YOGIC AGENCY: THE YOGA WITHIN COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

---

by
Abigail Heather Orenstein
December 2017

Examining Committee Members:

Eli Goldblatt, Advisory Chair, English
Shannon Walters, English
Terry Rey. Religion
Robert P. Yagelski, University at Albany, SUNY

ABSTRACT

Eastern practices have an increasing presence in Western locations of human services, such as mental health, hospitals, non-profits, prisons, K-12 education, among others. This trend includes the university and pedagogies of first year writing. The application of Eastern contemplative practice helps some people in certain circumstances, but its use raises questions. In the university classroom, methods like mindfulness meditation and yoga may offer perspectives that inform pedagogy. But, these interventions often lack concrete applicability to course content, oversimplify theoretical foundation of the original Eastern practices, and seem disparate from, rather than integral to, standard curriculum.

My dissertation analyzes how yogic practice is *already* embedded in the discipline of composition and rhetoric. By resignifying rhetorical scholarship as yogic, I shape a new and amalgamated conception of agency deploying yogic and Western perspectives. I call this *yogic agency*. By constructing, defining, and unravelling the function of *yogic agency* in the writing classroom, I extract, analyze, and refigure the yogic philosophy and practice as always and already underlying scholarship of composition and rhetoric.

My dissertation integrates yogic and rhetorical perspectives into one. I aim to sharpen and clarify of the role of yoga, as well as other alternative Eastern frameworks, in the Western writing classroom. There is sometimes an assumption that yoga is a pedagogical intervention replacing less effective teaching methods. This operates on the notion that our field is in a position of deficit. Instead, I generate *yogic agency* to illustrate the feeling of having control of one's worldview as a means to embody a way of perceiving that one already has everything within in order to become rhetorical agents of one's own life. I am not presenting a new way of teaching and learning but rather, a pronounced vision of the discipline as yoga surfaces within its theories.

For Opa, Horst Brand
Yoga: “Ach, Kvatch”

God comes to you disguised as your life.
Blessings often arrive as trouble.

In French the word *blesser* means to wound
and relates to the Old English *bletsian*--

to sprinkle with blood.

And in Sanskrit there is a phrase
a phrase to carry with you
wherever you go:

sarvam annam:

everything is food.

Every last thing.

- Teddy Macker, from “A Poem for My Daughter”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would have never finished were it not for Baby Neva, who began sleeping a long stint at four weeks. I chose my path because of affirmations from teachers, teachers who saw things in me I had not yet felt. Cantor Bernie Walters, my 11th grade English teacher, nominated me for the theoretical gumstarr award for "greatest intensity of purpose masked by a veneer of light- heartedness." Thanks to Dr. Walters for helping me to see the Nora Helmer in myself so as not to let Torvalds in my life take away my power. German professor Steve Dowden taught me how to view art as a vehicle for giving form to the formless, amorphous blobs of love and death (*liebestod*). Acting teacher Adrianne Krstansky let me know myself as a fighter in her Suzuki acting method classes. My yoga teachers Shiva Das, Parvati, and Mirella at Yoga on Main have guided me to use my inner fire in helpful ways.

Thanks to Terry Rey for encouraging me to explore yoga as a thesis topic, and for being so approachable. Bob Yagelski's 2016 lecture at Temple and book *Writing As A Way of Being* provided inspiration as well as a reframe of what our field can do. My professor Shannon Walters has pushed me to clarify my thinking by critiquing every word of my draft with care. Her course on the rhetoric of disability was life changing.

I am grateful to Steve Parks who generously shared his time as I read for exams. Steve made Marxism and political theory feel joyous and clear. My project is framed by books our conversations gave me the courage to open. Susan Wells has been a warm, delightful and brilliant woman my peers and me admire. I feel honored to have learned from her; thanks to Sue, for getting me, from day one.

One day I hope to serve as the teacher Eli Goldblatt has served for me. I walk away from our funny and honest conversations about teaching, learning, books, politics, Jewishness

“hegemony” and yoga, feeling repurposed and ready for what’s next. I used to get frustrated when I would meet with Eli. When I asked him to help me make a decision, he would resist giving explicit advice, always sending me off to find my own answer. I realize now the balance he achieves as a teacher/therapist/spiritual guide, which has allowed me to become an agent rather than a victim of my life. Eli’s writing and teaching illuminate the connection between comp/rhet and the profound personal growth its ideas brings to a life. I cannot thank him enough for the hours he spent talking with me and reading my writing. Thanks also to Eli for extending wisdom and humor to Temple students who needed an Eli booster shot on an otherwise gloomy day.

Special thanks to Jay Efran, who taught the distinction between love and limerence, mind and self. I am lucky to have best friends, Fallon, Evan, Sarah and Narrissa, who keep me in line. I would not be the same person were it not for my strong sister Esther, who brought yoga home to Philadelphia from Amherst when she was 19 and I was 7, before it was cool. To my sister Debbie, who teaches me silliness and carefulness. To my brother Josh, who inspires by always brewing a creative project. To my grandparents, Horst and Ruth Brand, whose house looked like a library, who demonstrated work is as important as health. Opa read and wrote no matter what happened to him. His love for socialism, Tolstoy, and the history of ideas lives on. To my parents, Miriam and Harry, thank you for telling me to search for challenges, for encouraging me to dive into tasks, for making intellectual growth central, for modeling unpretentiousness, and for being hysterical. To David, you provide the grounds for me to write by embodying hard work and perfectionism. Thank you for showing me how to be snowed in, even in the summertime.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Responsible rhetorical agency entails being open to and responsive to the meanings of concrete others, and thus seeing persuasion as an invitation to listeners as also always agents in persuasion.Agency... is based in individuals lived knowledge that their action is their own –

Marilyn Cooper. "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted."

Dana Santas, the yoga teacher for the Philadelphia Phillies, the Atlanta Braves and dozens of NFL pros, argues that one current controversy which leads to wariness about teaching yoga in schools, the risk it will bring Hindu spirituality into a secular sphere, overlooks the "myriad benefits" of the integration of hatha yoga (the physical practice of postures) into children's lives. Her 2016 article on CNN.com, "Beyond 'Namaste': The Benefits of Yoga in Schools," reassures her readers that the "The mind-body exercise focuse[s] on mental and physical benefits, not spirituality." She alludes to one set Georgia parents concerned that their children were being indoctrinated by an Indian religion. Santas goes on to offer the "power of mindfulness" with a few postures and guided meditations as a means to "promote imagination, reduce stress and increase mindfulness," and lauds the tangible benefits of bringing yoga into schools. Santas's characterization of yoga as mentally and physically beneficial for Western lives is a commonplace narrative and seemingly innocuous depiction of yoga in the mainstream media.

Although I believe such efforts are not outright harmful to students, my project seeks to offer an alternative vision of yoga and other Eastern practices as they are brought into contemporary spheres of American education. In a basic way, I want to reposition yoga in education as something that is already within the field of rhetoric and composition. Yoga is not the antidote or the answer that needs to be brought into the university classroom in order to

provide mental or physical benefits or ameliorate conduct issues or testing problems. In my project the yogic perspective is offered as a rhetorical and critical tool which already lies within the scholarship of composition, pedagogy and rhetorical theory.

A decade ago I began practicing yoga at the Kripalu Center in Western Massachusetts. I learned the physical practice of postures, (*asanas*) seated meditation (*dhyana*), and chanting in Sanskrit (*bhakti yoga* or the yoga of devotion) and I developed an understanding of yogic philosophy through texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita.* Yoga changed the way I view the world and therefore my behavior in it. It changed my inner life and my response to my own inner weather. Yoga changed the way I relate to experiences of joy and suffering. I look back on this first experience with yoga, my "honeymoon" period, with nostalgia but also with judgment. I reflect on that version of myself as naive, as someone convinced I had the answer. With this reflection on the past I sometimes wish I could sustain the freshness of view I suddenly felt before life "got" to me. In other words, the changes I felt from my new practice did not seem to stay, especially when the going got rough. In a basic sense, as one traverses a yogic path, it becomes less a matter of revelation - discovering new perspectives and transformed versions of self - but of seeing where a yogic perspective and yogic self already exists, where it flows, as Jack Kornfield says, always, like "underground water."

Because life "got" to me, as it does to everyone else at one point of difficulty or another, I worked hard psychologically to integrate the consciousness I gained as a developing yogi with the pain and powerlessness I often felt as a young woman with personal relationships and career struggles. In a broader context, I wondered how yoga fit into other arenas both within a personal register and in the environments and relationships surrounding me. In a kind of helpless way, I wondered how such experiences could actually influence others and affect any kind of change

long-term, especially those close to me who also struggled. I was stymied as to how it could help me in other parts of my life like teaching writing as well as writing and reading texts. I did not want to compartmentalize yoga into a bullet-pointed list of tangible benefits because that was really not my experience of it. Nor did I feel gratified merely by teaching yoga postures in my English classroom, having to justify it by espousing yoga's benefits.

Relatedly, sometimes I feel and felt no benefits from practicing and studying the teachings of yoga. There have been periods of life that were just too hard, where I abandoned my practice and the teachings it held. Yoga has always been there, though. I try to keep the practice going even a little, no matter how little it feels like it helps at certain points. I do not mean physically - I try to hold the teachings in my inner dialogue as I have tried to push on in spite of whatever else.

Discovering this seems to be the point of yogic practice and yogic theory has been both significant and emotionally painful. This is it - not groundbreaking revelation but pressing through lethargy and disappointment anyway, through dullness and through boredom and through the mundane anyway. Sometimes life is and was *that* hard. I wanted a vision encompassing that understanding, too. It is this problem of integrating a much broader, underlying and subtle vision of yoga or a vision often beyond words, which isn't simply counting on some concrete payoff of yoga, I explore here. I investigate and illuminate ways rhetorical texts engender yogic ideas, generate a yogic critical perspective, and reveal something I call *yogic agency.* I seek to show how the work we do in our field or the reading, the writing, the analyzing, the advocacy for a certain way of seeing and being, embodies the practice of yoga.

Yogic agency is the term I develop in order to identify a fuller picture of yoga that acts as a rhetorical tool and a critical perspective. More specifically, *yogic agency* is feeling of having

control of one's worldview in order to embody a way of perceiving that we already have everything we need within us to become rhetorical agents of our lives.

In terms of composition and rhetoric, we already have a yogic perspective in our field available to us within many of the central ideals reflected in texts and talks and the floating ideas arising from them. This project aims to unearth where *yogic agency* lives within texts, ideas, and circulating disciplinary conversation in order to reinvent and reinvigorate such disciplinary conversations by revealing the yoga within them. Thus, a concept of *yogic agency* aims to cultivate a renewed sense of rhetorical agency infused with yoga; a feeling that readers and thinkers-through of texts and ideas already embody the agency needed. Which is another way to say there is no place else to get to and our field is yogic as it is.

Yogic agency is not a formulaic proposal, like the similar ideas reflected in Santas' article, which presents the equation of educational setting [or any other institutional setting] + yoga = internal or obvious physiological or behavioral benefits. Arguments like hers assume the answer to much of the suffering that occurs in K-12 and university education is an exercise routine that remains uncontextualized in the larger curriculum. *Yogic agency* is not really an argument to do the practices at all, nor is it a discussion of any Western author who is under the influence of yogic ideas or Eastern practices. I do not intend to say that any author intends to promote or espouse yoga practice in order to achieve *yogic agency*.

Contemporary arguments that deploy yoga as an application which is "the answer" to a host of life's problems undermine the very philosophy upon which yoga is founded. Yoga is frequently *not* the life saving surgery or rescuing intervention, although it can help prevent some health problems, both physical and psychological. This is another way to say yoga is not intended to be practiced as a means to reach a certain outcome. A cursory Google scholar search

for research in the application of yoga lands us with a list of overwhelming results of studies with varied outcomes which in one way or another extol the benefits of yoga for individuals and institutional outcomes, even only with marginal empirical proof: yoga for corrections, yoga for PTSD in Monks and Nuns, yoga for binge eating disorders, yoga for urinary incontinence, yoga for pre and post natal, and yoga, of course, for education. These interventions and studies may be certainly beneficial in both the short and possibly long term, but my project seeks to carve out an alternative characterization of yoga that shows it already exists in the scholarly work of composition and rhetoric. In this way, the inner life of scholars, as well as the interior undercurrent of yogic principles within rhetorical thinking, becomes central to the work we are doing in the field.

Yogic Agency as Reinvention and Uncovering

At the same time, I argue, proposals for yoga as an application to pedagogy are modeled on the ideal of an improved product. They count on a specific outcome from the practice and continue to introduce yoga into Western contexts in a conventionally Western fashion or as an answer destined to solve long-standing problems [think: wrinkle cream or diet pills]. I explore yoga as a rhetorical and critical tool rather than an application, as a subtle shift in perspective rather than a vastly alternative intervention or a life-saver, and as an underlying way of attunement already existing in the field of composition and rhetoric. I therefore also suggest an alternate orientation toward yoga as mode of arguing, acting, sensing, communicating, and feeling. I aim here to sharpen and clarify the role of Eastern contemplative practices like yoga in the realm of the university writing classroom by illuminating their current purpose not as new interventions but as always and already present, like underground water.

I have struggled to convey certain ideas through earlier drafts of this dissertation. I try to

show how the authors I analyze have incidentally engaged with yogic ideas and I find yogic perspective within their work and extract it. This perspective is offered as a means to construct and create a rhetorical agency I term *yogic agency. Yogic agency* is an agency that lurks beneath the scholarship analyzed. And, as a result of how yoga-as-a- rhetorical tool, or *yogic agency,* is positioned as an undercurrent within this scholarship, I have used phrases such as the author "inadvertently" or "unintentionally" reveals a yogic perspective. Put another way, these contemporary authors do not use yogic terms in their work. Instead I interpret how yogic principles lie within scholarly work. Like literary analysis, I imagine terms into the work.

Significantly for how I argue yogic concepts are positioned within the scholarship of composition and rhetoric, I contend that when reread from a yogic perspective, yoga is uncovered and "reinvents" contemporary scholarship in certain ways. I analyze the undercurrent of yoga as it helps to reinvent and add to ideas central to pedagogical and rhetorical scholarship. These theories in the field include those of 1) communication (through a narrative on listening and silence), 2) action, 3) the language of naming and identity, and 4) healing in terms of affect. *Yogic agency*, like yoga practice, is mobilized by working with what is already there, not by relying on the feeling of discovering something new. Like yogic practice, *yogic agency* is engendering what is already living and breathing within the consciousness of our field. *Yogic agency,* as I aim to show, is not waiting for a revelation in order to come through and then ultimately pass. It is a continuous undercurrent. I attempt to uncover it.

Much like yoga practice reinvents but also uncovers a new version and conception of self, bringing a yogic lens to rhetorical scholarship with the aims of revealing *yogic agency* does allow a reinvention of the scholarship. While invention is typically associated with writing, it is useful here in the context of reading and shaping a specific form of *yogic agency.* Sharon Crowley culls

a definition of invention from ancient rhetoricians in the context of process pedagogy in *Composition in the University* (1998). She identifies invention as "any systematic search for, and generation or compilation of, material that can be used to compose a discourse suitable for some specific rhetorical situation" (208). With the aims of pointing to and mobilizing *yogic agency* out of the contemporary scholarship analyzed in this project, we must recompose, recompile, regenerate and thus reinvent *what is already there beneath the surface* which illustrates yogic principles. The work here also regenerates and revises understandings of rhetorical agency from a yogic perspective. From this process of rereading as reinvention, I intend to uncover *yogic agency* and a rhetorical subject empowered by agency, constituted by a yogic perspective.

Understanding the term yoga: Yoga as layered/Yoga as meaning everything and nothing.

In his semi-autobiographical book about the philosophies and applications of Kripalu yoga, *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* (1999), Stephen Cope asserts that the word yoga has "become one of those words that referred to everything and consequently to nothing." Having participated in and witnessed the "yoga scene" in Philadelphia for the past 10 years, I concur that the term has succumbed, unavoidably, to the kind of vacuous, new age "woo-woo" stereotype to which yoga is presumably attached. In the appendix to his personal narrative Cope attempts to define yoga in four distinctive ways, as "1) any technique of mystic union, 2) a broad term for Indian spiritual discipline, 3) Particular forms of yoga [such as *bhakti, karma* or *hatha yoga* or the yoga of devotion, service, and postures respectively, which still may mean different things to different people depending upon who describes them and where/when they are described and], 4) Classical yoga [the yoga formulated by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* during the 2nd century and probably the most influential on contemporary practice] (310-313). Cope breaks down the "complicated and nuanced history" of the various yogic periods as they helped to form

definitions of yoga, including the Vedic period, followed by the Vedanta, a period which includes the famous text of the *Upanishads,* and, later, Patanjali's period.

