for what might come next, of what we can build from critical theory. In these theories, Berlin misses the ways the body secures our epistemological perspective with sweeping statements regarding the totality of social construction. Because others have persuasively criticized Berlin’s theories on these grounds (see Fleckenstein’s *Writing Bodies*, in particular), I will limit my comments here. Defending the logic of social epistemicism, Berlin asserts that “the symbolic includes the empirical because all reality, all knowledge, is a linguistic construct” (1987, p. 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 mediat-

ing 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. (2003, p. 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 liberating and as a way to complicate subjectivity via materiality, as the contemplative does, he places meaning and value in discursive constitution. In other words, Berlin, a master policer of boundaries, seems to want closure whereas mindfulness dictates openness. The body and flesh of the writer are dually edged out. Our commonplaces have encouraged a willful ignorance of matter and our pedagogies have, in turn, left the materiality of teachers and students to the domain outside the classroom.

Discourse-community constructivists like David Bartholomae have also overlooked 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 appropriate an authoritative academic persona that will allow them the voice needed to be heard in the academy (*Inventing the University*). As with Berlin, the problem here is not the demystification of academic discourse but the disembodied presumption. These figurations of appropriation are incomplete without a body to literally place the process or flesh to account for it.

Berlin and Bartholomae remain touchstones for anyone interested in tracing the effects of social constructionist theory over the years, but, of course, as a field, we've moved beyond the initial foundation they laid. Yet, interruptions and complications of their early theories have often not moved us much closer to minding matter. Thomas Newkirk's critiques of critical pedagogy's heavy focus on students' transformation address positioning more explicitly but do so mostly on a figurative level. Newkirk finds appropriation models 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. (2004, p. 253)

Newkirk's critique is persuasive but incomplete. He helpfully locates appropriation and ties it to the situatedness of the writer, but still he explains situatedness mostly in discursive terms: students "pretend" by faking a mindset, an attitude. When we view Newkirk's critique from a feminist contemplative perspective, we see that in the appropriation model, we are asking students not only to take on a new discourse but also a materiality not their own, pretending themselves into other (imagined) bodies deemed authoritative or dominant, in turn, willing away their own. Newkirk thus similarly dismisses the inexorable connection between thinking and physical being.

Jane Hindman's mixed-form, academic and autobiographical self-portrait in *Making Writing Matter* shows the deleterious effects of the double appropriation of matter and language when attempting to assert authority within academic writing—in her case, the professional discourse community of composition studies. Reflecting on the limits of academic discourse to represent her situated 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 (2001, p. 98). To ask her to take on another subjectivity not uniquely embodied in this way is to do great damage to her inner life and her writing identity and their connections to her physical beingness. It is akin to viewing Mairs' marginality in linguistic but not literal terms.

By viewing Hindman's critique through Haraway, we can see how the problematic tendency to will away the organic body through the process of writing is endemic to the entire university, not only our field, and how this tendency is entangled with the epistemic function of academic discourse and guaranteed by its history. Responding to Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism*, Haraway argues that the academy's reliance on the scientific method and its partner-in-power, academic discourse, has provided a patriarchal backdrop that has been used to deny the power of materiality by assessing it a limitation, forever abjecting it to the realm of the feminine. If women have been their bodies in Western culture, men, in turn, have been "freed" to adopt a transcendent and hence disembodied subject position that ensures the objectivity of the knowledge

they work to produce.

Haraway elsewhere draws on Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* to argue that this division was solidified by seventeenth century narratives of the Scientific Revolution, 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" (1997, p. 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. Matter remains passive, silent, inactive—a resource from which knowledge can be made but never itself agentic in the making. This is the motivation for the will to discursivity that remains a feature of academic knowledge-making procedures, including the forms of academic discourse our writing pedagogies validate today. As we approach Bartholomae and Newkirk through Haraway, we see that our very understanding of how students come to appropriate academic discourse is based on the concomitant silencing of their bodies.

