

# CHAPTER THREE: SITUATING FEELINGS IN CONTEMPLATIVE WRITING PEDAGOGY



It is difficult to speak of bodily knowledge in words. It is much easier to experience it, to discover what it feels like

—BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life*

In 2003, UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) began a multi-year study to document the emotional and spiritual development of undergraduate college students. Researchers based the study on the premise that institutions of higher learning “have increasingly come to neglect the student’s ‘inner’ development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, self-understanding, and spirituality” (2005, p. 5). In 2005, HERI released its report on this study. This report found that of college students “more than two-thirds (69%) consider it ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ that college enhance their self-understanding, and a similar proportion (67%) rate highly the role they want college to play in developing their personal values” (2005, p. 6). Another 63% of students want college to provide for their emotional development (HERI, 2005, p. 6). These high percentages should give us pause. Our current educational default is to divide a student’s so-called personal life and growth, what the study refers to as “inner development,” from the critical enterprise we often take as the sole ground on which we can and should teach. But, this is not what our students claim they need.

The results from the HERI study directly support the pragmatic mission of contemplative education to teach the whole persons in our classrooms, taking an integrative approach to students’ outer *and* inner lives—in precisely the ways they are asking that we attend to them. To learn in their bodies, students must consciously approach their thinking, feeling and being as joined. A contemplative approach is fueled by mindfulness, awareness cultivated by present-centered attention that seeks to watch and not immediately judge unfolding experiences, ideas and feelings, anything that passes through the filter of our mind-bodies. In their attempt to create an operational definition of mindfulness through a careful review of existing literature in both Buddhist and secular traditions, Scott R. Bishop and his team of researchers note that mindfulness establishes a change

in perspective when attending to our inner experience. That is, while open to present-moment experience when engaged in a practice of mindfulness, we learn to focus on the process of our awareness as opposed to simply its content. We become more process-directed. So, “in a state of mindfulness, thoughts and feelings are observed as events in the mind, without over-identifying with them, and without reacting to them in an automatic, habitual pattern of reactivity” (Bishop et al., n.d., pp. 8-9). Through this process of self-observation, we learn to monitor and regulate both our thoughts and emotions using a conscious mode of acceptance. This mode of acceptance is contemplative, not conventional; it does not reduce the self to its thoughts and emotions because mindfulness creates a space between perception and response. This space invites recognition not unconscious attachment, which can be used in a complementary process of delayed assessment and, perhaps, eventual change. These mindful self-observations are “meta” moments of awareness. Educators call this process “metacognition,” naming the strategy that learners use to manage and monitor the learning process; contemplative practitioners, like yogis, call it “insight” for the same reasons. Because “mindfulness is thought to enable one to respond to situations more reflectively (as opposed to reflexively)” (Bishop, 1997, p. 9), we can understand it as a conscious strategy of metacognition.

Contemplative pedagogies that use mindfulness as a heuristic, practice and tool to build students’ awareness therefore have the ability to increase students’ development of metacognitive insight, as I explored in my second interchapter by looking at this term through the lens of the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. This process has implications for the HERI findings: the cultivation of mindfulness through contemplative practice has the potential to increase students’ self-understanding and, in turn, provide them with the tools to better understand their cognitions, feelings and personal values, characteristics of education that students claim to be missing in traditional educational structures. These structures, according to Fleckenstein, in privileging only the mind’s role in learning, have “divided human beings from the affective or spiritual basis of learning” (1997, p. 26). Contemplative education’s mission of mindfulness attends to students’ whole being, addressing previous omissions of emotion and spirituality in learning. And because mindfulness involves both a process of rooting into oneself as well as shifting out toward others, as I’ve explained in earlier chapters, it can help students learn to pair inner awareness with social responsibility. Indeed, the integrative approach of the contemplative insists that we stop dividing our educational missions along an inner/ outer binary: it isn’t possible to teach social responsibility without attending to inner awareness. In the words of contemplative educator Zajonc, “[w]e attend, the

world forms around us ... and so on cyclically. In this way, attentiveness works back on us as formation” (2010, p. 91). Our students’ emotional lives are intertwined, then, with their intellectual and civic pursuits.

Feminist theorist Allison Jaggar argued for an inclusive view of emotion years ago, well before Antonio Damasio (cf. *The Feeling of What Happens*) reasoned that thinking and feeling aren’t divisible since the mind is embodied. Jaggar warned us that

time 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. (164)

Our pedagogies are nothing if not political, making Jaggar’s statements valid for the contemporary writing classroom. In what follows then, I hope to examine the theoretical and the practical consequences of making emotions pedagogically visible in the contemplative 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 contemplative 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. Such efforts support our students’ quest for a meaningful education, as represented in the HERI findings.