For the most part, this project refers to many of the principles laid out in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (such as nonviolence or *ahimsa*), but also to particular forms of yoga such as *bhakti yog*a, by means of an exploration of the *Bhagavad Gita* in Chapter 3. Most frequently heard in yoga classes, the phrase "yoga means union," refers to the word "yoga" and its connection to the Sanskrit root "*yuj*," which can also mean unify, unite, connect, gather, yoke or join. Cope colors this well known definition of yoga with a broader notion that yoga is a "method by which any individual human being is brought into union with God, with reality, with a ground of being, or with source," pointing to yoga not only as a term for Hindu spiritual practice but also related to other mystical traditions such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Sufism (311).

Attempts to participate in a conversation about yoga frequently lead to the discovery that what was thought to be one shared understanding actually means something specific to each person and is contingent upon varied experiences. The seminal text *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (1958), which narrates elegantly although incomprehensibly the story of yoga by the controversial scholar Mircea Eliade, illuminates the very problematic nature of the term "yoga." While reading the book, it often feels as if Eliade is telling the story of yoga to a whole audience who understands yogic[1] theory perfectly while simultaneously excluding the reader of understanding yoga his or herself. On the back of the book, an anonymous *New Yorker* columnist describes the author's treatise as "free from the intolerable woolliness of thought and the crankiness in which a couple of generations...have enveloped the subject," further demonstrating

[1] Eliade (1907-1986) was a Romanian philosopher of religion and novelist who taught at the University of Chicago. Toward the end of his life and after his death he was criticized publicly for supporting the Iron Guard during interwar Romania as well as for privileging Christian theology over other religious belief systems.

the ways in which yoga has become famously hard to talk about, as the ideas of it, clarified more easily as experiences rather than words, are difficult to stabilize in language. Eliade concludes his book by admitting the meaning of yoga "depends upon what is meant by freedom" and thus will dictate how the practices unfold for individuals (364).

This is one example of how definitions of yogic terms have become interchangeable with one another. They are subject to redefinition and vagueness, as well as being removed from historical context. Eliade argues that the problem is the language of yoga itself: "basically it is the term *yoga* itself that has permitted this great variety of meanings," as there exists "popular, "nonsystematic" and "magical" yoga in addition to yoga strictly adhering to its deriving texts (5). Further, he remarks the word yoga's meaning, "to bind," always "presupposes" or assumes as a "preliminary condition" of ultimate attachment to the world, what he calls "profane consciousness" (5). Eliade explicates "the doctrines of Yoga" as it is presented by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutra*, although he notes Patanjali is not the "creator" of the yogic system. Rather, significantly, Patanjali reformulates and reorganizes what is called the Sankhya system.[2]

Both the system Patanjali describes and the Sankhya system, from which the yogic system is founded and then drawn out, are used in this project. Heinrich Zimmer identifies the distinction between the two systems of Patanjali's Yoga and Sankhya in *Philosophies of India* (1951).

He writes, the earlier system of "Sankhya provides a basic theoretical exposition of

[2] In 2016, Christopher Moncrieff translated one of his novels Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent, which Bryan Rennie reviews in the LA Review of Books. Rennie argues the translation is a hopeful effort to reignite an an understanding of the importance of Eliade's work in spite of the contempt surrounding it and his supposed alignment with fascism. Rennie contends that Eliade's published support for the "Legion" is only in a small amount of articles between 1936 and 1937, although Wikepedia says otherwise. Eliade notes that Yoga is theistic and Sankhya is not. For instance, yoga practice often involves deities, such as Ganesha and Shiva. Alternately, Sankhya is thought to come well before Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, some of which is dated to the second century B.C.E. and some of which is dated to the fifth century A.D. Sankya is believed to come before Patanjali's "rehandling" of the system, yet dating Sankhya is very difficult. Sankhya philosophy, according to Heinrich Zimmer, was founded by Kapila who is thought

human nature, enumerating and defining its *elements*...describing their state of disentanglement or separation in release." Yoga, on the other hand, as it is established by Patanjali "treats specifically...the dynamics of the process of disentanglement, and outlines practical techniques for the process of release" (my emphasis 280). Patanjali's yoga, then, presupposes the elements of human nature and works on how practitioners might remain bound or become liberated from them. In chapter five of this project which analyzes the yogic dynamics of emotion as a rhetorical tool, I focus on the elements of human nature (Sankhya system) and how they exist in relationship to one another. In other chapters which focus on silence, action and nonviolent communication, the theory deployed is based upon Patanjali's yoga. In Patanjali's yoga, there is an emphasis on the practices and attitudes aiming for freedom from the elements of human nature and inevitable human suffering.

Sankhya, on the other hand, is a theory of external reality and the internal mirror of it. It focuses on the balance between *prakriti* (matter and its activities) and *purusha* (oneness). The Sankhya system is relevant to chapter five of this project, as I explore the *gunas* or as Zimmer articulates them the three "distinctly differentiated aspects" of "matter" or *prakriti* (280). *Purusha* is undifferentiated oneness, or what Stephen Cope calls "individual, transcendental self" (205). The awareness of the yogic practitioner is in constant fluctuation between *purusha* and *prakriti*, between attention to the material world within which the yogi is "deeply ensnared" and to *purusha* or the "life monad," or unified reality or pure awareness. That is, *prakriti* is "eternally changing" and the "absolutely nonspirit" of material reality although the Sankhya system does not consider one as better or "more real" than the other (Zimmer 318-319).

Yoking all of these definitions together with the goal of illuminating one specific

---

to have lived in the 6th or 7th century B.C.E.

dimension of yoga for this project is too difficult. I am bound to exclude something important, or to make the mistake about which all of these thinkers warn. That is, the term "yoga" comes across as "new age," vague or empty. As I have experienced it, yoga is an art, a science, a method, a practice, a theory, a feeling. It is both tangible and intangible depending on when and with whom it is being practiced. In his book *Inner Tantric Yoga - Working with the Universal Shakti: Secrets of Mantras, Deities and Meditation,* David Frawley suggests that for yoga to be "inwardly transformative," one must ask how "[we can] learn to practically work with the universal forces within us" (3) In order to garner a productive definition of yoga so it can serve and be constructed as a rhetorical tool, I add to Frawley's question by asking how we might "learn to practically work with the universal [yogic] forces within us" so as to embody critically and socially conscious rhetorical agents. This is a path explored by those who attempt to integrate yoga into rhetorical scholarship.

Lit Review/The Connections Between Yoga and Other Contemplative Practices and Composition and Rhetoric

Bringing together yoga theory and practice with composition and rhetoric, pedagogy and education is nothing new. Conceiving of yoga as a practice of working with "universal forces within us" in order to also become rhetorical agents is yet another way of articulating a connection between inner life and the outward facing orientation of participating in civic life.

Gradually, the scholarship which argues for connections between yoga and meditation and our academic field has been diffusely emerging since the trend of Eastern contemplative practices increased in popularity in the 1950s, 60s and 70s in the West, although popular narratives would have it that yoga arrived in America in 1893 with Swami Vivekananda.[3] This

[3] Vats, Anjali. "(Dis)Owning Bikram: Decolonizing Vernacular and dewesternizing restructuring in the yoga wars," Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 13:4, 325-345.

scholarship and the suggestions, applications and meanings contemplative practices afford to pedagogy are broadly dispersed and wide ranging.

James Moffett and the "Essentialisms" Brought by the East

James Moffett is perhaps the most notable composition theorist to first propose contemplative practices as effective methods for teaching writing. In 1982, his essay for *College English*, "Writing, Inner Speech and Meditation," advocate the use of meditation in the writing classroom without privileging one tradition, religion, or meditation teaching over another. He writes, "meditation techniques show how to witness one's own mind...silence one's own mind. Then the mind can be better shared," as encouraging for writing teachers to practice meditation themselves so they might better integrate it into the classroom with students, in conjunction with analytical work. Moffett believes that "good writing will ensue, whereas fiddling with form alone will teach...only how to carpenter better the craziness of themselves and their world," and declares that the writing classroom can in fact set the stage for "self-transformation" (246).

Critiques of Moffett's proposals in *College English* challenge the notion of "self-transformation" and "self-transcendence," such as those printed the next year in *College English* by James Crosswhite and Barbara Schoen.[4] Such criticism argues that arguments like Moffett's construct the self as a solid core which can be changed or altered. This contradicts poststructuralist conceptions of the fluid and contingent subject, a concept of the subject which emerges in language. Joann Campbell theorizes in "Writing to Heal: Using Meditation Writing Process" (1994) that such objections to meditation in the classroom stem from the "distrust of the idea of a "deep" self so often sought by the meditation spiritual seeker" (249).

[4] Crosswhite, James and Barbara Schoen. "Two Comments on James Moffett's Writing, Inner Speech and Meditation." College English. Vol 45. No 4.(Apr 1983) pp 400-404.

Campbell notes Moffett's response to these critiques; he is not suggesting a "singular essence" to the individual, he says, but rather believes "spirituality depends on widening the identity," not narrowing self-conception to align with conceptions of a "true Self" with a capital S (Moffett, 117 "Censorship" quoted in Campbell 249).

The resistance to contemplative practices in the classroom relates not only to the separation of church and state and of religion and the spiritual with the secular, but with how our field problematizes the self and its construction in language. Some of the thinking in the field is framed by poststructuralist theories of language. If meditation allows access to a "deep self," it undercuts some of the principles of the field. As Campbell reminds us, "in postmodern theory, the idea of transpersonal unity is not desirable, and instead difference is foregrounded" (249). Excavating a "true self" through contemplative practice would seem to conflict with the goals of current writing pedagogies, which seek to complicate rather than shut down conceptions of the self.

To be sure, yogic practice in contemporary culture is often espoused with the intention of unearthing a "true self" beyond the ego. Without clarifying exactly what "pure" or "absolute" means for his readers, Mircea Eliade describes *purusha* or "essence" as "absolute reality...somewhere beyond the cosmic illusion….and beyond human experience...pure Being, the Absolute, by whatever name it may be called, the Self, the indestructible, *nirvana*, etc." (3). Eliade's describes an essence to "self" beneath or transcendent of reality. According to Eliade, the yogic practitioner searches to discover and inhabit this essence.

One of the aims for my project is to show how yogic thought might be deployed without presuming an essence to self and thereby disregarding "difference" or separation and contradiction between individuals and within individuals as they are constructed in language. I

try not to construct a concept of a unitary subject or apply an absolute meaning to terms, such as the Self or Being. There is value to leaving definitions and discursive constructions open, fluid and contingent as it does not group together individuals who do not identify with one another.

I know it is not always possible to avoid the essentializing of terms altogether. Sometimes this happens without awareness while writing. For the purposes of this project in which I perceive a yogic perspective, at times I deploy solid definitions of terms relating to the self and subjecthood. This is a way to keep objects of analysis consistent and understandable for the reader. Still, conceptions of the self in yogic texts and yogic thinking are not intended to be pinned down and are dependent on context.

The notion of a "true self" for which the practitioner strives to reach is problematic for rhetorical scholars aiming to loosen terms [such as "self"] from rigid definitions. An essay by George Kalamaras in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* struggles with this problem believed to arise out of the integration of Eastern teachings into Western critical theory. In the "The Center and Circumference of Silence: Yoga, Post Structuralism and the Rhetoric of Paradox" Kalamaras seeks to revise contemporary understandings of alleged "essentialisms" committed by yogic teachings.[5]

The notion of self as a paradox subverts the "oppressive center," which Kalamaras describes lives in post-structuralist theory. He contends critical theorists reconsider within "meditative awareness," a "center" that is "dynamic and not static," and a "condition of Being which is always Becoming" (16). His argument challenges objections to Moffett who advocates

[5] Framing his argument with a famous notion of Paramahansa Yogananda, author of Autobiography of a Yogi (1946) that the "divine eye is center everywhere, circumference nowhere," Kalamaras examines the yogic concept of an "absolute" within the context of post structuralist theory, encouraging strict followers to examine the notion of the "essence" from yogic perspective instead of the post-structuralist Western perspective. As an example, Kalamaras refers to Derrida's rejection of the concept of an "origin" which cannot be pinned down outside of language and argues the "apprehensiveness of radical poetries in the last several decades to even approach a reassessment of a

for "self-transformation" by integrating meditation into the composition classroom. Conceiving of self as "Being which is always Becoming" broadens rather than narrows ideas of subjecthood and identity within writing pedagogy. Kalamaras' proposal for yogic paradox is a given in yogic thinking and practice.[6]

The Nyaya School

Kalamaras' argument demonstrates how the discipline of comp/rhet is beginning to investigate the rhetorical perspective offered by yoga. One rhetorical philosophy which originates in India is the *Nyaya* school. The *Nyaya* school considers questions related to the "acquisition of knowledge," as Stephen Philips writes in his 2009 volume *A Brief History and Philosophy: Yoga, Karma and Rebirth* (18). The *Nyaya Sutra* is an ancient rhetorical tradition espousing the attainment of yogic bliss states, or *samadhi*, as well as liberation, or *moksha*. *Nyaya* tradition conceives of yogic states achieved through yoga practice as simultaneously a location from which analytical knowledge arises. What makes *Nyaya* school analytical is its deployment of "hard-headed realism," which accompanies the analysis of knowledge gained from yoga practice (Philips 37). The *Nyaya* school illuminates a connection between analytical knowledge with spiritual practice. What is known about its origins is less comprehensive than other Indian traditions such as the Vedas.

---

concept of 'center' (4)

[6] Although some postmodern theorists might dismiss yogic philosophy because of its potential "essentialisms" or association with the atman or "true self," Kalamaras' proposal of paradox shows one example of yogic thinking lending insight to rhetorical theory as it is influenced by postmodernism.

For the purposes of this project, rhetorical theory and writing pedagogy may be inwardly "self-transformative," as James Moffett suggests, necessarily sustaining an understanding of the self as possessing a "center" or "essence" or a "true self." According to Kalamaras, however, the "true self" would be within a "condition of Being which is always Becoming," or dynamic, not ever solid or fixed (16). While I do not wish to advance a theory of the self or subjecthood that is necessarily a fixed dichotomy between a "true self" vs. "false self" or any sort of "essence," I hope readers might understand that yoga complicates notions of the self and does not arrive anywhere definite. While I wish to maintain awareness of how I solidify terms and pin down conceptions of self throughout my project, it is something that I too struggle with. I continue to practice and cultivate awareness of my use of language inwardly

Rhetorician Keith Lloyd draws on the tenets of the *Nyaya* school and identifies it as the Indian rhetorical tradition. He works to dismantle the binary between spirituality and analysis, two modes of thinking usually separated. The rhetorical text revealed in the *Nyaya Sutra* has been dated back to 200 C.E, although dating the *Nyaya* is difficult, as some of the *Sutra* seems to have been written in the post-Christian era. As Phillips describes it, the *Nyaya* school promotes yogic thinking as a foundational and "special source of knowledge." But *Nyaya* also teaches the means of attaining knowledge as it is correlated to the "right procedures in debate and critical inquiry" (37). The *Nyaya School* conceives of yoga as a foundation for analytical knowledge. In a way, carving a path of *yogic agency* already existing within our very analytical field, echoes the work of the Indian rhetorical tradition.

Lloyd's essay "Rethinking Rhetoric from an Indian Perspective: Implications in the *Nyaya Sutra*" (2007) compares the rhetorical principles upheld by the *Nyaya Sutra* with Aristotle's syllogism. He contextualizes the *Nyaya* school within the rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, and Chaim Perelman, juxtaposing *Nyaya* theory with the concept of Burkean consubstantiality. The goal of debate in *Nyaya*, as Solomon Simonson puts it, is "seeing together" and as Lloyd identifies it, is locating "commonalities." Evoking the yogic perspective upon which *Nyaya* is founded to conclude his essay, Lloyd asks "how...rhetoric [would] differ if rhetors sought to define their arguments beyond their desires and fears, to find shareable ideas, common perspectives?" (Simonson, quoted in Lloyd 375). Lloyd works to make central a non-agonistic form of rhetoric whose objective is the coexistence of conflicting views and positions. Establishing *yogic agency* as both a critical perspective and a rhetorical tool mirrors this attempt. Like Lloyd's focus on the *Nyaya* tradition, an argument for *yogic agency* works to unify

---

without arriving anywhere final, either.

contrasting discursive positions of yoga and rhetoric.