The separation "of expert knowledge from mere opinion as legitimating knowledge for ways of life ... [is a] founding gesture of what we call modernity" (Haraway, 1997, p. 24), and it is one that has continued to hold sway up through contemporary times. This is evident through the continued valuation of a disembodied subject position within knowledge production and 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 feminist historical account. This modest rhetoric was conceived of as a "'naked' way of writing, unadorned, factual, compelling," 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" (Haraway, 1997, p. 26). Writing, out of necessity, was seen as a technology that could 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 knowledge (Haraway, 1997, p. 26). Observational, scientific reports and claim-driven, academic arguments may retain many differences—such as

the attempt to foreground the evidential framework for a claim in arguments—but they are united in their preference for the disembodied modest witness as invoked author. Both kinds of writing value the kind of substantiated proof that takes the writer's personal beliefs, self interests and embodied perspectives as factors that can be transcended in the pursuit of knowledge or in the recognition of the social construction of the self.

The transparent tale and the disinterested, modest observer remain features of recognizable scientific and (therefore) mainstream academic discourse to this day. We have inherited the value of “naked writing,” or author-evacuated writing. Even in our own rhetorically-sensitive field, the emotive and experiential self, often (mis)understood to be the personal self of expressivism, is feminized, and granted significantly less epistemological agency, if any at all, than the “modest” academic arguer, the “witnessing” critical intellectual, who furnishes appropriately 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* (Olson & Taylor, 1997) especially the chapters *Person, Position and Style* and *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 scholars like 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 witness, 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. (1987, p. 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” (1994, p. 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 feminist critiques as we'd like to think. More recently, Hindman has argued that our field persistently values the same kind of arhetoricity and objectivity Haraway credits as a hold-over from 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 *Writing an Important Body of Scholarship* (2002) Hindman charges professional academic discourse in composition studies with a phallogocentric perpetuation of an epistemology of objectivity, 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” (2002, p. 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.

The modest witnessing required here can be productively challenged by the writing yogi's imaginative claim to her body within feminist contemplative pedagogy. Indeed, we can learn a lot about how to approach matter and writing bodies mindfully by looking to the contemplative practice of yoga. Yogis learn three primary lessons through their practice that are useful when re-crafting the writing subject as material and reconnecting the cognitive and physical aspects of the writing process:

1. Our subjectivity is always first embodied. Our bodies are part of our integral selves because our flesh is intelligent and because our mind/consciousness is diffused throughout the body and is not simply located in the brain or head. To recognize ourselves as body-minds is to see our flesh as a source of power and knowledge. It is to become embodied imaginers.
2. The greatest resources we, as body-minds, have in the quest for awareness are practice and experience. Experience advances the initial wanderings of our imagination and therefore begets wisdom and knowledge.
3. Consequently, it is only with and through the body that we can reach a greater awareness of ourselves and, paradoxically, the world around us—matter is the common thread we share with that world and others in it. Matter is the connective tissue that unifies us with the world so that the yogi's inner turn to the center is simultaneously an unfolding to the external. A journey that accounts for the personal does not, then, dismiss

the cultural but refuses to recognize static separations between the two.

To develop mindfulness of matter in these ways entails being open to a shifting web of positioning and relationality wherein we neither ignore postmodernism's focus on linguistic construction and representation, launching us back into early expressivist or Romantic notions of authentic subjectivity, nor do we allow the deterministic contour of strong linguistic constructivism. Aiding the feminist contemplative writer in this journey to reclaim materiality is an understanding of Haraway's feminist subject. This subject sees her body as instrumental in knowledge-making practices, defining herself neither as a "fixed location in a reified body" or as a "body ... blank page for social inscriptions" (1991c, pp. 195-197). This embodied subject shows us another way, neither squarely essentialist nor anti-essentialist, one in kindred spirit to the contemplative project.

While Haraway may not intend to write as a contemplative pedagogue, her interest in non-Western spirituality aligns her project with my own. She forwards a mindfulness of matter that allows me to explore an embodied representation of the writer within contemplative writing pedagogy, one that integrates the key understandings of the yogi and practices these with a feminist edge. Mindful yogis practice at their "edge," the challenge place where they can embody new imaginings but do so in ways that are sensitive to their embodied realities at the present moment. In the same way, by pairing Haraway's key points with yoga's, I am practicing pedagogy at the edge and turning mindfulness back on itself, asking contemplative education to be aware of its feminist potential.