In a spirit of inclusivity, I refuse the closure of defining feelings as entirely linguistic *or* organic and of delineating between cultural affect, psychological emotions or physiological feelings in what follows. Instead, I borrow education theorist Meghan Boler’s comprehensive definition of feeling<sup>19</sup> 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 (1999, p. xix). If feeling is material, it also discursively shaped too: “[t]here is, as well, a powerful linguistic dimension to our emotional awareness, attributions of meanings, and interpretations” (1999, p. xix). A holistic definition of feeling 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 contemplative pedagogy and by yoga.

I will extend my previous analysis of Haraway's concept of situated knowledge, which I engaged as part of a contemplative epistemology in the last chapter, to include a corollary dimension of what I call "situated feeling" in the pages that follow. By recognizing how emotions and knowledge are entangled, I argue that feminist contemplative writing pedagogies give us ways of recognizing exactly how emotions impact writing and provide us a method by which they can be productively theorized and engaged within composition studies. As I locate my enactment of contemplative education within the practices and philosophies of yoga, I will suggest how we can involve our students in a situated process of feeling by teaching them an Eastern-inspired "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, understood to be writing yogis in contemplative pedagogy, to approach their feelings with openness and resilience in order to become more flexible writers. But first, I briefly 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 meaning making and self-determination within the praxis of feminist contemplative writing pedagogy.

## "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 critics of emotion in composition leveraged their social models against cognitivism, which, they claimed, ignored the impacts of language for the biology of emoting. Even so, while early cognitivist investigations of emotion have fallen out of favor for social-constructivist views of emotion as situated, Alice Brand's original message from those investigations that "[o]ur students need to be familiar with both the emotional and intellectual cues they experience that tell them they are ready to write, ready to stop, and ready to do a number of things in between" is as true and valid as ever (1985/1986, p. 11). The terms we use to explore these cues have changed, and

compositionists such as Laura Micchie, Susan McLeod and Lynn Worsham have asked us to re-examine early dismissals of emotion by critical pedagogues who did not find appeals to biology compelling. These women have attempted to reconcile early biology-based conceptions of affect with newer theories of discursive construction and social conditioning. Their scholarship has helpfully created a new wave of attention to emotion within composition studies, but it has often done so at the cost of entertaining the body as an agentic emoter, a feature of contemplative writing pedagogies. This is a point I will develop in the next section. For now, I'd like to focus on what should trouble us all: even 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 writing body from our classrooms—no matter if we approach these from the lens of discourse or biology.

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 (1991, p. 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, 1991, p. 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 knowledge counter to those recent, progressive theories of affect. I argued in the last chapter that our situated knowledge, informed by our experiences, can be used as a means of making critical the integration of personal, embodied evidence and social analysis in the writing classroom. Here, I contend that 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. We must be mindful of their lived presence and effects if we hope to change them—why I take the time here to explicitly recognize their deleterious effects.

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 shared tales of memorable classroom experiences, nostalgic at the end of yet another semester, my colleague noted that a student had recently cried in her presence. When I asked her how she responded, she looked genuinely 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. This colleague seemed shocked to hear me tell stories of teaching encounters that validated and perhaps even encouraged student emotion, sharing moments when I hugged a student in distress and when I invited another student on the verge of tears over his lackluster performance on an essay and extenuating personal circumstances (his parents were divorcing) to my office to talk through his feelings and frustrations.

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 students. It has always been curious to me how 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. Worsham argues that the absent-presence of feeling is perpetuated because we are taught a limited means of emotional expression and identification. Such silencing of emotion, guaranteed by our limited vocabulary, is a primary form of “pedagogic violence” meant to uphold the patriarchal status quo (Worsham, 2001, p. 240). Evoking the writing body, feelings become a “phantom limb” we must learn to suffer in silence (Worsham, 2001, pp. 247-251). 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 (Worsham, 2001, p. 240). The invited and critical expression of emotions is, then, an inherently a feminist endeavor and is fruitful ground for contemplative writing pedagogies.