Non-Agonistic Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom - Holistic Visions toward Writing Pedagogy

Correspondingly, many texts on the philosophy of pedagogy analyze the possibility of non- agonistic rhetoric of schooling and the writing classroom. While she does write only from yogic principles, Mary Rose O'Reilly's argument for *The Peaceable Classroom* (1993) explores through personal narrative the dimensions of a nonviolent pedagogy. O'Reilly is inspired by an initiation into teaching writing during the draft of Vietnam, or a role in which failing a student could cause him to be sent to war. Her work is instigated by her Professor Ihab Hassan's question as to whether or not we can "teach English so that people stop killing each other" (9). O'Reilly examines this question from the literal perspective as well as the metaphorical one, seeking to break down ways in which pedagogy is built on attitudes of violence, judgment, hierarchy and the "unexamined" inner life. She valorizes awareness of inner life as "the first goal of education...bring[ing] students to a knowledge of the world within," while she desires to integrate students' personal vision with collective understandings (32). Her illustration of the balance between the inner and outer spheres of life is an aspiration for my project.

In *The Peaceable Classroom*, the "violent" nature of schooling surfaces in grades, attitudes, and classroom discussions of the writing classroom. Violence in schooling influences society in hidden yet prevailing ways. As the "center of force," O'Reilly contends, the composition teacher can "discover the seeds of war in the interactions of the typical classroom," while witnessing connectivity between the inner life of the student, the classroom, and war or peace beyond the classroom walls. It is convenient for administration and students to think of writing pedagogy as positioned within one compartment in the university, or as only a stepping stone to getting a job after college. O'Reilly shows the importance of overturning such

assumptions. She characterizes pedagogy as holistic, with its cultural and social influence transcending compartmentalization. She advocates for students and teachers to begin by searching inward in order to expand outwardly toward peace, as "war begins in banality, the suppression of the personal and idiosyncratic" at the same time encouraging us always to "conclude in the communal" and to avoid solipsism (59, 61). O'Reilly's refrain, which negotiates a relationship between inner life and civic participation, provides another invitation for integrative yet critical rhetorical and pedagogical theory. It is this position from which I seek to expand.

Presumably, the writing classroom effects change in ways assumed to be ineffectual or negligible. As evidenced by O'Reilly's work, the transformed interior vision of the individual in the act of writing and schooling shapes the social and economic culture surrounding him/her. In very basic terms, the writing course matters outside the writing course. Founding its argument on trust that the connection between an individual's inner life and the reality of the community are interdependent, Robert Yagelski's *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability* (2011) argues for composition studies to work against the dualistic Cartesian worldview of the self, which perpetuates an attitude toward writing as a "technology for communication and a straightforward, rule-governed process of encoding a more-or-less stable meaning in a text" (3). Positioning writing as an ontological act through the lens of Zen Buddhism, which instead illustrates the self as "nondualistic," Yagelski aims to supplant the "fundamental separation of self and world" with a view of the "basic interconnectedness of all beings." Like O'Reilly, Yagelski widens the philosophy of the writing classroom beyond its compartmentalization and its perfunctory outcomes (82).

By expanding writing so that it is in and of itself a "way of being," Yagelski illuminates

the value of transforming writing pedagogy to unravel the viewpoint of a nondualistic self. That is, conceiving of writing as a "way of being" or an "ontological act" "intensifies] the writer's awareness of him or herself *at the moment of writing*" and will also point "the effect of the experience of writing on our sense of self [as] cumulative," with the ultimate goal of creating "just and sustainable communities" (112, 134). Yagelski's advocacy for a balance between inner life and the individual's role in community and social justice bolsters both perspectives as equally important approaches to pedagogy. Both O'Reilly and Yagelski open up paths for rhetorical scholars to construct a balance between the inner and outer in the writing classroom. They invite composition instructors to investigate both spheres of living and teaching in the discursively prescriptive and dualistic culture of the writing classroom.

The Emergence of Embodiment and Mindfulness studies

The goal of expanding the comp/rhet discipline beyond classroom walls marks the scholarship merging contemplative practice with composition and rhetoric. The 1997 volume *The Spiritual Side of Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential* edited by Regina Paxton Foehr and Susan Schiller, explores several dimensions of spirituality, including the Eastern and "Navajo" perspective, as well as the ways in which spirituality intersects with topics ranging from personal illness to public engagement. The expansion of the discipline is here called for as a move outward to encompass more cultures, practices, and perspectives, and a move inward as a means to valorize the inner life, the body, and the understanding of the self and spirit (however that may be defined in context) in the classroom. Explorations such as these engender the coalescence of varied perspectives from both personal and vocational positions. I aim for *yogic agency* to coalesce the personal and inward with the academic and vocational.

To those unifying and integrating ends, much discussion of embodiment and embodiment

studies illuminates a rhetorical perspective as postmodern rhetoric is considered "embodied."[7] In her 1999 essay "Writing Bodies: Somatic Minds in Composition Studies" Kristie Fleckenstein critiques the work of James Berlin, or the "architect of social epistemicism," for overlooking the materiality of the body and thereby effacing the bodies and voices of the subjects to whom he aims to give voice. Although social epistemicism looks to "change the conditions which undergird victimization and predation," Fleckenstein believes the movement neglects the need to "(re)write flesh and text" (283). Examining embodiment in rhetoric is an act of understanding how and why the body matters to analytical work. Yoga is one vehicle of embodiment, which intervenes in the writing classroom. Current embodiment scholarship focuses on the postures of the body while practicing, rather than the yogic philosophy underlying the use of the poses.

Recently there has been an upsurge of scholarship bridging the practices of mindfulness and embodiment in the classroom. Christy Wenger's *Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy* (2015) proposes an examination of mindfulness and the embodied writer in the writing classroom. She focuses on a term she names the "writing yogi." Wenger advocates for emotions to be central to the composition classroom as a means to regard the body as a complicated, charged and "lived site of knowledge," rather than a text constructed by culture (10). As a reflection of the connection between yoga practice and theory in and of itself, Wenger interweaves a theoretical framework of contemplative writing pedagogy with "interchapters" narrating her feelings and student responses to yoga practice into the classroom. "Yoga," for Wenger, is the body and all the knowledge and awarenesses it holds. She advocates for awareness of the body as the key missing ingredient to scholarship in composition.

[7] In "Disability, Rhetoric and the Body," (2001) James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson declare a"postmodern understanding of rhetoric as "embodied" proceeds both from the deconstructive knowledge that figures and tropes are not mere embellishment but are a part of all argument" (Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture 8).

"To understand embodiment as a central facet of feminist composition pedagogy," Wenger echoes Fleckenstein, "we must...accept our bodies as flesh and text," and invites mindful awareness of the body in the writing classroom (39). In the context of my project, it is important to designate Wenger's yogic pedagogy as somewhat limited to the body. Wenger's definitions of "writing yogi" and "yoga" refer more strictly to the body. As any yogic practitioner knows, it is difficult to detach yoga practice from yoga principles. As I have experienced it, the practice leads to inner awareness and understanding corresponding to yogic texts. Wenger's definition of "yoga" originates from her practice as she is an Iyengar practitioner. Iyengar is a tradition of yoga that emphasizes the *asana,* or postures.[8] Like other yoga traditions, Iyengar practice is based on a definition of yoga steeped in ancient yogic principles. But the primary focus of the Iyengar practice in America is on the physical postures.

In a sense, Wenger's creation of the term "writing yogi" opens up space for an examination of yoga's function in the writing classroom to which this dissertation responds. I aim for a definition of yoga, which encompasses Wenger's work, and expands it beyond conflating yoga as a path to embodiment in the classroom. Rather than build another practical application or an embodied perspective to the classroom, I hope to clarify the function and definition of yogic principles as they already live in the comp/rhetoric field.

Furthermore, Wenger's book responds to advocacy for intersections of mindfulness, embodiment and writing pedagogy drawn from the work of scholars such as Judith Beth Cohen and Geraldine DeLuca. In her essay "The Missing Body - Yoga and Higher Education," (2006)

[8] B.K.S Iyengar (1918-2014), author of Light On Yoga (1966) writes "As a well cut diamond has many facets, each reflecting a different colour of light, so does the word yoga, each facet reflecting a different shade of meaning and revealing different aspects of the entire range of the human endeavor to win inner peace and happiness" (20). Iyengar's disciples who teach in the United States teach an alignment based practice, which focuses scrupulously on the posture and its myriad nuances. Pranayama, or expansion of the life force, or breathing exercises, is thought to come after mastery of the poses in the Iyengar practice. The philosophy is equally significant to other yoga traditions

Cohen proposes a "courtship" and not an "ecstatic union," between yoga and "academic inquiry." After she discovers yoga, she finds the ways in which she frames her work in her writing classroom contradictory to her yoga practice. As Yagelski conceives of the writing classroom, Cohen's inward perception of students is too derived from "Cartesian dualism," as she notices in herself overlooking the body's influential role in intellectual learning (22).

In "Headstands, Writing, and the Rhetoric of Radical Self-Acceptance," (2005) DeLuca narrates her entry into yoga and Eastern thought later in her career as a scholar and composition teacher. She writes, "in theory...and in the practice of yoga as I have experienced it, teachers embrace a rhetoric of radical self-acceptance" which differs from the competitive values laden in capitalistic institutions (28). DeLuca points to the possibility for self-acceptance rhetoric in the writing classroom by teaching Natalie Goldberg's book *Wild Mind*. Goldberg is a self-help author who combines Zen Buddhist meditation and writing - what she calls "writing practice" - to dismantle the power of "wild mind," or what DeLuca borrows from D.W. Winnicott to identify the ego or "false self." More significant, DeLuca poses the question as to whether yoga practice is relevant to classroom learning. She writes, "One practices to practice, as one sings or dances, for the feeling of it, for the wholeness it brings into one's life...Is there room for such teaching in the average classroom?" She leaves the question unanswered, and her readers are left wondering how exactly yoga might fit in DeLuca's teaching practice (30).

One declaration standing out in DeLuca's work is a confession within the first few lines of her essay. She says she has only been practicing yoga for four months. One can discern the novelty of her experience not only by the way she struggles to integrate her academic life with what she calls her "new age" life without knowing how they might fit together, but also by the

(such as Jivamukti or Kripalu) for Iyengar teachers and practitioners, but the posture or asana is always in the foreground of Iyengar's teaching and following.

way she idealizes the new age epistemology, which encompasses myriad frameworks and perspectives. DeLuca designates the "new age" as a location by which "people assume that others are all right" (31). In contrast, I have observed, there is competition, betrayal, and hierarchy in the yoga community and in other Western "new age" communities. DeLuca views the academic and new age spheres as vastly separate. The Western world is competitive and stratifying, while the "yoga world" is democratic and equal. I want to complicate notions of these two "opposing" worlds by revealing them as integrated in ways one would not expect.

The Instagram Yoga Scene and Critical Yoga Studies as a Growing Discipline

The "rhetoric of radical self-acceptance" which DeLuca conceptualizes is compounded by other contemporary yoga "rhetorics," 12 years after her essay was printed. There is the rhetoric of "alignment," made popular by Iyengar followers like Wenger. There is the rhetoric of the "yoga cliches," which are often the object of mockery and/or part of the stereotype of what a yoga teacher would say: "open the heart" or "go deeper"[9] or "find center," "Zen," or "Chi" (neither of which are related to Yoga or Hinduism), all of which abound in yoga studios and are printed on yoga paraphernalia such as mats or clothing.

A google search for "why I quit yoga" or "why I quit being a yoga teacher" lands several results, some which admit annoyance with the scene in general, claim disillusionment with the way yoga valorizes and perpetuates stereotypes about what kinds of bodies can meet its physical demands, vent frustration with the way capitalism has infiltrated yoga practice, explicate warnings that yoga can in fact "wreck your body,"[10] amidst other complaints, many of which are validated during just one experience at a yoga class. These are rhetorics that personally frustrate and stymie me. While I want to believe my project does not participate in yoga clichés or rhetoric

[9] Heinz, Erica. "Yoga Cliches: Part Deux: 'Go Deeper." The Huffington Post. 17 January 2011.
[10] Broad, William. "How Yoga Can Wreck Your Body." The New York Times Magazine. 5 January 2012.

which appropriates Indian yogic terminology into a Western sphere, I am afraid it is impossible to avoid entirely. Maybe it is relevant I am not of South Asian descent and I was not brought up Hindu or Buddhist.

One of my biggest problems with the contemporary yoga "scene" and a majority of the teachers and practitioners within it is the way in which it materializes in social media. People use social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, to promote classes, demonstrate postures, and post "inspiration." This is conceived as just another way to connect and build community through yoga. But it has unconscious consequences, I argue, which are seldom brought up. While some of the material might certainly be inspiring to some, for the most part, it also acts as ego aggrandizement. It is not possible to post something on social media without the hope (conscious or not) of constructing one's "self" in a flattering light. Obvious to some, but not to all, this goes against the inherent goals of yoga, however one might conceive of them from whichever ancient or modern source, whether it is shedding some of the ego, working more selflessly, or achieving healthier thinking. I am not sure how to reconcile the hypocrisy of the yoga scene as it permeates in spite of scrutiny and criticism. It seems too hard to resist posting and/or looking, for a lot of yoga people at this moment in time. Like my dissertation, this problem is about forging a meaningful connection between the inner and the outer. In the above case, the outward facing gaze subsumes the inward one and I am still uncertain how to negotiate it inwardly.

With this contradiction in the foreground, no characterization is more common than the one which identifies yoga as a practice for white people, specifically white women.[11] One emerging critique is the depiction of the nation, lineages and cultures from which contemplative

[11] Let us not forget the stereotype and "joke" that men go to yoga to meet women. (Joke is in quotes because I never found this very funny.) I have never, ever, met a couple that does yoga together and had met in a yoga class. Which is to say, as far as I experience it, people tend to keep to themselves at classes because yoga is "me time." This is the case at least until practitioners are regulars in a class together and the community builds.

practices originated. Analytical orientations are turning to the ways in which the Eastern practice and teachings of yoga are appropriated into Western contexts, as evidenced by the burgeoning discipline of "critical yoga studies." In a 2014 article "(Dis)owning Bikram: Decolonizing vernacular and dewesternizing restructuring in the yoga wars, " Anjali Vats remarks that yoga's "connection to racial politics...makes [it] an important object of study and site for understanding both (neo)colonial appropriation and anticolonial maneuvering," and analyzes the meaning of and resistance to Bikram Choudhry's attempt to patent and commodify a 26-part posture sequence (328). Vats' article considers non-Western "Indian agency" as it relates to Western representations and enactments of yoga practice and theory. She points to the methods by which non-Western practitioners and teachers defy the appropriated "knowledge production" generated by Western yoga business, which tend to commodify yoga, repositioning it into capitalistic logic. As a means to show the ways in which yoga has become a trend tailored for white women and their milieu, Vats cites Raka Shome's analysis of "white femininity" *Diana and Beyond: White Femininity, National Identity, and Contemporary Media Culture* (2014):

> Yoga ... has also ended up as a modality through which privileged, affluent white women express their seeming self-worth, self-care, and connectivity to life, while all around us racial, geopolitical, military, environmental, and economic violence increasingly function to destroy life or the ability to sustain life ... for the ordinary and the poor—and particularly in the Global South (328).

Vats explicates how Indian Government's creation of the TKDL, or Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, discredits the rhetorical influence of Bikram Choudhry and his followers. The TKDL, as Vats shows, redirects "knowledge production" back to its creators rather than subjecting the Indian people's influence on yogic ideas to erasure.