By dialoguing contemplative practice with Haraway's theories of epistemology in what remains of this chapter, I will work toward a definition of writing yogis as those writing bodies that are consciously mindful or 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 Mairs targets; the difference produces what I have previously referred to as the embodied imagination. My exploration of writing yogis will hinge on the importance of conscious awareness and will refuse to deny the integrity of particular bodies, who are situated in time and place, but who also feel and experience their embodiment as, in part, an expression of interiority. This is the responsibility of awareness assumed by the writing yogi as embodied imaginer. My efforts in the remainder of this chapter will be extended in the following interchapters with pedagogical discussions of how to live out the theories of writing yogis through contemplative classroom practices. By 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 writing yogis can do to reclaim their writing bodies and embodied imaginations within contemplative pedagogy.

## LESSON 1: REPLACE THE MODEST WITNESS WITH THE WRITING YOGI—OR, THEORIZING THE EMBODIED IMAGINER

Mairs' creation of an embodied writing subject is based on her tacit knowledge of being a body in the world. By grounding her writing theory in practice, she advances a central value of the contemplative process. For through practice, the yogi is led to a similar, respectful awareness of her materiality that Mairs attains through the experience of her disability. "The physical body ... is not something to separate from our mind and soul. We are not supposed to neglect or deny our body as some ascetics suggest. Nor are we to become fixated on our body" states Iyengar in his book, *Light on Life* (2005, p. 5), where he documents his philosophies of yoga. His point is that we are our bodies, not just that we have them, and that accepting the vulnerability of the body is both a humbling and liberating experience. Iyengar writes within a contemporary tradition of globalized, international yoga that seeks to blend the teachings from ancient yogic texts like the *Yoga Sutras* with his own understandings as leader of the Iyengar branch of Hatha yoga. His teachings have great merit within the yoga community because they spring from a lifetime of his own experiences of using his own body as an "instrument to know what yoga is" (2005, p. xx). The body teaches if we listen.

Yoga works toward figurative and literal balance and alignment. The point of practicing yoga, including breath awareness, pranayama, meditation, dhyana, and postures, asana, is to help us integrate and align the layers of our embodied being. Only in their alignment will the yogi reach enlightenment and self-realization: "the practice of yoga teaches us to live fully—physically and spiritually—by cultivating each of the various sheaths" toward the end of integration (Iyengar, 2005, p. 5). Asana not only reminds the yogi of her intimate connection to her body but also teaches her to harness the totality of her awareness by learning to work with and through the body: it becomes the source of her self-realization. And so, in learning her body, she learns the nature of the material world: "If you learn a lot of little things, one day you may end up knowing a big thing" (Iyengar, 2005, p. 14).

Iyengar's statements regarding the centrality of the body in creating knowledge and developing awareness detail the first lesson yogis learn through their practice, as outlined at the conclusion of the last section of this chapter: our subjectivity is always first embodied. Not only are our bodies part of our integral selves, but they are also intelligent since the mind is diffused throughout our physical being. If Western traditions tend to see our brain as synonymous with the mind or consciousness, yoga sees the mind as diffused throughout our material being and not simply located in the head. To recognize ourselves in this

way as body-minds is to see our flesh as a source of power and knowledge. Because the thinking and being sheaths of our bodies have “no tangible frontiers” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 6), the journey of the writing yogi is to become aware of the intricacies of the body and the importance of claiming it. Because of her interest in Indian spirituality and non-Western rhetorics, Haraway advocates a similar awareness that comes from recognizing the body as an epistemic origin. In theorizing the contemplative body with her, we can bring feminist mindfulness to contemplative writing pedagogy.

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 (1991c, p. 183). With the objectifying backdrop we have inherited, Haraway argues it is understandable why so many feminists across disciplines have adopted social constructivist thinking, which use the great equalizer of rhetoric to show the historical, contingent nature of truth. With objectivity dismantled, oppressive power structures are revealed and the inherent rhetoricity of the body is questioned. Haraway finds these poststructural narratives of knowledge-making limiting, since they don’t provide adequate grounding for a pragmatic account of the real world (1991c, p. 187). Too many grievously ignore the reality of matter and our flesh in order to secure the epistemological superiority of the modest witness.