But like the phantom limb that contradicts its non-presence when it tingles with pain, emotional expressions often do occur in our classrooms and offices, even if they are uninvited. I’ve heard colleagues label these moments as “outbursts,” criticized on the grounds that they are only too telling of students’ lim-

ited analytical powers, which makes students overly reliant on emotional cliché and performance. This pat response is best unpacked through Dawn Skorczewski's analysis of student writing, which investigates why students' beginning written discourse is often a hybrid blend of cliché and critical analysis. Cliché doesn't mean our students aren't thinking, Skorczewski claims as she examines student writing, only that they are using the ordinary language available to them to express those thoughts. Important to my analysis here, Skorczewski's notes that the clichés students use are often emotionally-loaded. Skorczewski's advice regarding teachers' reactions to student cliché might, in turn, be helpful to consider when approaching emotional discourse in our writing classes. Skorczewski's reminds us that "critical thought [may be] a kind of safe house for [teachers] in the same way that cliché can be for our students" (2000, p. 234). In other words, we judge our students' conceptions and expressions of their inner selves based on the ways we have ourselves been taught to mistrust personal and emotional language in favor of the discursive certainty of the poststructuralist self. As we acknowledge students' "lack of familiarity with how emotions work, we need to recall ways in which faculty embody or fail to embody critical emotional literacy as they situate themselves within the disciplinary culture of their fields" (Winans, 2012, p. 154). It would therefore be a greater critical (and feminist) gesture for us to revise our pedagogical rules and view awareness of our emotional positioning as a teachable skill in the writing classroom than for us to simply dismiss feeling altogether or write it off as clichéd and meaningless. Simply recognizing the flippant manner with 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" (Skorczewski, 2000, p. 236).

Here, following Skorczewski's gesture of rhetorical listening, I am interested in what changes when we begin to apply mindfulness to student emotion, viewing it not only as a readily-accessible discourse, 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. In the next interchapter, I explore how contemplative pedagogy provides us a means of engaging student emotion and validating it as a generator of writing and meaning. 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. Mindful discussion of emotion is necessary for us to create an environment where metacognition is a necessary and teachable feature of the writing pro-

cess, as monitoring and controlling one's thoughts requires both motivation and continued effort, both of which are affective in nature. As Fleckenstein notes, we must talk to our students about how "much of writing consists of explosive moments of conflict ... balanced—if we are lucky—by mystifying moments of flow" (1997, p. 28). In addition, we might also talk about the joy and pleasure of writing with our students. In the next section, I suggest that the concepts of "situated feeling" within contemplative writing pedagogy can help us perform this important work of recognizing the rhetorical and material effects of feeling.

## SOLVING THE "PROBLEM" OF EMOTION THROUGH SITUATED FEELING

In Chapter Two, I treated situated knowing and feeling separately in order to develop a theory of situated knowledge for the feminist contemplative writing classroom; however, this separation is more reflective of the linear nature of a book than it is an indication of their status as separate faculties around which we can draw definitive lines. Contemplative approaches, in seeing education and learning as embodied, recognize that "full comprehension that arises as the fruit of contemplative pedagogy is not a remote, abstract, intellectual knowledge, but a form of beholding (*theoria*) that is fully embodied, which means that it entails aesthetic and moral dimensions as well as cognitive ones" (Zajonc, 2010, p. 91). 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 composers<sup>20</sup> 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 contemplative writing pedagogy, I am interested in seeing emotions as "situated feelings," marked by their corporeality as well as their social positioning, which creates and reflects the 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. An embrace of the material via this feminist contemplative 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 lore-driven practices, as demonstrated in the last section, and a means of increasing our limited vocabu-



lary of emotion in composition studies.

To review, Haraway defines situated knowledge as a feminist epistemology based on “particular and specific embodiment”<sup>21</sup> (1991c, p. 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 (1991c, p. 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 claiming a mainstream, postmodern situatedness, as has become routine among compositionists. As we’ve moved toward postmodern definitions of situatedness as the contingency surrounding all meaning, based on our placement in discursive systems that structure what and how we know, our pedagogies have typically closed out matter. Keeping a tension between mainstream constructivism and pedagogical alternatives, expressivists like Elbow and Lad 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 pedagogies that rely too heavily on the exclusion of the “personal” for the social or vice versa, moving beyond inattention to the body. Situatedness from a Haraway-ian lens mediates: 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 meaning outside the text. 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” (1991c, 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). Alternately, Haraway advocates a strong embodiment in which the body is not just a window for knowing the world but is the map that structures our mapping of the world. We might even say that embodiment is knowing in this contemplative paradigm.