Judith Mintz, author of the blog "Yoga Cultures" and doctoral student at York University in Ontario enacts a mode of critical analysis of the contemporary yoga scene. She includes

meditations from the perspective of Edward Said's "orientalism" and a dissertation which currently "examines the ways in which yoga students and instructors negotiate, resist, and conform to a consumerist, white, able bodied ideal" she believes shapes the attitudes of yoga studios and retreats in North America. Mintz navigates the ways in which social positions are hidden or made central within the yoga studio by means of ethnographic unravelling of "unexamined privilege" of students and teachers at various yoga studios ("Yoga Cultures"). As one might gather from blogs like "Decolonizing Yoga" and "PostYoga: A Manifesto" and studies like Vats, Mintz, Jennifer Musial,[12] and Joseph Alter,[13] "critical yoga studies" analyzes the yoga scene from multiple perspectives such as race, embodiment, and Marxist theory. This movement is one intervention into the problem discussed above regarding yoga and social media. As yoga operates as a commodity within a white Western sphere, practitioners and teachers must become willing to critique its authenticity as well as clarify the underlying motives of its manifestations.

My dissertation does not analyze the appropriation of Indian culture and origins by the popular yoga scene, which is one focus of critical yoga studies. What is critical in my project is inwardly critical of its author's ego. Like yoga practice, I intend to demonstrate awareness of my own appropriations, contradictions, limitations and shortcomings. This kind of honesty is in the center of my meditation and yoga practice as well as my teaching. While keeping it in the foreground of my attitude toward writing, teaching and learning, I try to catch myself stuck in ego. One of the ways this occurs is by drawing awareness to the claim of possessing an answer or the next new pedagogical intervention. This doesn't mean I always catch myself stuck in ego in writing, even after so many revisions.

[12] Musial, Jennifer. "Engaged Pedagogy in the Feminist Classroom and Yoga Studio." Feminist Teacher, Vol 21, No. 3 (2011), pp. 212-228.
[13] Alter, Joseph. "Yoga and Fetishism: Reflections on Marxist Social Theory." Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Vol 12.4 (Dec. 2006).p 763. Online.

In a basic sense, *yogic agency* demonstrates how rhetorical agency can be inward and outward at the same time. In the following four chapters I unearth how *yogic agency* already breathes an unspoken presence in our field. I unravel and extract the unspoken presence of *yogic agency* in four key concepts in our discipline, each with their own chapter, including: 1) action 2) a theory of communication via analysis of listening and silence 3) a pedagogy of nonviolence, and 4) healing by presenting a yogic theory of affect.

In Chapter 1, "Yogic Agency and Action as Offering," I analyze how a yogic theory of action as illustrated by *Bhagavad Gita* emerges in composition and community literacy scholarship. By focusing on work by Paula Mathieu, I illuminate how proposals for "tactical" action taken by the university in the community demonstrate a yogic theory of action. Within a yogic theory of action, as Krishna tells Arjuna in *Bhagavad Gita,* one acts without preoccupation with the outcome of action, or "actions' fruits." In addition, I analyze scholarly work by Eli Goldblatt, Linda Flower, and Ellen Cushman to show the ways in which a recognition of the already present yogic theory of action in the field of rhetoric [action as offering] could change perspectives on institutional relations with surrounding communities. The ultimate aim is not to disregard or invalidate the concrete aims or "fruits" of university action in the community. Rather, a yogic theory of action aims to advance nuanced and sensitive goals of university action as a means to serve the community sustainably.

In Chapter 2, "Yogic Agency *& Communication: Rhetorical Listening Reinvented & Reaching Inward*" I unearth "yogic listening" within "rhetorical listening." Yogic listening is a contemporary theory of listening based on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. Rhetorical listening and silence is a non-agonistic form of rhetoric developed by Krista Ratcliffe and Cheryl Glenn. I reinvent rhetorical listening and silence by uncovering the inward practice of yogic listening

within it. Rhetorical listening and silence is oriented outwardly to the social world. A yogic perspective on rhetorical listening catalyzes a personally directed, inward, and intuitive practice useful for social interactions. I explicate a personal experience in graduate school as a microcosm of the ways in which yogic listening can be uncovered in rhetorical listening in spite of seeming incongruence. Thus I try to show how yogic listening reinvents, expands and coexists with rhetorical listening.

In Chapter 3, "Yogic Agency and *Ahimsa: Open Rhetorical Space as Nonviolent Pedagogy"* I carve out two different types of writing pedagogy based upon two contrasting modes of subjecthood illustrated by the writings of Gandhi. The pedagogy of "*blocked system,*" as I call it, is based upon a conception of subjecthood termed "brute force." The pedagogy of "*open rhetorical space*" is the perspective of language/naming in the writing classroom based upon *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *satyagraha* (truth-force). By reading and reinventing it from a yogic perspective, I try to show how rhetorical theory in Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech: Politics of the Performative* enacts yogic nonviolence through a theory of language. I also consider the influence of Butler's work on other theoretical writing such as rhetorician Lynn Worsham.

In Chapter 4, *"*Yogic Agency and Healing: Undermining Rhetorics of Triumph with the *Gunas,*" I deploy the *gunas* or three qualities of nature or matter as rhetorical tools. The *gunas* respond to rhetorician Jackie Rinaldi's call to "link" "rhetoric" with "healing" (833). I aim to undercut conventional narratives surrounding happiness, which enact a narrative of triumph or overcoming the adverse, negative feelings believed to hinder happiness. In doing so, I show how texts presume happiness to be a lasting state individuals can reach and sustain. I offer the *gunas* as alternative trajectory to the traditional story of overcoming sadness and inertia to happiness

and purity. The *gunas* are a discursive tool revealing all emotional states as fluid, as a necessity to heal. Happiness is not the final state to reach because it does not stay. Positioning the *gunas* as a rhetorical tool uncovers all inward emotional experiences as important, thus humanizing all "feelers" of various emotions as equal.

I conclude my dissertation by revealing *yogic agency* as a link between the inward and the outward. Responding to Linda Adler-Kassner's prompt to offer "personally grounded stories…[which are] seen as a collective body, [as] witness to a larger one that ha[s] gone relatively unexplored," I hope to show how my personal rereading of contemporary texts shifts the story of our field, refreshing our perspective on activism and concrete change (4). To make change we must start with the inward. We must begin by working with ego in practice. Then, we craft an intentional vision of the surrounding community. I bind together the Eastern and Western concepts of my project with an attitude of "tenderness toward groundlessness." This is an emotional and inward shift of perspective in response to the inevitable, outward discursive conditions of impermanence and the fluidity of reality. Impermanence and fluidity are conditions which a yogic practice always makes clear. Yet they are easy to forget in our Western writing classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

YOGIC AGENCY: ACTION AS OFFERING

A yogic theory of action bubbles under the surface of comp/rhet scholarship when we begin to reread certain authors from a yogic perspective. Action is an object of analysis found in texts related to community literacy and service learning. In this chapter I investigate how a few thinkers in the field of composition and rhetoric advance a yogic theory of action that I term "action as offering." I interrogate these texts in order to extract their yogic undercurrent. By envisioning the undercurrent of some contemporary scholarship of community literacy as incorporating the yogic principle "action as offering," perspective of action builds on the concept of *yogic agency*.

In this chapter the principles of *bhakti* and *karma* yoga create a reinvigorated vision of action as a concept in the university. *Bhakti* and *karma yoga* are not physical or postural practices. They are psychological approaches to service, devotion and action. The crux of yogic action emerges in the *Bhagavad Gita,* as Krishna teaches Arjuna, in the sense that one must act but not with a focus on "action's fruits." One must not become preoccupied with the outcome of action. I will detail the conversation of Krishna and Arjuna later in the chapter. From a yogic perspective, action is conceived of as offering in an academic context when someone or something does not affirm, respond to or forwardly influence work in an active or concrete way. I extrapolate a conception of yogic action, or "action as offering," from the *Bhagavad Gita* and reconceive it as a theoretical context of action in the Western university classroom, thereby exploring a mindset of action as "not for actions' fruits."

"Action as offering" is not corrective suggestion or an innovative pedagogy being

recommended by the East to the West. The theory of action is already emerging in Western rhetorical theory of community literacy and service learning. The work of Paula Mathieu, primarily her 2005 book *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, is analyzed. I also examine other community literacy texts analyzing service learning projects between universities and communities, demonstrating the problematic relations when it comes to universities working in communities. These analyses articulate the need for a clear conception of action from university classrooms and the community together.

In her book *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers* (2008), Linda Adler- Kassner argues there is an element of teaching within activism and community organizing, just as there is too activism and community organizing within teaching, which administrators and instructors must make a priority (121). It is this intersection between teaching and action in the university and the community with which I am concerned. Significant, the activism bound to teaching is not only related to outwardly facing civic life, the community and the social world. Thus I explore the inwardly facing, psychological life of action among all the teachers and scholars analyzed in this chapter.

The theory of action in our discipline takes a inward, yogic approach. *Tactics* and other texts by Mathieu reveal the trouble when faculty and students work from insular and self-serving objectives even when they believe themselves to be "serving" the community. The text of the long poem of the *Bhagavad Gita* offers a specific perspective on the concept of action. It teaches a principle one should act, but not based upon the potential outcome of action. From this I name the theory of action developed in this chapter to be "action as offering."

Strategies vs. Tactics: "Vexed" and "Contingent" Actions Aiming for "Insufficient Present and Possible Alternative Futures"

Before interrogating the notion of "action as offering" it is most important to say that outcomes of actions do matter to myself and my interlocutors in our field. Writing from the city of Philadelphia provides daily opportunity to remember this. I observe economic and racial disparity just by looking out my apartment window. Residents of any diverse city are destined to think through problems in terms of money, race, class, public education, immigration status and housing. All are complex systems which feel cold toward the nuances, personalities, and exigencies of individual lives. It may always feel that way. When colleges and universities are located near poor communities, conditions appear more pressing and the contrasts of lives materialize sharply. To many university students and faculty, there feels a need for conditions of human suffering and injustice to be improved and eradicated. Thus it feels right to invest in theories and actions that demonstrate concrete outcomes, which aim to change lives.

Among my graduate school peers and me, the immediate impulse is to want to solve such problems. The impulse is followed by frustration. Circumstances seem far too complicated and layered to even begin. Paula Mathieu's investigation of action gives form to these formless, frustrated feelings. Her work is relevant to researchers, teachers, writers and thinkers of the university who look out the window and witness but fail to understand how to deal with the confluence of problems in bordering neighborhoods. Although not discussed in her book, her proposal for tactical action extends to problems such as murders, lack of resources such as food, and failing schools. Part of Mathieu's proposal for the university's influence in the community is for action to start in increments. Small actions chisel away at the feeling of magnitude of the problems, which often feel insurmountable. Most significant, her argument designates the

decisions for actions to spring from the context of the neighborhood outside the university building window. Tactical action is planned and executed based on the eyes, experiences, voices and ideas of neighborhood people who live the actual, rather than the academically imagined, neighborhood life.

Using the framework of strategies and tactics of Michel de Certau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), Mathieu argues in *Tactics* that "thus far composition's public initiatives have relied primarily on *strategic logics*- proceeding as if the university were the controlling institution determining movements and interactions…[which] seeks to control spaces and create institutional relationships with an "other" in the community," often assuming the community is a location of stable and unshifting relations and conditions, to which the university make claim and control (xiv). Instead, Mathieu proposes, a "tactical orientation [which] operates situationally," and suggests:

Adopting a tactical orientation in a university setting means letting go of comfortable claims of certainty and accepting the *contingent and vexed nature* of our actions. A tactical orientation needs to be grounded in hope, not cast in naive or passive terms, but hope as critical, active, dialectical engagement between the *insufficient present and possible, alternative futures* - a dialogue composed of many voices (my italics xv).

This chapter aims to interrogate Mathieu's "tactics of hope" in order to show how *bhakti* and *karma yoga* inadvertently underlie its argument. For her, a theory of action depends upon a contingent, often difficult-to-navigate tactical model and its resulting "insufficient present and possible, alternative futures," incorporating viewpoints from several stakeholders in a project. In Mathieu's vision, actions are of a "contingent and vexed nature" in that we do not often know

concretely what impact a university's action will have on the community, because of a variety of unpredictable factors. The narrative of action, for Mathieu, is not the trajectory of hard work preceding reward. It is a series of variables that can get messy and might not end the way anyone pictured it.

Conceiving of action as "vexed" or even puzzling and confounding, Mathieu shows how "academic administrators," who often act on the assumption that service learning is an "important marketing tool, [and] a "unique selling point" for the institution," regardless of the university's underlying intention, make service learning projects of action seem sweepingly magnanimous. These projects are conventionally regarded as an altruistic gesture toward the community (95). The limits or even damage of institutionalized, or "strategic" service learning programs, Mathieu believes, are overlooked and wide ranging. Although university controlled programs can provide "measurable success, broad institutional presence, and sustainability," at the same time these programs create a sense of rigidity when it comes to responding to the shifting, circumstantial and idiosyncratic needs of a community. Instead of focusing on how the community might benefit, Mathieu's research shows how when universities are in controlling service learning through "top down" "institutionalization" they focus on prescribed desired outcomes for themselves in one way or another, such as drawing more students by marketing their institution's value to the community. The community, Mathieu shows by example, is often unaffected or even harmed in ways undetected by the university.

By proposing a model of "tactics of hope," to be deployed when university students and faculty cross the boundaries of the university into the community, Mathieu refocuses a notion of action to engage "tactics [which are] available when we do not control the space." She implicates the university's tendency to manipulate actions in the community based upon the university,

rather than the community's terms. Borrowing words from de Certeau, Mathieu writes, "the place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety [a tactic] is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized," and thus the "Other" in the moment determines the relations and needs of a service learning project (16). When university actions employ a "tactic," the "Other" decides the mission of the project. Conversely, strategic institutional programs depend upon controlling the space and constructing rules, assessment and evaluation. These results are geared to benefit and contribute to research of the university instead of working to respond to the nuances of individuals in time and space within the community.

University Action: Action Within Karma and Bhakti Yoga

By advancing a mode of action framed by "tactics of hope," Mathieu's project fits within a specific perspective of *karma* and *bhakti yoga*, also considered the yoga of service and devotion. *Bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga* are inner practices the yogi takes on while doing work or performing a duty. *Bhakti yoga* is sometimes practiced as meditation or chanting to a deity. *Bhakti* and *karma yoga* are psychological practices generating an orientation toward work, duty, action, and service and thus their perceived outcomes.

The *Bhagavad Gita* illustrates a definition of *bhakti* and *karma yoga.* In the 40 line poem narrating a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, Krishna makes an argument for why Arjuna should enter a battle against his own kinsmen. Krishna describes the practices of *bhakti* and *karma yoga* in his argument. For our purposes, the dialogue in which Krishna convinces Arjuna to fight against his kinsmen is a metaphor for engaging with the internal battleground against himself. Krishna persuades Arjuna to become an inward warrior in a struggle against the ego. This signifies the practices of *karma* and *bhakti*.

In *Philosophies of India,* Hans Zimmer describes *bhakti yoga* as framing a perspective on action in the following way: "it should be performed as a service to God…By regarding duties in this light, one gradually eliminates egoism and selfishness." That is, one does not position outcome or personal gain as the primary focus of action (302). This is continuous inner practice. It goes against our biological conditioning of wanting to know what we will get out of doing something. Instead, Zimmer notes, the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches a viewpoint of action within the yogic path in which actions are performed as oblation. They are performed as offerings to God, dedications, and/or sacred rituals for the sake of their sacredness rather than for the hope of results.

Paradoxically, action as offering is taught in *Bhagavad Gita* as a location by which to make gains in consciousness. While material outcomes or victories are not the intention of action, as Krishna teaches, inner and spiritual growth are. In Chapter Two, Krishna tells Arjuna that the yogi is "Indifferent to gain or loss, to victory or defeat," which demand meditation-in-motion while one performs action Krishna continues, "this is philosophy's wisdom; now hear the wisdom of yoga. On this path no effort is wasted, no gain is ever reversed" regardless of the result of the action performed (52). By asserting "no effort is wasted," Krishna valorizes the practice of acting no matter the outcome, as it is performed in the present moment. In this practice, even if the warrior were to "lose" the battle in material terms, when all actions are considered oblation, offering, and/or dedication, the inner ways in which warrior expands his or her personal understanding through struggle in "battle," is never lost. The practice itself is an opportunity to inwardly struggle with the power of one's ego, or what Erich Schiffman calls "small mind (8)"

A Note About Floaters

The juxtaposition of action with the practice of "offering [it] to God" is problematic in the context of the secular university. The *Gita* states that actions should be offering to God. I appropriate this notion as independent from God, or as offering in and of itself. I delineate an important distinction between actions as offerings as a contained entity and actions as offerings to or for someone or something. This chapter subscribes to the former rather than the latter. The practice I conceive regards yogic action as non-theistic. Or, as Michael Carroll, author of *Awake at Work* and my meditation teacher would say, there are "no floaters" in this practice.[14] Within a framework of "action as offering" agents are not aiming to make contact with, embody, or make good with the divine. It is not a practice which makes priority *to whom* action is offered. Action is a practice *of* offering. The practice itself is the priority.