Haraway provides an alternative to these narratives by dismantling the modest subject’s source of power: vision. She intentionally reclaims vision as the central metaphor to frame her feminist epistemology, stealing it away from the masculinist “cannibal-eye” (1991a, p. 180) or phallogocentric psychoanalytical significations of lack and recasts it so that “we might become answerable for what we learn how to see” (1991c, p. 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 (1991c, p. 190). Queering the traditional understanding of vision as disembodied 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 it is 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” (1991c, pp. 189-190). Just what kind of objectivity this entails, I will turn to in a moment. Haraway takes pains to insist that what we can see is limited by our body’s composition even if, at the

same time, the meaning we can make of our worlds is limited by the cultural and ideological apparatuses we have internalized. “What we learn how to see” stresses to readers that 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 self-awareness of her 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” (1991a, pp. 160-161). Her modest witness is not modest because she 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. From a contemplative perspective, Haraway roots the modest witness in the realm of the material, so that knowing is anchored equally in the cognitive and the material and is brought together through the medium of experience. In sum, Haraway’s take on feminist vision helps to bring the fleshy knower into view and testifies to her role in the construction of what is (and can be) seen. It further affirms the responsibilities inherent in understanding the process of seeing as associative, social and relational. Literally and metaphorically, this is a kind of connected seeing.<sup>5</sup> That is, it replaces detachment with engagement, connection and interaction.

As Haraway’s quote indicates, the location of the writer-knower 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 contemplative pedagogy 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 or 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 imager 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 awareness of her organic matter, her flesh. Contemplative pedagogy energizes this awareness by understanding it as mindfulness so that the writing yogi does not only maintain focus on her immediate experiences but also faces those experiences openly and with curiosity not hasty judgment.

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 truth—giving reliable testimony—while eschewing the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations” (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000, p. 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. (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000, p. 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 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.

When Haraway’s concept is placed within the framework of feminist contemplative writing pedagogy, I suggest that the feminist modest witness becomes the writing yogi who utilizes the skill of embodied imagining. As a tool for inquiry, the embodied imagination is an introspective skill that directs the writer’s awareness to the ways knowledge of the external world is linked to self-knowledge. It also insists that mindfulness of bodily sensations and feelings can increase

our reflective and reflexive capacities. Iyengar states that yogis are transformed in their contemplative practice of asana and pranayama which “does not just change the ways we see things; it transforms the person who sees” (2005, p. xxi). In turn, the writing yogi who self-consciously claims her embodiment is transformed by a mindfulness of matter that begins with her own body and extends toward other bodies in the world. I outline the consequences of this process for the first-year writing student in the following interchapter. Here, I stress that the writing yogi begins to respect and to take into account how the construction of present realities and future possibilities is based on the knowledge she constructs from experience as well as her affective positions toward other bodies as a result of these experiences. The writing yogi respects her practice as one that creates “knowledge and elevates it to wisdom” by exercising her embodied imagination (Iyengar, 2005, p. xxi). She recognizes intimately that imaginings always occur in the context of material environments and within the frame of her flesh. Our bodies must embrace and enact the dreams and ideas of our intellect for them to mean and to be acted upon.

Through her integrated practice of yoga and writing, the writing yogi recognizes that different bodies produce varying bodies of knowledge and that the expression of a pose or idea may look quite different from one mat to the next, from one paper to the next. Rather than separating, these differences join the embodied imaginer in a humility “that enhances [her] credibility” (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000, p. 159) to others and to nature since, like any one fleshy body, any one body of knowledge is essentially unfinished. Importantly, like Haraway’s mutated modest witness, the writing yogi is modest because she recognizes her intimate connection with the world of matter and the relationship between spirit and nature in which neither are rejected even as they are seen “inseparably joined like earth and sky are joined on the horizon” (Iyengar, 2005, p. xxiii). If in Haraway’s version of feminist modesty we reclaim the body and refuse transcendence, in kindred spirit, the “modest” writing yogi remains connected yet refuses to lose her center like any other experienced yogi: “In a perfect asana, performed meditatively and with a sustained current of concentration, the self assumes its perfect form, its integrity being beyond reproach” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 14).

The stress I place on the integrity of the self, based on Haraway’s theories and the tradition of yoga, differentiates my concept of the writing yogi from the somatic mind as it has been theorized previously in our field. In “Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies,” Fleckenstein asks compositionists to work toward 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” (1999, p. 286). I am arguing for a similarly embodied and connective, but not identical, concept here.

Fleckenstein attempts to get at the writing body through 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” (1999, p. 286). Rather than placing the writer in her body, Fleckenstein defines the writer in the contact between her being and her environment, a kind of spaceless space in the union of these permeable substances. Because Fleckenstein’s concept is complex, an example here is helpful. Like I did earlier, 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. (1999, p. 288)

Corporeal certainty is really uncertainty.