Embodiment is also feeling. The web-making process of situated knowing is one of “passionate construction” according to Haraway and “resonance, not ... dichotomy” (1991c, pp. 194-195). 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. 1973, p. 121). Because it invites feeling and sees emotion as critical and necessary to meaning, connected knowing advocates the epistemological stance of the “passionate knower” (1991c, p. 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.

In exercising both mindfulness of her means of creating knowledge and the ways that knowledge ties her to others, the writer who takes on the role of embodied imaginer navigates a problem-solving context in which current emotional states, levels of motivation and perceptions of control are constantly being assessed through the introspective and reflective application of metacognition. The most recent educational research recognizes that affect and metacognition are bound together in much the same ways I am arguing that body and mind and feeling and knowing are linked in the contemplative. Preceding evaluative judgments of learning and knowing, “metacognitive feelings inform the person about a feature of cognitive processing, but they do it in an experiential way, that is, in the form of a feeling, such as feeling of knowing, feeling of confidence” (Efklides, 2006, p. 5). Writers who reflect on their learning between drafts of the same paper, for instance, do not do so in a cool and calculated way. They may ask themselves questions like, “How well am I understanding my audience’s needs?”, only to find that they are producing more writer-based than reader-based prose. Whether or not this becomes a moment of frustration and defeat in which the writer gives up or one of hopeful challenge in which the writer faces the problem with motivation and confidence in her ability to work through the recognized issue is feeling-laden. As I explore in the next interchapter, oftentimes, a writer’s ability to be aware of her body’s reaction to such a reflective process is key to her consciously processing the impact of her feelings on her writing process and using those feelings toward positive change and outcomes. As I will show there, if she can use her breath to work through the tensions of problem-solving, she may perceive her control of the situation to be greater than if she is unaware of this embodied tension.

Here, I’d like to focus on how the embodied imaginer, who understands meaning-making through the lens of situated knowledge, is summarily engaged in a process of situated thinking *and* feeling. In this contemplative process, it is understood that:

- 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.

- The body is the origin of both feeling as well as thinking. Both processes must be interwoven to create responsible, local knowledge.
- Our understanding of feeling is primarily experiential but our common embodiment, which can be seen as a promising and productive “limitation,” produces certain schemas of emotion 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.
- 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.
- 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 enmeshment of feeling and thinking. Situated knowledges are, in part, marked by feeling since they both place us in a material body and spatialize us in the world. Situated feeling highlights the ways materiality and discursivity are yoked in circles 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 natural. 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 alternatives like Laura Micciche’s more performative “rhetorics of emotion” (2007) because the latter too often establishes the body as a discursive marker, denying its agentive materiality. Despite a weaker focus on the body than I am calling for, Micciche has done much recent work in composition studies to make emotions visible and intelligible, and her book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching* 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 among the rhetorical appeals. 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” (2007, pp. 1-2). It is with the latter, the doing of emotion, that Micciche is concerned.

Micciche’s work raises fruitful questions about how contemplative writing pedagogies might take up the meaning-making potential of situated feeling. While not aligning her work with embodiment 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 (2007, p. 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 motor 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 and metacognitive insight.

Micciche is as resistant to understanding emotion simply as a quality of the private mind as I am, since it is this kind of “commonsense” 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 personal example I used to frame this chapter and leads Bartholomae to argue that expressivism, the pedagogy historically 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” (1990, p. 69).<sup>22</sup> 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.

Micciche understands emotions as “emerging relationally, in encounters between people, so that emotion takes form between bodies rather than residing in them” (2007, p. 13). A relational, constitutive understanding of emotion underscores it as a rhetorical “technology for doing” (2007, p. 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” (2007, p. 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, 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 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 (2007, p. 27). The term takes on a webbing conception connecting the individual who feels to a larger network of material subjects and objects by the web-spinning of language as it works like a spider.

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 the ways 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 (2007, p. 28). Micciche's point is that composition's emotionated response, which is a central feature of its 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 (2007, p. 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" (1999, p. 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" (1999, p. 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 One, when Butler extends her performance theory to sex, the body becomes a sign emptied of its materiality.<sup>23</sup> To testify to the social construction of sex, Butler encourages us to see matter as "a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface" (1993, p. 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" (2007, p. 13, emphasis added). This binary is reflected in her desire to divorce emoting from rhetorics 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. In sum, it recaptures the presence of the contemplative writing body, the writing yogi, a term I fully explain in Chapter One.