Actions Burned Up in the Fire of Wisdom

The *Bhagavad Gita* situates action as a location for inner growth rather than outward results. Krishna discusses with Arjuna a personal attitude toward action and action's outcome. In Chapter 4 verses 17 thru 21 he says "with no desire for success, no anxiety about failure, indifferent to results, he burns up his actions in the fire of wisdom" (75).

The yogic practitioner gains wisdom from performing actions without egoistic attachment. The word "burn" demonstrates a valorization of illumination and transformation arising out of actions performed without preoccupation with results.

Mathieu notes how the result of action may only "possibly" produce a future which diverges from present conditions. Her understanding of action demonstrates the yogic "burn[ing] up [of actions] in the fire of wisdom." Sometimes an action, no matter how hard one has worked on it, may only be a personal or collaborative learning experience. As inner transformation takes

place, though it may not be the way anyone imagined it. An action may not always produce material or concrete change, right away at least. Mathieu identifies actions as "vexed and contingent" thus depicting them as both distressing at times as well as fluid and dependent on changing factors. By characterizing action in this way, Mathieu's writing reveals an unspoken yogic message to dissolve what Krishna calls "anxiety about failure." Mathieu shows that one must practice the acceptance of action as is. All action is inherently problematic. In Mathieu's work, a concept of "action as offering" emerges and is performed tactically, directed toward the space of the Other. It brings about unexpected results for which the university did not necessarily aim.

Krishna's lesson for Arjuna points to the intensifying practice of "burning up" the egoistic attitude toward action. The process of fire and burning are significant in yogic literature. They allude to illumination, penetrating ideas and analysis, detoxification, and change. Krishna makes sure to to tell Arjuna that the practitioner "engaged in action" in fact "does nothing at all," even as the action itself unfolds (112). The practitioner inwardly resists grasping at results. He or she practices inward resistance. He or she does not let the desires of the ego dominate the action itself. At its essence, this is "doing nothing at all" besides the action. The ego quiets and the action is performed as offering, without aiming for personal benefit (86).

Emerging in *Tactics of Hope* is the yogic practice of being, as Krishna articulates it, so "engaged in action" that the ego of the practitioner, does "nothing at all." As Mathieu shows, actions can be distressing or confounding for the practitioner. Actions bring about inward uncertainty. Yet when an action is directed "tactically," as Mathieu describes it, toward the space of the Other, one observes how the ego is "burned" in the "fire of wisdom." The ego's aiming

[14] Carroll, Michael. Awake At Work, Shambhala Publications, 2008.

toward personal benefit is "burned up," or cleansed by focusing on the action alone, not what comes out of it. Mathieu demonstrates how a tactical approach is an "action as [an] offering" toward the space of the Other. A tactical approach toward action supplants the ways in which a strategic approach preemptively carves out an outcome, which benefits the university. Steeped within Mathieu's portrayal of tactical action in the university projects is her unintentional indication of the yogic concept of "action as offering." Mathieu's work develops a philosophy for university action without egoistic intentions.

Unequal Power Relations Between the University and the Community: The Community as Charity Model.

The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches all individuals are equal in that they suffer and experience joy. Thus it advocates for a parallel relationship between the server and the served. Perceiving humanity and equality in oneself in relation to others, Krishna tells Arjuna, is to "master" the "ego" and attain a state of yoga (86). Yogic action, then, Krishna shows, must stem from recognition of the equality between the server and the served.

Mathieu's work, when viewed from a yogic perspective, reveals the significance of acknowledging equal knowledge between people regardless of social status. The acknowledgment of an equal playing field between individuals is significant for a concept of action as an offering. In *Tactics of Hope*, Mathieu deconstructs the ways in which the university presents itself in an asymmetrical power relation to the community it wants to serve. She observes the ways in which universities take strategic actions specifically when they attempt to make a "real world" impact using service learning projects. These projects rely on a construction of the university and community, or the server and the served, in an unequal relationship. In her research, Mathieu points to the habit of the university conceiving of its surrounding community

as in need of charity sponsored by strategic and institutional initiatives. In a charity model, the institution funding a service learning program is presupposed as the dominant and all-knowing partner within the project while the community is conceptualized as needy and defective in solid and unshifting terms. This allows for the university to calculate a prescribed set of outcomes by means of action. Mathieu warns that in this model "service learning is a predetermined goal," or even that students are given the "generic and benign" task of "service learning" without a specific assignment or localized context. These projects do not mold to the community and its actual needs and strengths. Instead, the community is viewed as "the source of the problem." Students believe it is their duty is to solve systemic problems in the short duration of the semester (90).

Mathieu argues that the actions performed by strategic initiatives are embedded in conceiving of the community as a unitary misfortunate in need of charity. In those textual instances, I uncover the yogic principles of action. The charity model tacitly encourages university members to "act," to invoke *Bhagavad Gita* says, by aiming for the "actions' fruits" (65). By constructing the community as a problem to be solved, the dominating institution, working from an egoistic strategy rather than a tactical model, bases its action on a prescribed or desired outcome. The university student or faculty member can claim to have rescued a population or neighborhood. .The strategic model is also then based on characterizing the community without much nuance or attention to who people actually are.

Karma (service) and *bhakti* (devotion) *yoga* (often used interchangeably) is arguably an undercurrent in Mathieu's work. It is a perspective which helps to articulate actions as offering. Mathieu aims to show ways in which to dissolve the unequal power relation between the university and the community. By arguing that actions of the university can prove more effective

when they are "tactical," in the sense that they "originate[d] not from university needs but from the articulated needs of one community group." Mathieu shows the necessity to revise the power dynamic embedded in the actions taken by the university in the community. By reenvisioning the community not as a "site of need," and by "construct[ing] projects that acknowledge the expertise and capacity [already] existing there," one uncovers a yogic theory of action laden in Mathieu's writing.

In a similar vein, Mathieu proposes tactical service work because of its "timeliness and sensitivity to space," as university members respond in the present moment. Tactical action is yogic in that it occurs in the present moment. It responds to circumstantial and shifting needs of the community, or what Mathieu calls "exigencies." Mathieu, in essence, implicates a concept of action as offering by characterizing tactical service work as demanding total attention in the present (99). This is a central characteristic of tactical action and the yogic theory of action, which underlies it.

The Function of Institutional Ego

In Mathieu's work, the institution is a macrocosm of the individual that demonstrates the attributes of ego. By invoking a fresh attitude and methodology called "tactics of hope," Mathieu introduces university actions which are "useful to local communities and may even help academics imagine new post-disciplinary forms of research [which may be] unpredictable and inefficient, but [are] an act of hope." Mathieu imagines "insufficient" and "possible" futures as the results of action as part of an attitude she terms hope (134).

Beneath Mathieu's construction of the word hope is a yogic concept of action as offering. Her definition of hope is an open future made up of potential. Hope is not a prescribed vision of success tending to empower some and force change upon others. At the same time, her

conception of hope is not entirely specific. This is useful to her rhetorical aims of constructing hope as a vision the reader cannot yet fully picture. The *Bhagavad Gita* helps to reveal Mathieu's vision of hope by constituting an individual ego as a microcosm within the institutional macrocosm.

By focusing our attention on hope, one can see the yoga in Mathieu's writing. Mathieu says we must see tactical actions for their "radical insufficiency." Instead of resisting and trying to change perceived limitations, one surrenders to them and continues with tactical actions anyway (134). Unravelling Mathieu's term "hope" from a yogic perspective, one reduces the power of the ego internally. Mathieu calls for a "critical interrogation of the present" before a "predetermined blueprint for future practices." Institutions must evaluate present actions in earnest and understand how they affect real people. Basing action on "blueprint for future practices" is a projections of the institution's ego into the future, neglecting immediate exigencies and overlooking the ways ego is driving action in the present (134).

Krishna tells Arjuna that "wisdom is the final goal of every action" (66). Of course, it is stretch to say that Mathieu's argument for tactical action does not aim for any tangible results other than yogic wisdom. Yet her identification of tactical action as within a framework of "radical insufficiency" advances the concept of action as offering (134). The intentionality with which with actions are performed in Mathieu's framework can be inwardly transformative for all persons involved. This may be insufficient for universities with prescribed outcomes, but profound growth can take place from a service learning project in which wisdom is gained and outcomes remain unfulfilled.

The Problems with the Public Turn, the Need for an Inward Turn, and the Production of Wisdom

Of significance in Mathieu's arguments are the ways in which the university privileges the production of knowledge and the commodification of scholarship over the improvement of conditions for those outside the college campus. Krishna's repeated use of the term "wisdom" and its connotation as the "final goal of every action," and as a "fire" which "illuminates" helps us to reevaluate this dichotomy between knowledge production and wisdom from a yogic perspective (65). That is to say that Mathieu's analysis calls into question whether the production of academic scholarship is evidence of "wisdom" or personal and collective growth, or if it is solely for institutional benefit. In *Tactics* Mathieu uncovers the term the "public turn" in composition in order to assess honestly how the university negotiates its role in the communities outside campus. Keeping in mind that a yogic perspective holds the "final goal of every action" as "wisdom," I analyze how Mathieu demonstrates the university's need to redefine exactly what "wisdom" means for the institution as it is in action (66). The subtitle of *Tactics, The Public Turn in English Composition,* reflects Mathieu's critique of the ways in which "composition is hitting the streets" as a result of agendas which compel the university classroom into action in surrounding communities. She shows how idealism embedded "in the streets" conception is bound up with the commercialization of the university. There is an emerging necessity to advertise colleges as the market becomes more competitive.

The "Public Turn" signifies the outwardly-directed attention of the comp/rhet discipline. Concurrently, it indicates a resistance to insular, secluded aims and interests of the liberal arts. The "public turn" possesses the goal of addressing immediate problems of the urban and rural areas surrounding universities. As a consequence of the commodification of the university, Mathieu shows by example how the "public turn" tends to set in motion strategic models of

action which demonstrate a lack self-awareness and self-reflexivity regarding their aims.

Mathieu shows how the "public turn" could take a less "public" approach or be less outwardly directed. The university classroom could begin by first turning inward and observing with candor institutional aims and strategies. By calling for this kind of awareness, Mathieu teaches her readers what Krishna teaches Arjuna. Instead of the "public turn" arising out of capitalistic objectives, Mathieu wants to position tactical action as an individualized approach to a specific community. In Chapter three Verses 16-20, Krishna tells Arjuna, "though the unwise cling to their actions, watching for results, the wise are free of attachments and act for the well-being of the whole world" (66). University classrooms which operate on their own terms and seek to improve the image of the institution demonstrate clinginess to results. These projects fail to cultivate inner awareness or outwardly directed wisdom. The "public turn" does possess good intentions in some ways. But when institutions do not value turning inward to assess the real aims of a "public" project, they do not consider the "well-being of the world."

A redefining of the term wisdom could aid in a reassessment of the values of the public turn. If engaging with outside communities is to be effective, an inward collective awareness of prescribed aims and hoped-for gains must take place. An interrogation of the outcomes aimed for by institutional action is crucial to the inward surrender of ego. In terms of wisdom, professors and program directors who intervene into the local community could begin to more truthfully understand the value of potential wisdom and knowledge gained from a specific project. A central question to ask the students and faculty initiating a service learning project is whether wisdom is defined as the production of research or as something less tangible - as inward and collective growth, as a relationship, as a conversation.

In an attempt to answer this question, Mathieu provides the example of a graduate student

who asks to produce a documentary based upon *Spare Change*, the newspaper for which homeless people write. The graduate student conducts interviews at the staff office and takes up time under the pretense the video would be useful to *Spare Change.* Fran, executive director of *Spare Change*, tells Mathieu that while the graduate student receives her degree, the newspaper office never receives a video after several promises of its arrival. This is disappointing to Fran who plans to use the video to promote *Spare Change.* It feels to her like the graduate student did not take her organization seriously. At the same time, Fran and her employees go through trouble to help the student produce her video. The graduate student gives the appearance of her academic work as oriented outwardly to the community. But she shows lack of awareness to how the community organization perceives her project and its goals.for participation. The student mistakes *Spare Change* as existing for her benefit and the completion of her assignment. Working from ego, she does not conceive of the newspaper as an independent entity on its own with its own objectives.

This graduate student, reveals her ego, *ahankara,* as attached to the results of her action while failing to understand the actual needs of the served. From a yogic perspective, Mathieu characterizes the graduate student as working from ego. The graduate student acts based upon the outcome of her personal situation rather than the desires and hopes of the community with which she works. Because her ego's desires supersede the needs of the newspaper, one might assume that the graduate student could not see how important the video might be to Fran and *Spare Change.* She overlooks the possibility of a useful and symbiotic relationship between herself and the newspaper. The graduate student's action is "strategic," not "tactical." By never delivering the video, the student shows she is not conceiving of "the space of the Other." It is possible that the pressure of this student's graduate program indicated the need to the student a mode of

strategic action, while still giving her the impression she was effectively serving the community. The student believed her assignment to be the priority. But it remained out of sphere of her thinking in terms of how it might be of service to the organization of *Spare Change.*

As far as she is concerned, *Spare Change* is there to help fulfill her graduate requirements. From her perspective inwardly, the ego of the graduate student supplants the individual and communal needs of *Spare Change.* The writers and readers of *Spare Change* do not feel more heard, seen or supported as a result of the student's outcome based action. The outcome of this strategic action is a grade. It seems counterintuitive that service would not be the primary focus of a service learning project. Clear communication regarding the student's academic goals of the project as they cohered to institutional objectives of *Spare Change* would have made this project more effective for everyone involved. Evidenced by how she operates based upon earning a grade, the graduate student is not aware of her ego dominating the project. This exemplifies one paralyzing blind-spot of grades, requirements and other tangible rewards positioned as outcomes of action in the university in the wider community.

This story suggests that awareness of one's ego is key in community action. The importance of the awareness of biases, assumptions, and hoped-for advantage within individuals and institutions is explored by Eli Goldblatt. In "Alinsky's Reveille: A Community Organizing Model for Neighborhood Based Literacy Projects," (2005) Goldblatt show the ways in which a yogic form of action makes crucial the awareness of ego in the form of honesty about institutional intentions. His essay reveals the struggle of acting without the fruits in mind, without proposing a tidy conclusion for the struggle. He suggests that getting real about *who* an action truly benefits is a vital part of effective action in and of itself. The inward honesty, discussion, analysis and awareness this demands substantiates action.

It is this inward facing struggle that is a crucial aspect of yoga. As it reads, the first sutra of the *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali* begins "Now the Inquiry of Yoga," but it is also translated as "Now the struggle of Yoga." The practice and theory of yoga involve diving into the idea of continuous and unending struggle. The *Bhagavad Gita* reflects this struggle. With regard to awareness of how overpowering the ego can become, Arjuna admits the yogi is always in struggle with ego. He warns, even for the seasoned practitioner, that the practice of yoga, or silencing the fluctuations of the mind, is a continuous practice of directing one's attention to "big mind," or "Self," away from ego. Arjuna shows Krishna his concerns and doubt in Chapter Six, verse 34, when he says "the mind is restless, unsteady, turbulent, wild, stubborn; truly it seems to me as hard to master as the wind" (95). Krishna agrees with Arjuna and sympathizes: "Yoga is indeed hard," but that one must keep trying in earnest and with awareness (96).

"Yoga is indeed hard:" Action Rooted in Honesty about Ego's Blindspots

The conceptualization of the ego in *Bhagavad Gita* as it relates to action is represented by Arjuna's experience of yoga. Krishna tells him, "Yoga is indeed hard" (96). The *Gita* encourages readers to make peace with the struggle all individuals experience with ego. When Krishna makes the confession that yoga is indeed a practice in and of itself of being immersed in struggle, he alludes ego is more pervasive than the reader might imagine. Ego is not something which can be compartmentalized or put away on demand. There is always present a struggle to maintain awareness of ego.