Conceived of ambiguously, Fleckenstein’s somatic mind remains problematic for contemplative writing pedagogies. A more contemplative perspective would see 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 I take following both Haraway and contemplative practice. Hypothetically, based on the ways Fleckenstein equalizes 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 interchangability and dissipation into surroundings here—a move Mairs herself would discredit, I think. 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 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 a vortex of intertextual materialities, we lose the unique experience of what it means to be humanly embodied. What it means to be integral or whole is not to be of one inviolable piece so much as it means, in both Iyengar's and 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 or corporeal certainty to the doorway or merging our agency with it. 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 (1991c, pp. 195-197). So while I 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 contemplative writing yogis. For me, this is a more responsible conception since the door cannot experience Mairs as she can it.

Marilyn M. Cooper addresses this problem of agency in her recent *Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted* when she argues, "[w]e experience ourselves as causal agents, and any theory of agency needs somehow to account for that experience. And we need to hold ourselves and others responsible for what we do" (2011, p. 437). In this article, Cooper argues for an interactional model of causation, one that accounts for the ways

an orator does not coerce; he merely puts words into the air. In the brief moments of conscious or unconscious reflection that occur while we listen to a sales pitch or a campaign speech, an active process of evaluation and assimilation occurs in our minds . . . . When someone sits back and decides, "All right, you have persuaded me," he is not merely describing something that has happened to him. In spite of the grammar, he is describing something he has done. (2011, p. 437)

What this scene gets at is Cooper's desire to construe agency as "emergent" (2011 p. 421), as a product of relations and actions, whether conscious or unconscious,

and not of simple causation wherein a certain action causes a particular effect in linear fashion. Cooper's understanding of agency as emergent is congruent with a contemplative emphasis on the agency of movement; however, her assumption that if agency is emergent and mobile, it can never rest in an individual is not harmonious—for the same reasons the somatic mind is not—with the contemplative approach I present here.

For in this contemplative approach, the objects and subjects of positioning are not reducible to each other, but are rather always embracing each other as the yogi simultaneously embraces her center and her environment. In his post-modern study of yoga and Buddhist philosophy, George Kalamaras notes that

[p]aradoxically, the yogi, through various meditative practices, withdraws consciousness from the periphery of the body in ways which heighten the inner sensorium; in total intimacy with a “center” of awareness, then, the advanced mediator's consciousness expands to embrace the immensity of the universe, moving beyond all awareness of limitation, psychological borders, or psychic “circumference.” (1997, p. 9)

This never diminishes the integrality of the individual or her ability to consciously act in the world—even if she recognizes her ability to produce effects on that world is as much imaginative as it is real. I will take this argument up once more in my third chapter when I discuss how the acts of extension and expansion allow us to understand embodiment as both an experience of interiority as well as exteriority. In this chapter, I will revisit the concept of integrity once more in the final section by attending to Haraway's notion of companion species. But first, I explore the connections between the embodied imagination and Haraway's concept of situatedness.

## LESSON 2: WRITING YOGIS EMBRACE SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

So what then defines the partial, modest knowledge of the feminist witness or embodied imaginer? Situated knowledge, a paradoxical “embodied objectivity” (1991c, p. 188) is defined as what will allow for a feminist retooling of the knowledge-making process while not discounting 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” (1991b,

p. 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 (1991c, pp. 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. (1991c, p. 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.

Haraway’s call to learn in our bodies is realized by contemplative pedagogies that advance learned mindfulness through the practice of yoga. “Yoga is something you do” Iyengar tells us, “a conceptual understanding of what we are trying to do is vital, as long as we do not imagine that it is a substitute for practice” (2005, p. 108). Yoga teaches us to recognize and reflexively inhabit our embodiment “to name where we are [and are] not,” just as Haraway invites us to do. Like Haraway, Iyengar encourages us to imagine our goals and the future outcomes of our practice, but he warns us to not take such imaginings as reality until they are also embodied. We embody through practice just as we create knowledge through experience. Situated knowledge is exactly what yogis create on their mats when they practice asana and pranayama, learning their “particular and specific embodiment” and therein understanding how their bodies influence the knowledge they make. Because they recognize this, yogis often speak of the problems created when comparing or judging one’s version of a particular pose with another’s. Each body is different, located in time and space uniquely, which manifests an integral interiority and exteriority that cannot be reduced to another’s. Thus, my virkasana, or tree pose, will look different than another yogi’s; to expect sameness is to deny our particular embodiments and might lead to injury. Learning yoga therefore becomes a way for writers to begin to value situated, and not transcendent, knowledge: “in this way, the practice of asana, performed