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 contemplative 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 the classroom. 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 (Micciche, 2007, p. 58).<sup>24</sup>

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, her feeling center, seems lost here for the performance of the author's. Rather than using only the projected personae of authors, in contemplative pedagogy, students would be just as likely to read their own written texts. Such reading could lead to productive discussions about how emotion is flexibly situated depending on the reading and the reception of a text. This practice could show how our 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; it might also reveal an unexpected disruption, creating emotional dissonance for the author of the text which may or may not be felt by other readers. Another option might be for us to engage students in an embodied and experiential analysis of their emotions as they relate to their understanding of how their writing selves are created. Amy Winans describes a potential activity in her article advocating contemplative pedagogies within literature classes that engage students in an examination of difference and a questioning of privilege. Indeed, she argues that we must attend

to emotional literacy if we ask students to confront difference in our courses. Winans sees contemplative practice as a means of engaging students in analytical and experiential engagements with their emotions toward the end of developing critical emotional awareness (2012, p. 152). Winans asks students to “spend ten minutes outside of class standing in a public place doing nothing—without pretending to be doing something (waiting, checking a phone, people watching, looking for something” and to write a paper about that experience (2012, p. 160). This contemplative activity is meant to promote students’ analysis of silence and any emotions of discomfort caused by engaging directly in experience without distraction. Winans concludes that such contemplative practice both allows students to feel the way their identity shifts in their interactions (or lack thereof) with others and also how their bodies are implicated in emotional responses. With this recognition comes the responsibility to analyze emotions that result from habitual thinking and the responsibility to recognize how our emotional states can impact the ways we can make and interpret meaning from experience (Winans, 2012, p. 161). Contemplative exercises like these can show students that there is movement and stickiness in situated feeling 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 contemplative embodiment. Contemplative philosophy and feminist theory together provide 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.

## 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 its 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. What may matter most to contemplative writing pedagogies 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 recognizes not only the theory but also the practice of situated knowing and feeling.

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 contemplative practice 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 feminist contemplative writing pedagogies engage in a feminist epistemology of situated thinking and feeling. These pedagogies are consequently invested in getting students to practice connected knowing, a mode of knowing that is personal even when the object of knowing is not (Belenky, et al., 1973, p. 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 stu-

dents' 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 in 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. (2008, p. 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 together individual bodies 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. Linda Adler-Kassner sees the potential of yoga to teach writers and program administrators the importance of communing with others in her 2008 book, *The Activist WPA*. Using her experience as a yoga student, Adler-Kassner argues that yoga teaches that “[o]ur breath is our own, yes. But when we hear the breath of others and develop our practice in concert with others, that practice changes in ways we don’t always anticipate” (Adler-Kassner, 2008, p. vii). 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 situated feelings within contemplative 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 on a holistic notion of “critical being” rather than simply 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” (2001, p. 240). A contemplative 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 feeling 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 our situatedness in a particular body in the world. 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 engaging in situated feeling, actions which insist on a personal attentiveness that joins the “sensitive awareness of the body and the intelligence of the brain and heart ... [together] in harmony” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 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, 2005, p. 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).<sup>25</sup> When practicing warrior III, for instance, I cannot see the leg I lift behind me as my body 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 to look behind me, I lose my balance. Instead, I must learn through practice to feel the positioning of my leg behind me and to use my feelings as a guide to 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 and language captures and shapes it. 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, 2005, pp. *Light* 33-34). I invite my reader to try this exercise. The space created through this stretching 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 create new openness. As this simple exercise shows, 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 instead of reaching my arms out 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 ball of my standing foot and not enough on my heel, 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 the limits of 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 of contemplative knowing. 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 reflective 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. I also ask them to reflect on the emotional endeavor of the writing process itself, encouraging them to metacognitive insight. As I detailed in an earlier chapter, completing a regular *asana* practice as part of the composing process itself 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 what others might be thinking or how they believe they should feel. 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 agentic 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 (2001, p. 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 (i.e., 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,

refusing hard and fast delineations between the two. 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 means to see how the social circulation of emotion between bodies works. We must give up control, to prompt a flexibility of thinking and feeling with others and beyond the insular self. Vulnerability becomes strength for 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” (2002, p. 4). Teaching students to consider seriously their classmates’ ideas helps to achieve this end. I’ve had students practice contemplative listening in written responses to peers who disagreed with their ideas, 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 than such strategies alone, 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 embodied selves in the process. I en flesh the contemplative theory of situated feeling presented here in the next interchapter by exploring how it translates to the classroom and gives meaning to a practice of breath control, or *pranayama*, in the contemplative writing classroom.