From a yogic perspective, I observe that Eli Goldblatt conceives of action in the university as a yogic struggle. He makes a priority coming to terms with egoistic motivations that underlie action, encouraging awareness and openness to the ego of the Other. Although Goldblatt does not explicitly mention the yogic nature of the struggle, from another dimension of his work,

yogic thinking comes to the fore. The struggle of action, as Goldblatt constructs it, illuminates self-serving desires and fears of individuals and institutions.

Goldblatt addresses the function of institutional ego within community and university partnerships with his essay's opening question: "Who serves whom in community-based composition courses?" He believes that university based service learning projects demonstrate "the need for a balanced and non-exploitive relationship" that does not position the university as expert (121). This question of "who serves whom" calls into question the core intentions of service learning projects and composition courses, which enter the community.

Here Goldblatt underlines the dual possibility of an ego-driven community based project advantaging a few university members by fulfilling an assignment or a grade or a research publication and alternatively, a project helping participants on all sides. His leading question marks the importance of coming from a clarified intention for a community literacy or service learning course.

Like Mathieu, Goldblatt calls for a reevaluation of the server/served dynamic, which risks misunderstandings, power imbalances, at best, and effacing the community's actual needs, at worst. Goldblatt analyzes the community organizing model of Saul Alinsky, whose activist work began in the 1930s and went until the 1960s. Out of Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals,* Goldblatt outlines what he calls a "set of principles" useful to university educators directing focus to surrounding neighborhoods and communities. One of the principles Goldblatt parses from Alinsky is "Be guided by a broadly defined sense of self-interest...and encourage all other participants to do the same," indicating that self- interest will always be dominant in thinking during action, but collective awareness and thus acceptance of its presence will allow it to be useful to, rather than damaging of, the server/served power relation (128). At first, it sounds like

Alinsky encourages ego-driven interests of both parties to be held as most salient in a community based project. But rather than subordinating some "self-interests" underneath others, Goldblatt interprets Alinsky as encouraging transparency. Rather than operating on a pretense of "saving" the community, Goldblatt believes honesty about egoistic intentions can help a project succeed.

I recognize Goldblatt's writing invokes yogic principles of action by encouraging the very awareness of ego Krishna teaches to Arjuna. In his admission to Arjuna that "yoga is indeed hard" and the mind is difficult to master, Krishna illuminates the way ego self serves. The "mastering" and awareness of the ego arises out of the way a practitioner directs attention during action. The way one directs attention can allow for an expansion of awareness or for perpetuation of unawareness of ego. Goldblatt argues "self-interest" can act as "guide" for all participants. Rather than a project positioned beneath a veil of idealism failing to admit to ego's self-interest, he argues for awareness of "self-interest" to promote understanding of where everyone is coming from. For instance, Goldblatt notes how Alinsky suggests "we communicate with others on their own ground," and we "respect people's dignity by creating the conditions for them to be active participants in solving their own problems rather than [as] victims," while extending awareness to "self-interest" of both partners (123). Bringing self-interests of the ego out in the open can draw participants closer to dialogic action. Illuminating self-interest can help to dismantle a community-as- problem and university-as-rescuer power dynamic.

Goldblatt's leading question demonstrates yogic practice for himself as a community organizer and for the field as an underlying philosophy. By asking "who serves whom" in community based partnerships, he points to the centrality of awareness of ego for individuals and institutions in the field. "Action as offering" presumes the presence of the ego. Viewed from this yogic perspective of action, effective community partnerships can only be accomplished through

dismantling the dominance of ego and dedicating attention to the Other. In this light, service learning projects must attend to the nuanced life of the Other while understanding the role of one's complicated self-interest. By means of an argument for honesty with himself and others, one can point to the ways Goldblatt's writing illuminates "action as offering."[15]

An Example of Tactical Action; Action as Offering in Struggle and Tools

Paula Mathieu argues tactical action must be "grounded in hope...as critical, active, dialectical engagement between insufficient present and possible, alternative futures - *a dialogue composed of many voices*" (xv). Her depiction of tactical action as dialectical and dialogical articulates a space in which what is not satisfactory about present conditions merges with what agents discuss and aim for as a potential reality in the future.

This definition of tactical action is too a space of yoga. It is a space of struggle not banking on specific results. Amidst conflicting voices in dialogue, working from a perspective of an "insufficient present" is another articulation of the struggles and inquiries of yoga. Ellen Cushman's ethnographic text *The Struggle and the Tools: Oral and Literate Strategies in the Inner City Community* (1998) serves as an example of tactical action.[16] Cushman articulates a "struggle" while demonstrating the concepts Mathieu finds crucial to tactical action, dialecticism

[15] One can perceive implications of a higher sense of "self" beyond the ego in the writing of Mathieu and Goldblatt. For Mathieu, it emerges in her assumption of a self which commits to tactical action, a self able to enact action while transcending the strategic goals of the institution. For Goldblatt, we can parse out a textual presence of a higher self as his contention for awareness of the ego's intentions and its influences on others. Both thinkers suggest a dichotomy between ego/true self, or small mind/big mind, which is ever-emergent in the yogic system. In chapter six verses four thru eight Krishna teaches Arjuna "The self [ego] is a friend for him who masters himself by the Self; [purusha or Erich Schiffman's concept of 'big mind]," yet without this "mastery," or awareness of the power ego's desires and fears, the ego becomes an enemy (89). In other words, the ego can be helpful to those engaged in action. Awareness of and willingness to work with ego (small mind, or the non-higher self) is a key presupposition for these texts, and what they suggest for skillful action.

[16] I attempt here to make two points at once, hoping I do not have too many pots boiling. Cushman depicts her community residents engaged in tactical action. Simultaneously, I am trying to show how her text is an example of tactical action, or the kind of research Paula Mathieu would want someone in her service learning course to conduct. Thus Cushman is herself engaged in tactical action.

and dialogism.[17] Cushman's book shows an instance of tactical action as myriad voices join together in order to compose a particular struggle (and attainment) of rhetorical agency for urban community residents. In an ethnography of an inner city community, Cushman works to dismantle the myth that poor and disenfranchised residents of an inner city are stuck in "false consciousness."

Significantly, Cushman illuminates the "struggle" against institutions community residents undergo by trying to improve socioeconomic circumstances. Through close analysis, she uncovers the rhetorical "tools" residents deploy in everyday interactions when confronted with the barriers of institutional agents. Thus she reveals the rhetorical and linguistic agency of "community members [who] have critical consciousness that manifests itself in various linguistic events and artifacts that scholars often overlook" or that scholars conceive of as helplessness or resignation (2).

I take her ethnographic account as an example of tactical action and, by extension, "action as offering." Cushman forges a connection between a research publication and the community in such a way that shapes, as Mathieu defines tactical action, a "dialogue composed of many voices" and "critical [and] dialectical engagement." Her writing results in the reader's understanding of community residents as critically conscious and rhetorically agentic when faced with social oppression. Her text acts as "tactic [grounded in] hope" searching for "possibly" "alternative...futures," with no guarantees for change. Cushman demonstrates how inner city residents navigate what she calls "systematic oppression" (or the "struggle") by means of linguistic manipulation and subversion of which other scholars blithely assume them to be incapable. Through her writing, Cushman composes a "dialogue of many voices," showing how

[17] This is my interpretation - Cushman did not respond to a call from Mathieu. Mathieu published Tactics in 2005 while Cushman published Struggle and Tools in 1996.

residents aim for their lives in the inner city to change, while possessing understanding of how institutions try to prevent such change.

Cushman's ethnography demonstrates tactical action in the ways in which her awareness focuses on the "space of the Other." In one instance she analyzes the community residents' confrontations with institutional agents such as administrators at the welfare office. She gives attention the ways in which a perceptive community resident mutters under her breath, displaying awareness that a welfare administrator treats her unfairly and deliberately erects barriers to welfare. By complexly envisioning "the space of the Other," Cushman argues the "Other" demonstrates critical consciousness and rhetorical skillfulness without prompting or being "taught" it by someone like herself, a scholar at the university.

By carving out the "space of the Other" in the story of community residents, Cushman illuminates "action as offering." She depicts community residents as actually subverting systematic oppression without acquiring material gains for such acts of subversion. For instance, Cushman points to indications of rhetorical agency such as the resistance to respond to accusation and mischaracterization by institutional agents or the awareness community residents evince that they are intentionally disadvantaged by the agents of the system. She unearths responses of "subtlety" as purposeful discursive choices, as markers of critical consciousness. Paradoxically, she illuminates how community residents' acts of resistance do not always produce the change for which they strive. This form of tactical action is both "grounded in hope" and "critical," but does not bank on the reception of specific results. It is action that reaffirms outcomes in the future cannot be counted on. Like the present, Cushman depicts the action of community residents with the awareness the future is in flux.

Cushman thus depicts and enacts tactical action as "action as offering." Without

outcomes resulting from the rhetorical skills of community members, she invokes a conception of agentic critical consciousness in space in which community members might otherwise be dismissed as within "false consciousness." As part of the ways she demonstrates tactical action and "action and offering," Cushman engages and deploys the Other's terms rather than her own. By letting the voices of community residents come through in her text, her writing reveals devotion to believing in the space of the Other and their ability to creating change. She demonstrates faith in the power and discernment of the Other to find ways to resist systemic oppression, even with subtlety and silence

Viewed from a yogic principle of action, Cushman demonstrates "action as offering" as she values critical consciousness and rhetorical agency for its own sake. Her readers sense a commitment to the depiction of inner city residents as the *Bhagavad Gita* describes the yoga practitioners in action: "self- possessed" and "resolute." Inner city residents in *Struggle and the Tools* contain inward-facing strength and skill as means to resist institutional barriers without being prompted or taught. By illustrating rhetorical confidence and the ability to be critical of the world around them, community residents display a strength of self, a lack of ego with regards to their position in a socioeconomic hierarchy. Cushman evokes "yoga" as constituted by "skill in actions" and a sense of self possession, as the population she analyzes works within and for the sake of, not against, the struggle. By means of the depiction of struggle bound to yogic action, emerging in Cushman's work is an aspect of *yogic agency* (64).

The Yogic Action within the Strategy: The Action Within the Inaction/The Inaction Within the Action

In Chapter 4 verses 17 to 21 Krishna tells Arjuna that the "true nature of action is profound, and difficult to fathom." There is "inaction in the midst of action and action in the

midst of inaction." Yogic action conceived as without egotistically grasping toward an outcome is an offering to the "fire of wisdom" (75). A yogic mode of action presents a paradox. Sometimes a person might appear to be in action yet the action may accomplish nothing at all. On other occasions a seemingly productive action contains stillness, fixedness and offering to wisdom at its center.

In a parallel way, Mathieu's framework of strategic action can be interpreted as a yogic notion of action in certain contexts. "Strategic logic" which is driven by institutional outcomes, would seem to be the opposite of yogic action. Yet the yogic principle of "action as offering" also surfaces in writings about community literacy appearing to promote strategic action. Mathieu defines the "strategic logics" of the university and their community partnerships as "proceeding as if the university were the controlling institution determining movements and interactions…[which] seeks to control spaces and create institutional relationships with an "other" in the community" (xiv). Although a strategic action may arise out of a "controlling institution," I show how strategic action may be made up of micro- interactions, which are tactically oriented and in some situations, yogic.

The work of Linda Flower, specifically her book *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement,* is situated within a logic of strategy. Yet her writing also suggests a yogic mode of action as offering. From a yogic perspective, I reenvision this as the "inaction in the midst of action," thereby reinventing her strategically tinged action with community members as "burn[ing] up...in the fire of wisdom." Even through a theoretical foundation beset with "strategic logics," one can reimagine Flower's work as presenting "action as offering."

As one would expect from strategic action, in part three "Rhetorical Tools in the Rhetoric of Making a Difference," Flower primarily writes from her undergraduates' perspectives, rather

than the vantage point of the community members who those undergraduates serve. She narrates the struggle to understand and relate to community members that her undergraduates Scott, Anne and Nicole encounter while working at the Community Literacy Center, remarking upon "stories [which] offer a ground for inquiry into the negotiated, situated meanings **these students** construct *out* of racial and cultural differences *with* urban teenagers" (my bold, Flower's italics 160). Flower prioritizes the construction of meaning "out" of and "with" the position of the Other, rather than have these undergraduates constructing discourses for or about community members. Yet these stories are derived from her students' experiences. This means that stories of community members are molded into the theoretical frameworks of Flower and her students.

Flower's account represents Mathieu's definition of "strategic logics." Flower portrays college students wanting to "control spaces and create institutional relationships with an "other" in the community" within the container university students generate and operate. Reinvented from a yogic perspective, one observes Flower's students, especially on a micro-level, working from a position of yogic action, or "action as offering." Flower depicts her students as personally driven by the task of understanding the "space of the Other" without demonstrating expectation of a reward or personal benefit. She argues within the dialogue between students and community center members students strive for "a kind of understanding that could support literate and social action." Their dialogue is based on understanding neither the students nor the urban teenagers with whom they work are considered the "arbiters of truth." Each party attempts to understand the others "rivalling" viewpoints (160). University members control the conversation and the space, ("strategic logics"). But the undergraduates attempt to observe and hear the perspectives of the community teenagers is arguably yogic in the sense that they do not try to change the alternate perspective for their own advantage. The goal of understanding (without changing)

"rivalling" viewpoints is a form of "action as offering."

"Transformed understanding," is the goal of negotiating opposing positions, or what Flower terms "intercultural inquiry." Transformed understanding unfolds when varied social positions and viewpoints come other in conversation, as Flower quotes Clifford Geertz, one explores "local frames of awareness" or what "[others] think they're up to" (169). One conceives of the action of undergraduates working toward "transformed understanding" by negotiating "rivalling" viewpoints (160). Simultaneously, this dialogic work reads like it is accomplished within the mission of the Community Literacy Center sponsored by Flower's university.

Read from a yogic perspective, one can reinvent the goal of "transformed understanding" and uncover how it also illuminates a lens of "action as offering." As Krishna tells Arjuna in the chapter "The Yoga of Action," without "anxiety about failure," the yogi "burns up his actions in the fire of wisdom" (75). While Flower's methodology and terms might originate from an institutional strategy to which the Other adapts and assimilates, the ultimate outcome of "transformed understanding" invokes a belief in action as offering. "Literate and social action" is a way to grow in wisdom for everyone. In Flower's framework, wisdom is developed communally and is thus defined by its community and its collectivity. Strategic action in many contexts effaces the "Other" as a means to count on outcomes for the university. For Flower, strategic action can also be an example of "action offering." Strategic action, too, can be an opportunity for the institution and those it serves to grow inwardly together. Thus there can be value to institutionally controlled actions informed by the perspective of "action as offering."

The Tension Between Big Mind and Small Mind in Action: The Ego of the Teacher

In his writing on the *Bhagavad Gita*, Heinrich Zimmer describes the *bhakti* path as working from the dichotomy of the "higher" Self and the ego. I discuss this dichotomy in

Chapter Two as the difference between big mind and small mind. Zimmer recapitulates Krishna's teachings to Arjuna in the *Gita*: "the first mistake is that of the normal behavior of the naive worldly being, prone to act and eager for the results. This only leads to a continuation...of the unavoidable sufferings that go with being an ego." This is the ego attached to a specific outcome of an action whose benefits are material and ephemeral (404). Zimmer goes on to unravel the core objective of the *Gita*, which is to "Act: for actually you act no matter which way you turn- but achieve detachment from the fruits! Dissolve thus the self-concern of your ego, and with that you will discover the Self! The Self is unconcerned with either the individuality within (*jiva, purusa*) or the world without (*a-jiva, prakriti*)," or the transient shifts of matter and nature (404). By using the word "unconcerned," Zimmer refers to the concept of detachment from the results of actions and the objective of immersion in the action in and of itself. Immersion with action alone, detached from results, is an essence of yoga. Yogic action inwardly clarifies, disciplines and opens the limitations of ego, which take shape as linguistic representations in the mind.