with the involvement of all elements of our being, awakens and sharpens intelligence until it is integrated with our senses .... All of our bones, flesh, joints, fibers, ligaments, senses, mind and intelligence are harnessed” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 14). Engaging our flesh leads to deeper, more impactful learning and respect for locatedness.

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. 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 long quote above from Haraway underscores. But when we recognize our embodiment as essential to meaning making, we begin to realize that vision from nowhere or from everywhere, are equally impossible. 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. As in yoga, “[t]he self is both perceiver and doer. When I use the word “self” with a small s, I mean the totality of our awareness of who and what we are in a natural state of consciousness” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 14).

Unlike other knowledge processes, which produce independent or “true-in-themselves” facts, situated knowledge “initiates” according to Haraway’s same passage above. 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, in turn, 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 contemplative: 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.

### LESSON 3: WRITING YOGIS SEE THE WORLD IN TERMS OF CONNECTIONS

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” (Haraway, 1991c, p. 187).<sup>6</sup> 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” (1991c, p. 161) Haraway reminds us. As a critical and reflexive practice, situated knowledge thereby enacts feminist connected knowing.

Connected knowing values the historical and experiential by taking on a relational orientation to what 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., 1973, pp. 113-123). 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., 1973, p. 178). This is quite unlike a hierarchical pyramid where one must “move a mountain” to effect substantial change (Belenky et al., 1973, p. 179). Iyengar describes connected knowing similarly in the language of yoga: “In asana our consciousness spreads throughout the body, eventually diffusing in every cell, creating a complete awareness. Asana is the “broad gateway” that teaches us to discover awareness through our bodies and to keep our bodies “in harmony with nature” (2005 p. 11). It is this focus on connection that characterizes the contemplative.

Contemplative pedagogy theorized through Haraway recognizes that differ-

ence 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.<sup>7</sup> 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” (1991c, p. 161). Contemplative pedagogy is about working with difference toward a state of balance, starting with the writer’s connection between her body and the body of the other.

The yogi understands her body as intimately connected with and as part of a larger world of matter, of nature. Thus, in exploring her “own body, [she is] in fact exploring ... nature itself” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 22). In the tradition of yoga, we, as individual material bodies are a part of nature; nature, or prakrti, is “all that is practical, material, tangible, and incarnate” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, as I noted earlier, it is only with and through the body that yogis can reach a greater awareness of ourselves and, paradoxically, the world around us, since matter is the common thread we share with that world and others in it. The yogi’s inner turn to the center is simultaneously an unfolding to the external. A journey that accounts for the personal does not, then, dismiss the cultural but refuses to recognize separations between the two. “Individual growth is a must, and yoga develops each individual” says Iyengar, “[b]ut your body is an image of the world around you: it is a big international club” (2002, p. 11). Yoga’s understanding of the self as prakrti means that not only are we situated in and among the matter of the earth, but that our understanding of the world is always fixed to our placement in it. This doesn’t mean that our understanding or placement is static—quite the contrary. The situatedness of our understanding means that like nature, we too are constantly changing. I’d like to put these contemplative understandings in dialogue with Haraway once more to complete the feminist epistemology I’m building in this chapter for contemplative writing pedagogy.

Haraway, like Iyengar, argues that when we talk about bodies, we talk about the world; “our” flesh is the matter of the world. She calls this “significant otherness” and discusses how it changes our relationship to other species, what we might now perceive as 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” (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000, p. 140). Extending her conversation about the interconnectedness of nature and culture and, therefore, of subjects and objects, 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, she reconceptualizes human evolution from this ecologically-minded trope of “significant-otherness.” Conventionally, we deem those closest to us, our significant others. Suggesting close-bonds between animals and humans, this 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” (2003, p. 6).

Of herself and her dog, Ms. Cayenne Pepper, she says, “We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh” (2002, p. 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. This entails a radical shift inasmuch as each being must now be seen as literally constituted in its relation to others. 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 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 usage of “companion.” Questioning the effects of her and Cayenne’s interactions within *Notes from a Sportswriter’s Daughter* from *When Species Meet* (2008), Haraway details 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?” (2008, p. 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. (2008, p. 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’” (2008, p. 16).

If we understand Haraway’s figuration of companion species as a means of establishing the centrality of relationships within a feminist materialist epistemology, we not only see the coherence between Iyengar’s discussion of the connectedness of all matter by virtue of its belonging to the state of *prakarti* but we can see the ways significant otherness in Haraway’s formulations are implicated in contemplative practices’ focus on “reciprocal revelation” (Hart, 2008, p. 236). Contemplative educator Tobin Hart defines reciprocal revelation as the “willingness to really meet and, therefore, be changed by the object of inquiry, whether a new ideas or a new person” (Hart, 2008, p. 236). It is this kind of revelation of our infinite mutability in the face of others that prompts Iyengar to marvel at the openness developed by the yogi who recognizes that “we are a little piece of continual change looking at an infinite quantity of continual change” (2005, p. 7). To understand significant otherness or reciprocal revelation, we must be willing to first acknowledge our interdependence with the larger world of matter, which encompasses but never diminishes us, and second, we must recognize how this requires our full presence in the moment of meeting others, a skill developed by contemplative practice.

Haraway shows us how reciprocal revelation rewrites the history between dogs and humans and in so doing, illustrates what revisionist accounts that forward mutual responsibility and respect might do to “produce a female symbolic where the practice of making meanings is in relationship to each other” (Haraway 1995, p. 56). 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 . . . and more confident parallel



occupation of areas also occupied by dangerous humans” (Haraway, 2008, p. 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” (2004, p. 305). Not to be overlooked is wolves’ opportunism and “choice” to interrelate in this story; humans, after all, provided food and shelter. To ignore these species’ entanglements is to refuse to respect meetings between selves and others—whether they are animals and humans, humans and humans, or minds and bodies. And to acknowledge these entanglements, we must attune our ability to be contemplatively present in the world so that we might respond to it and not simply react.

Haraway uses her discussion of companion species to refine her understanding of subjectivity within her feminist epistemology; in doing so, she brings us even closer to a contemplative subject understood through the lens of *prakarti*. Because the body is part of a material world that extends far beyond our powers of discursive construction, it refuses to be dominated or written entirely by our narratives and is storied by nature itself. The self she defines can be understood as a yogi: “[s]ince yoga means integration, bringing together, it follows that bringing body and mind together, bringing nature and the seer together, is yoga. Beyond that there is nothing—and everything” (Iyengar, 2002, p. 48). How we get students to begin to see themselves in such integrative ways, as writing yogis, is the subject of my first interchapter.

To reflect companionate duality, Haraway calls subjects material-semiotic agents. By highlighting the material and the linguistic in one term and hooking agency on both, Haraway reminds her reader that this is a subjectivity 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 and respects the agency given to matter in Eastern philosophies like yoga. The contemplative insight 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 situated knowledges. For, epistemological meaning rests just as much on materiality as it does on language.

Mairs claims as much in *Waist-High in the World* when she notes that it is impossible and dangerous to represent her mind as superior to and separate from her failing M.S.-stricken body, as if her body were a mere object that could be divorced from her self. Mairs so interweaves her subjectivity with her body that when speculating about who she would be without her chronic disease she answers, "Literally, no body. I am not 'Nancy + MS,' and no simple subtraction can render me whole" (1996, p. 8). While she recognizes that she can choose to write about topics that don't include her health or explicitly refer to her body, Mairs argues that writing without her body is impossible, that her writing identity is entangled with her material reality (1996, pp. 9-10). Mairs is mindful of the ways she is her body largely because she has to be; she simply does not have the luxury of divorcing her subjectivity from her material reality because her material positing affects the literal, not just figurative, position of her perspective. Importantly, embodied subjectivity is to Mairs constructed as much by her brain chemistry as by cultural configurations of her semiotic tags and biological realities as a "depressed MS sufferer" (1996, p. 42). Calling herself a "creature" of her "biochemistry" (1996, p. 42), Mairs sees bodies as more than mere objects of knowledge or that which is merely marked by the discursive, thinking subject. By using Mairs as an instructive 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 union of language and the body. These are the options feminist contemplative writing pedagogy secures.