Teaching serves as an example of action, which reveals when ego is limiting or precluding the perception of students' exigent needs. In an essay about teaching, Mathieu illustrates "action as an offering" as central to teaching. She discloses in her essay for the *Journal of Advanced Composition* entitled "Excavating Indoor Voices: Inner Rhetoric and the Mindful Writing Teacher," (2014) a personal struggle with her teaching evaluations. She shows how feedback from students is a battle with ego. After receiving responses she considered "poor" from her students at a new teaching position in the fall semester during which 9/11 happened, Mathieu observes her own "indoor voice" and "inner rhetoric" become harsh. Emerging in her essay one perceives Mathieu's recognition of her ego or "small mind" is attached to the notion

that she is a "good teacher." Receiving negative feedback from students about her teaching ruptures the language, what she calls "inner rhetoric," or the "stories we tell ourselves about ourselves," with which her ego constructed herself (54).

The egoistic identity of a "good teacher," directs Mathieu's attention to search for student feedback in order to reinforce her identity. The act of teaching and searching for feedback signifies action aimed for outcome, an outcome reaffirming a sense of identity as a teacher. Mathieu tells her readers how this makes teaching less effective, and illustrates the ego's influence on the action of teaching. By doing so, she emphasizes to teachers the necessity of responding to students in the present moment first, not thinking of future feedback, thereby preventing the ego from maintaining dominance on the teacher's inner life in the classroom. Mathieu valorizes turning inward in order to recognize the barriers that ego can erect between the server and the served and the action of teaching. Action must not be based upon aligning with a predetermined vision of oneself as a teacher, but must morph as students demonstrate to the teacher what students need to learn and how they themselves must learn it.

Teaching invokes the constant of the ego and its pulling and manipulation for a particular result, either steeped in emotions of fear and anticipation, regret, hopefulness, or fruitful optimism. Within Mathieu's growth one observes the ways in which she is able to reframe her discomfort in relation to her students as a means to expand awareness of her own ego's patterns. As a teacher, Mathieu reveals a notion of action as offering as she articulates an internal struggle most teachers know well. "Am I good enough? How do I know?" As a teacher I have spent whole semesters wondering how effective I am. How do I keep the action of teaching productive and successful without the former question predominating my thinking in the classroom as I face my students? Conceiving and re-envisioning the action of teaching as action offered to students

rather than a performance of a "good teacher" might be one place to start, as Mathieu shows.

The Guru Mantra and Action/Student & Teacher/Server & Served

The *Bhagavad Gita* interrogates the action occurring between the teacher and student and between the server and the served. The *Gita* is often popularly understood as a poem acting as a metaphor to depict life as a "battlefield" or a "teacher" in and of itself. One is continuously re-enacting the dynamic between the teacher and the student, the server and the served, while the teacher and the server is always changing. The "Guru" mantra embodies the idea that life is teaching us in every moment or that the yogi must work to, as Sharon Gannon explains, "see the Guru in the teacher who is right in front of you." The Guru might be heartbreak or illness, as difficult as that might be to grasp and endure in the moment.

The "guru mantra" grapples with this dynamic relation-in-action as well, originating in some ancient Vedic texts written between 1500 and 1000 BCE. The guru mantra, according to Sharon Gannon, author of *Jivamukti Yoga: Practices for Liberating Body and Soul* (2002) and founder of the Jivamukti Yoga School, writes of the Guru mantra: "Guru is the remover of darkness: Gu means darkness, and Ru means remover. Darkness refers to what obscures the light of awareness. The mantra asks for the ability to see [read: illuminate**]** the guru in all names and forms, and even to acknowledge, love and serve the guru who you cannot see, who is beyond all visible forms" (78). The Guru mantra is also popularly associated with the chant in the background of the George Harrison song "My Sweet Lord." Gannon includes the Sanskrit transliteration in her explanation:

> Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru devo Maheshwara, Guru sakshat, param Brahma, tasmai shri guravay namah

While there are numerous translations of the Guru mantra, Gannon translates it in the following way:

> Our creation is that guru (*Brahma*-the force of creation); the duration of our lives is that guru (*Vishnu*-the force of preservation); our trials, tribulations, illnesses, calamities and the death of the body is that guru (*devo Maheshwara*-the force of destruction or transformation). There is a guru nearby (*Guru Sakshat*) and a guru that is beyond the beyond (*param Brahma*). I make my offering (*tasmai*) to the beautiful (*shri*) remover of my darkness, my ignorance; (*Guru*) it is to you I bow and lay down my life (*namah*).

Gannon's translation makes clear that this not a mantra expressing gratitude toward the "Guru" in any monotheistic or concrete sense. Rather, Gannon shows how the "Guru" mantra is recognition of life teaching everywhere through all encounters. As the mantra is chanted with respect to a remover of darkness (Gu-ru), it acts as a prayer that life can be illuminated as a teacher in and of itself. This is the essence of all teacher and student relations; life and relationship are teachers in and of themselves. The action unfolding between the teacher and student is educational all on its own, especially when it is challenging or difficult, and especially when egos get in the way on either side of the equation. One is taught through the circumstances of birth, death, and all the struggles in between or what the mantra terms *vishnu* or "the forces of preservation".

One points to the pervasiveness of "being taught" in both formal educational moments and the unexpected challenges of life and relationship. In *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna identifies himself to Arjuna as a part of everything a person might come across in the struggle of life. At this point in the poem, Krishna transform between physical manifestations to prove his point to Arjuna. On the path of the yoga of action, all forms and manifestations of life are welcomed as part of life's trajectory. This moment in the poem evinces that teaching is everywhere. Instead of clinging to the results of actions and remaining attached to a notion of the way things should be

within the paradigm of "like" and "dislike," the yogi accepts all manifestations of life as part of God or Krishna or the Guru or the Universe in spite of discomfort, ugliness, and suffering.

Central to the viewpoints of the Guru mantra and of Arjuna's discussion with Krishna is the emerging and ever-shifting conception of action and how it affects personal and spiritual growth. The teacher, says the mantra and Krishna, is present to show the yogi all the forms teaching and thus growth can take. At the same time, the relation between the student and the teacher is made up of the actions of acceptance and inquiry into the discomfort, imperfections, and rawness of the teacher/student relationship. Letting go of the results of the outcome of the actions between the student and teacher is included in the invocations made by the Guru mantra. The mantra acknowledges the outcome of an action such as a "calamity" can be uncomfortable and hard to bear. But it can result in growth and the lessening of "ignorance." No matter the outcome, the practices of *bhakti* and *karma yoga* argue, action leads to inward growth. This is and of itself can be a hard lesson to believe and accept because so many of our actions appear fruitless in the day to day.

Mathieu on Mindfulness

In *Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga* (1955) Swami Vivekananda, a Vedantic philosopher who taught in the late nineteenth century, writes: "What is karma-yoga? The knowledge of the secret of work...What does it say? Work incessantly, but give up all attachment to work. Hold your mind free. Misery comes through attachment, not through work. As soon as we identify ourselves with the work we do, we feel miserable" (90). Vivekananda advises the practitioner to control his/her thoughts while working within what he symbolizes as an ocean of ego. Instead of being swallowed up by ego, the yoga practice is a means to impede the "project[ion] [of the] tentacle of selfishness" onto others without feeling drawn into a "wave" of ego-driven action.

Once tendencies are brought into awareness, the practitioner can bring his/her actions everywhere without the risk of becoming "contaminated" by ego's manipulation (92).

Mathieu demonstrates the link between action and mindfulness in another essay, which argues for the use of mindfulness practice in the writing classroom. Mindfulness, as Mathieu shows, is a pedagogy in which teachers and administrators bring attention to the emotional life of interactions between individuals as they are in dialogic action in the classroom. In the 2015-16 issue of the *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* Mathieu's essay "Being There: Mindfulness as Ethical Classroom Practice" argues "if we accept the premise that the teaching of writing is or should be connected to ethics, then writing studies must teach not only the thinking mind but must help cultivate awareness, in the forms of breaks from thinking of observing one's thinking." Mathieu situates an inward space of awareness as influential to ethical action in the classroom. This action is by definition yogic action; it is not ego-driven.

"Breaks from thinking," or open space mind between thoughts, is not typically valued as a location from which to analyze, nor is it taught in the writing classroom. Locating "breaks from thinking," therefore, is a task with which one quiets ego in the classroom and promotes ethical (not ego-driven) connection between individuals. As the mindfulness task of finding space between thoughts is a useful pedagogy for composition, Mathieu constructs a relation between ethical action and the ego, and the writing classroom. Usually, inward awareness is something developed in a psychotherapy session. The tendency and assumption is to leave it out of the classroom.

Mathieu welcomes such inward attention. She admits mindfulness practice and the awareness which emerges with it will not create a utopian classroom. It may even cause conflict or discomfort as it brings inward states forward, possibly into classroom discussion. While the

connection Mathieu draws between mindfulness and ethics is vaguely developed, I observe a link between her call for mindfulness practice and the underlying objectives for action in the classroom. Mathieu demonstrates by means of mindfulness that awareness of the personal and collective aims of action can lead to ethical choices. She points out "we have mostly been teaching the thinking parts of writing," while awareness of intuitive and affective aspects of classroom interactions are not dissected. Her call for mindful awareness as it relates to ethics is another articulation of yogic action or "action as offering."

The yogic path of action emerges in the mindfulness practices for which Mathieu advocates. Mindfulness, as she shows, requires individuals to go against usual thinking processes. The egoistic trajectory of action, or what would encourage one to grasp after a specific result without mindful awareness, is mitigated through expansion of awareness of ego. "The discipline of yoga is against the ordinary current," as Ravi Ravindra write in *The Spiritual Roots of Yoga: Royal Path to Freedom*, "...yoga place[s] constraints on the usual activity of our desires, inclinations, body, breath, senses, mind, attention, and ego, so that they may be brought under the control of something higher [and thus] the development of the vision of discernment," which distinguishes between the perception of ego-mind and those of "pure awareness" (57-58).

While Mathieu's "tactical" approach introducing mindfulness into the writing classroom does not imagine that awareness is cultivated with the aim of "something higher," it turns the focus back onto individual interactions and individual thought patterns and feelings. Mindful awareness asks individuals to negotiate personal perspectives on university time. One uncovers within Mathieu's introduction of mindfulness and ethics to the classroom a tacit proposal for "action as offering." Yogic action demands, to use Ravi Ravindra's words, a "vision of discernment," which also go against the "ordinary [university] current" (Ravindra 58).

"Action as offering" is personal and inward for individuals in the writing classroom as they navigate university goals and outcomes. In the writing classroom, individuals act based upon work done internally, not based on outcomes. Ego-driven desires and fears are articulated and brought forward into awareness. The aim is for individuals to respond and act out of something other than ego. This is the path of action as offering as it aims for *yogic agency*.

Conclusion

The *Bhagavad Gita* is often conceived of as an epic poem about a war. Krishna makes the argument to Arjuna as to why he should fight against his own family. But the battle waged in the *Gita* is really a metaphor of the battlefield of ego. Krishna convinces Arjuna to inwardly struggle with his own ego. In a recent talk at Ananda Ashram in Monroe, New York, "The Warrior Within through the Bhagavad Gita," contemporary Sanskrit scholar Manorama refers to a statement her Guru Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati makes about the *Bhagavad Gita*: "You have no choice, to be a warrior or not, you have to fight. The only choice you have is what kind of warrior to be. Either you can be a warrior on the outer level, or you can be a warrior on the inner level. But you have no choice, you have to fight." Indicated here is the inevitability of battle, of struggle in life. To be sure, Manorama's Guru implies without willingness to fight inner battles, outer battles will arise more and more in life The path of action as offering is indeed a path of becoming a warrior on the inner level before entering the social sphere. The warrior practices yogic action through inner awareness of the ego as it desires certain outcomes, and through focus and devotion to the space of the Other. Practicing inward awareness of ego and working directed toward the space of the Other, the warrior practices "action as offering."

The argument for inward work, inward "fighting," as action as offering is already streaming through composition scholarship if we take time to perceive and unravel it. We are

already working toward committing to a notion of our actions as offerings when we reinvent and uncover within our scholarship what it continuously teaches us about action in the community and classroom. We must see how we are already acting without regard for the outcome in some locations and in certain ways. Only by accessing a notion of action as offering contributing to *yogic agency* already available for us internally can we commit to "tactical" projects that intervene into the community. Only then will the university produce tangible results for communities surrounding universities, which need things to change.

The inner warriorship illustrated in *Bhagavad Gita* shows us how to navigate the difficulties of the ego when it comes to action in the writing classroom. But it really also shows us that there is nothing new to be taught for actual change to occur for real people. There are no new pedagogical or theoretical intervention to be offered in the classroom, as we already and always embody what is needed for action as offering.

CHAPTER 3

YOGIC AGENCY AND COMMUNICATION: RHETORICAL LISTENING REINVENTED BY YOGA

First World Problems - Graduate School Woes

In my second semester of graduate school, I took a course entitled "On the Sublime," with literature and theory professor Jacob Kleinman. The course was almost all "literature" people, and interestingly, when recalling the course with a "literature" friend, we both agreed the class was mostly men talking, surrounded by women listening. The following story assumes my role as "Other" as central to its context - as a 'lowly' graduate student without funding and a Jewish woman who struggled to keep up with the level of academic writing and analysis taking place in my seminars. The position I inhabited has helped me to revise my understanding of listening. I previously associated it only with the paralysis of my own action, or the shyness and fear of saying the wrong thing. Now I define it through the understanding that listening affords me as I connect to others and to myself.

The course studied theories of the aesthetic state of the "sublime." We read Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Edmund Burke, and Lyotard, among others. We read a small section of Deleuze and Guattari, who wrote about experiences being beyond the subject and object dichotomy and transcending ordinary consciousness. We related this to the sublime experience in some way, on a day I raised my hand. I said something like: "This is just like yoga, and what all the books about yoga say." I was excited to make the comparison, but I did not say much more, nor did I explain how I arrived at this observation. What I meant was the immersive "sublime" experience of feeling the subject/object dichotomy dissolve reminded me of the unifying feelings I had

rarely and briefly felt in yoga practice. One of the men in our class, a frequent contributor to class discussion said, while smirking with belittling warmth, "Yeah, it's just like that." Our professor agreed with the student and concluded, while the ideas might be similar, the course reading was not "filled with presuppositions," like the "vague" yoga books I was talking about.

Our professor's remark that this nebulous group of "yoga books" were "filled with presuppositions" has stayed with me because I still don't know what he meant. The function, not the meaning, of his remark, however, was obvious to me. He took my comment and smoothed it into academic vocabulary by critiquing it and the texts to which I referred for their underlying assumptions. This was his way of getting us back on topic because we had dabbled into something off topic. We had begun discussing "Yoga books," although the genre of the alleged books described remained unspecified. We could just as well have been talking about modern-day self-help or ancient scripture, but none of us took the time to discern which. I have been trying to figure out what the professor meant by his remark, with which he seemed so satisfied and confident. I continue to read "yoga books." It is a genre ranging from self-help and wellness books to Eastern philosophy as well as research that takes place in Western universities, among other categories. Still, I wonder what presuppositions I am overlooking within the books I read, which still help me so much.

Professor Kleinman's comment performed its job of closing off what he compartmentalized as outside-the-discipline and an inappropriate connection drawn by one of his students. The connection I brought up between sublime experience and yogic states, I admit, could have oversimplified much of the texts we discussed. Much of the sublime was, in fact, about clearing away thoughts and becoming subsumed and transcended in something outside oneself and beyond the ego. While studying texts about the sublime suggested as much, it

remained hard to get yoga out of my mind.

My professor discouraged my kind of text-to-self connection. Disciplines should be kept in their rightful compartments, which was what that interaction showed the students in class. In English and Theory classes we discussed English and Theory. If our discussion resembled another way of thinking or being, even if there was a thread connecting to another less Western set of concepts, bringing it up was superfluous. Another instance in graduate school in which I submitted an essay for my "2nd year review" led to my learning this same lesson, or to keep my "personal" ways of thinking in my personal space. The essay was about how yogic thinking challenged very conventional, thesis driven academic thought. I wrote it in my first semester yet when I submitted it to the department as a representation of my work, the committee put me on academic probation. The message was conveyed that I had to somehow repress or change the framework from which I wanted to write in order to stay categorized as "in my discipline," and to stay enrolled in my PhD program. I struggled to learn how to be "academic" and push "yoga stuff" to the side, not out of dogmatism, but because yoga helped me so much in my daily life and relationships. It felt dishonest to push it away. It wasn't like a religion I had to keep out of school. It was a whole way of thinking that for me, never even considered God or anything religious. But maybe I just wasn't playing the game right.

Despite the negative external feedback, in these instances I expressed what I call *yogic agency* as a mode of listening. During moments of conflicting discourses, both in front of me and within me, I had to learn to listen to contradiction and at the same time hear my own disappointment and confusion. To be sure, these stories I do not demonstrate personal "victories" in which I am able to bring together my academic life with the personal. But what I felt in those moments was a mode of listening inwardly - a sort of submission to congruence between the

personal and the academic always and already present - in a different way I had at first imagined it. Nothing appeared seamless, and my professors did not validate my yogic perspective. I did not know how to articulate *yogic agency* yet, nor did I know how to defend my views if I was belittled.

But what I learned to enact in those moments, both to myself and to others in the classroom, was a way of listening to texts and a way of reading, which helped me to express what felt inwardly true. I had to reinvent moments of opposing frameworks appearing useless to one another. I had to reinvent moments, which seemed to reveal to me a yogic way of thinking was contradictory to "real life." Only by remaining open to the way yoga would fit into my academic career in an all-encompassing way - not in the way I imagined it would - did I begin to discover the way yoga had presented itself within my graduate work, and in everything I did, all along.

Most important, the reinvention of my perspective was also an uncovering of what was already there. This story above serves as a microcosm for the chief argument in this chapter, which explores rhetorical and yogic perspectives at once, showing the links between what we might call the political and the personal. Now, I try to reinvent rhetorical texts by uncovering the yogic within them.

Listening: Reinvention and Uncovering

The field of contemporary rhetoric and the theory and practice of yoga share a reverence for the communicative act of listening, although in different ways. This chapter analyzes contemporary texts recontextualizing an ancient form of meditation termed "yogic listening." When it is joined or yoked with contemporary rhetorical scholarship on listening, "yogic listening" serves to reinvent ideas within such Western scholarship. Specifically, I analyze the

writings on the rhetorics of silence and listening by Krista Ratcliffe and Cheryl Glenn. The reinvention of the theory of rhetorical listening/silence occurs as we uncover and unfold the yogic ideas already present in Western scholarship.

For the field of rhetoric, rhetorical listening is a move into non-agonistic and less traditional forms of rhetoric, which often require manipulation of others and involve competing ideas between factions. I describe the means and goals of rhetorical listening in detail later in this chapter. Yogic listening, too, invites another non-traditional and alternative rhetorical and communicative acts, which does not rely upon persuasiveness and contestation but upon openness and submission. The openness and submission of yogic listening takes place internally.

Positioning listening as a rhetorical tool dismantles the assumption listening is a seemingly passive and "feminine" form of communication. Listening, viewed as rhetorical, illuminates how it can be experienced as empowering and agentic. As I interlock it with yogic listening, I aim to evoke a revisionary and reinvented understanding of rhetorical listening.

Although rhetorical listening is a tool oriented toward the social world, it can also be useful as an personal practice of turning inward. Thus, as I map a theory of yogic listening onto the scholarship of rhetorical listening, I intend to sharpen and clarify the individual and internal power possible for rhetorical listening when viewed from a yogic perspective.

This chapter charges the individual within the university - both individual students and individual faculty - to deploy listening as a persuasive tool to communicate internally and between one another. Rhetorical listening is a catalyst for the community to function from a position of understanding one another, as Krista Ratcliffe shows. Rhetorical listening is reinvented by the practice of yogic listening as it turns a rhetorical tool intended for social interaction inward. This is not only a call for collective action but also for a simultaneous looking

inside as a means to be more clarified while communicating interpersonally and then collectively. I try to demonstrate how a revised practice of listening emerges and brings forward and outward the inner qualities of 1) responsibility and 2) fearlessness of practitioners, listeners and speakers. This chapter positions readers, students and teachers, in charge of their own awareness in order to illuminate an aspect of a *yogic agency* addressing communication with others.

Balancing Oneness with the Universe and Changing From Within

The following is an old and oft repeated joke I never found funny. A monk walks up to a hot dog stand. He tells the vendor to "make him one with everything" and hands the vendor a $20 bill. The vendor hands him back the hot dog but without change. The monk looks confused. The vendor tells him, "Change must come from within." In spite of its oversimplification of yogic thought and corresponding cliches, the "joke" gets at two very basic conceptions of selfhood popularly associated with yogic practice. First, the joke alludes to yoga as defined by the term "union" in the phrase "make me one with everything" as "union" is the intention of yoga. The word yoga stems from the word root *yuj*, meaning "to join," and therefore yoga is frequently linked to the word "yoking," also meaning "union." Most people practicing yoga in our culture today do not share this intention "to unify," as yoga has become commercialized, tied to fitness, and recast as the mastery of postures. On the other hand, the general idea the hot dog vendor conveys, the notion that change "comes from within," permeates yogic philosophies and writings. The yogic system assumes yoga is internal and thus individual discipline. Thus it rests upon a sensibility that this level of discipline requires psychological freedom from external influence.

An analysis of individuality and selfhood within the social world is relevant as I interlock

theories of an internal, individual form of yogic listening to a collective and community based theory of rhetorical listening. As I build upon a concept of *yogic agency*, I recognize "agency" and "individuality" are not interchangeable terms. I analyze Prem Saran's ethnographic study *Yoga, Bhoga and Ardhanarisawara: Individuality, Wellbeing and Gender in Tantra* and her focus on notions of South Asian individuality to frame this chapter. Saran works to define what individuality means as a concept. She illustrates notions of South Asian "selfhood" through case studies of individuals in India and other South Asian nations and analyzes the influence of concepts of selfhood on Western academic scholarship on non-Western societies. In Chapter 3, "Yoga and Indic Individuality," she discusses the complex, albeit "startlingly" basic and thus challenged assumption that "South Asians lack a bounded sense of selfhood," a characteristic observed, Saran argues, when a South Asian person is living in the West. Conversely, this notion is a vacuous and obfuscated academic conclusion while that person is living in South Asia. Saran complicates the notion of South Asian selfhood and individuality as it relates to yogic practice, determining South Asians demonstrate an individuality she terms "mandalic individuality" (126). "Indic mandalic individuality" Saran contends, is paradoxically constituted by both personal autonomy and "porosity," a term deployed to indicate how an individual is integrated into a larger whole (127). Saran goes on to say,

> the basic fact that the mandalic/*holonic* Indic individuality is predicated, both ideologically and operationally on yogic enstasis (on the mystical experience)...[and] has a characteristic inward modality (balanced, of course, by outer social and other activity) that locates the experience of true selfhood within oneself; it promotes a high, even radical degree of personal autonomy (127).

Internal yogic listening and outwardly-oriented rhetorical listening mirror the concept of

Indic individuality. That is, Saran identifies "Indic individuality" to be "holonic" in the sense that she observes subjecthood as both personally autonomous while seamlessly contingent upon a whole system. Her use of the term "mandalic" can be interpreted several ways.

I borrow Saran's constructions of the "unboundedness" of "selfhood" and of "Mandalic/Holonic Indic individuality" to generate an aspect of *yogic agency* as it relates to communication. I take "mandalic" to suggest the process of mandala making. Mandalas (most frequently associated with Tibet and made by Buddhist monks) are temporary artistic designs, often representing deities. They are constructed collaboratively out of sand, grains, glass, and even legumes and grains. In a way, the concept of Mandalic individuality indicates an individual in continuous unfolding formation and transformation, at the same time part of a unified whole. "Mandalic individuality," therefore, is not fixed nor is it univocal, as Mandala making is collaborative and composed of myriad vital parts. Yet at the same time it aims to be symmetrical and unified in its design. One observes here the intermingling of the internal with a collective whole.

It is Saran's negotiation between personal autonomy, or as the hot dog vendor would say "change coming from within," and the openness emerging from collective involvement as a sense of who one is, or the "unbounded" sense of selfhood, becoming "one with everything," which corresponds to interlocking theories of yogic listening and rhetorical listening. The following analysis demonstrates an inward-facing, yogic perspective reinventing scholarship of rhetorical listening.

The Ego & Yogic Listening

Ahankara

Yogic listening reduces, although does not eradicate, the predominance of the voices of

sociocultural discourses within our thinking. These voices come from conditioning from the sociocultural spheres at many different registers, volumes and venues. Broadly speaking, these voices constitute "ego"- or the voice of consciousness continually ranking and rating the self as good or bad based upon external and conditioned standards. As a result of the overpowering voice of the ego, individuals feel separate from one another and from the events of the world. When one thinks and operates strictly based upon ego, reality is not integrated into life as as it could be. It appears "the world" is an entity to fight against. Prem Saran identifies this as a "bound" sense of selfhood pervasive to the West. A "bound" sense of selfhood involves feeling separate from or in competition with the world, causing resistance to what is happening in reality - events, feelings, impressions - about the world surrounding an individual. A "bound" sense of selfhood leads to a viewpoint of reality as what can be gained from it. One ranks his/herself among others who perceive the world in the same bounded way.

A Kripalu friend, Narrissa, clarified for me the most apt description of ego in the moment she saw I was very caught up in it. She reminded me I was inside the "Abby Show," and the world was not in fact the "Abby show." In other words, instead of observing the world of phenomena and shifting events as they unfolded before me without my control, I mistakenly believed the events of the universe occurred either in my favor or against me. I mistook the people and events within my reality as all looking, watching and reacting to me, and, depending on my mood and what was happening, the events of the day were to be taken personally. In every moment "I" was either "good" or "bad." While steeped in the "Abby show," I inhabited ego and I viewed reality as it is not. I experienced reality as transpiring with me in a starring role. Naturally, while in ego I failed to see how everyone else is in his or her show - the "Betsy show," the "Jamie show," etc.

In his book *Yoga: The Spirit and Practice of Moving into Stillness*, Erich Schiffman defines ego as "when the wave - you or me - mistakenly believes that it stands alone and that, somehow, it is essentially separate and different from the ocean and from other waves" and thus it is a "limited understanding of [who we are] based on our conditioning and the data we receive from the five physical senses," which includes, I add, the interpellative voices of others within interpersonal and cultural registers (119). Schiffman goes on to say "Separateness is what's obvious," but through the practice of yogic listening a sense of "underlying oneness" rises into consciousness and is transformative of the ego of the practitioner. Schiffman defines yoga as "conscious union," in his guidebook, which provides instructions and pictures explicating and leading its readers to aim for the state of "yoga," or union, through both yoga postures (*asanas*) and meditation constituted by a conception of yogic listening (Schiffman 129).

Yoga is the goal of yoga practice, says Schiffman. Put another way, yoga is not existing only in ego, and it is not the solipsistic perspective of any "Abby show." It is a bigger view - the view of *purusha* - which Schiffman articulates through a concept of "big mind." Schiffman recapitulates ancient scriptures from his own perspective and without citation. This is an acceptable and pervasive rhetorical practice in the contemporary yoga world. In the practice Schiffman describes, yogic listening is the way to reach a state of yoga. He breaks down yogic listening clearly distinguishing between two distinctive types of mind, "small mind" (ego or *ahankara*) and "big mind" (Infinite, universal mind, or *purusha* in Sanskrit). In *Philosophies of India*, Heinrich Zimmer explains that "*ahankara*, the ego function, causes us to believe that we feel like acting, that we are suffering…[and] is the center and prime motivating force of delusion [and] the misconception, conceit, supposition or belief that refers all objects and acts of consciousness to an "I" (319). The "I" of ego prioritizes external recognition signified by

language, status, and other systems by which people are rewarded or disparaged for who they are (319).

Ahankara is the conception of self in yoga in which people see themselves as separate and "bound" from others, to use Saran's term. The ego remains within a paradigm of what Ram Dass calls "praise and blame, loss and gain, fame, and shame" (38). The ego's presence in consciousness matters for yogic listening because we foreground the ego in the mind, "listening" to *ahankara* out of obliviousness and separateness. When stuck in ego or "small mind," we cannot hear a possibility for another internal voice, a voice originating in "porous" connection to collective consciousness. We so typically take for granted the shifting desires of the ego in our culture. It is so ingrained that we cannot detect ego as dictating consciousness or our interactions with one another. Lack of awareness of ego's dominance in the mind forms its essential character.

Ahankara can be clarified more effectively when contrasted with *purusha*, or what Schiffman would call "big mind." *Purusha*, according to Zimmer, is "defined as pure spirit...without attributes, without qualities, without parts, without motion...unaffected by pains and pleasures... untroubled undeluded radiance," which exists outside the sphere of focusing on the external responses of praise/blame or loss/gain, and is a form of consciousness available at any time if we listen for it (329). The distinction, then, between these ancient terms in in Schiffman's contemporary framework, is "small mind," or the mind limited to the monologue within of ego, in contrast with "big mind," or the mind within consciously deferring to the space of the "infinite." The "infinite" is a word Schiffman uses cohering with *purusha,* or as Zimmer writes "without qualities." It is also thought of as "pure awareness" in yoga discourse.

Yogic listening happens when "small mind" becomes consciously aware of itself and can

begin to choose to listen to "big mind." That is, the yogic listener chooses an internal discourse upon which to direct his/her focus, first becoming aware of an internal discourse existing beyond ego. This alternate internal discourse is, as Zimmer defines *purusha*, "without attributes," beyond the limitations of what Ram Dass calls "praise and blame" (38). Schiffman characterizes yogic or "meditative listening" as the "yoking," or "joining," of "small mind," or *ahankara*, with "big mind" or *purusha* (306). His methodology depends on the definition and practice of yoga, or union, as the yoking of small mind with big mind, by means of listening.

Schiffman describes the process as the "deferral" or inward surrender of "small mind" to "big mind." This occurs when the practitioner purposefully chooses to listen to a voice other than ego ("big mind") inwardly. This conscious choosing of interior discourse on which to focus, this act of private deferral amongst the dialogues voicing themselves inside us, is what makes yogic listening an act of persuasion. The inward choice to listen to a discourse other than ego is the yogic moment of rhetorical agency. As a practice, this decision is at first deliberate. Over time, it becomes automatic.

While conceiving of yogic listening as an agentic rhetorical tool I recall Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, as "defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." Choosing to attend to internal discourse which is not made only of ego is one mode of "observing...the available means of persuasion" inwardly (181). It is a way of choosing to open up limitations of ego, cultivating responsibility and fearlessness while interacting with others. Expanding inwardly the "available means of persuasion," and transporting awareness from "small mind" to "big mind," to use Schiffman's words, extends understandings of ourselves beyond ego. The inward choice to listen to "big mind" mobilizes our "available means" within. In turn, it leads to alternate ways of positioning oneself in relation to

others based on responsibility and fearlessness rather than separateness, competition, and the advancement of status.

Rhetorical Listening, Identification & Responsibility to Others

Considering it from Aristotle's definition, yogic listening is also in fact a form of rhetorical agency, albeit internally. It expands and turns inward a reinvented form of rhetorical listening. As the goal of her methodology for rhetorical listening in her 2005 book *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness,* Krista Ratcliffe presents "understanding," or, as she inverts it, "standing under," as the goal of rhetorical listening. While "standing under," the rhetorical listener acts as an agentic subject rather than a listening object or vessel. The rhetorical listener listens to conflicting discourses at once and lets them "wash over him/her," while "learn[ing] to [listen] to those who do not agree" and "consciously acknowledging all of our particular and fluid standpoints." The rhetorical listener identifies with difference without erasing the difference of other viewpoints. What results is not forced agreement but identification through disagreement and difference (212).

Kenneth Burke's articulation of the term "identification" is a foundation for Ratcliffe's argument. For Burke, "identification" emerges as a rhetorical tool when individuals find common threads between each other. One person identifies with another through some shared experience, identity or position. These Burkean commonalities between people reinvent what is conceived of as Aristotle's "available means of persuasion." People observe commonalities between each other and act upon them as if they are the "available means of persuasion" (181) According to Burke, commonalities and resulting identification are deployed in order to get what we want from others.

Ratcliffe reinvents the long standing rhetorical tool of Burkean identification through

common threads by offering difference as a way to identify with others. Listening is the way to hear difference. Listening is a means to discovering and understanding of differences between individuals. Yet, Ratcliffe maintains that this is still a mode of identification. People identify through the understanding and acceptance (or "standing under") of differences between one another. Ratcliffe proposes in order to "stand under" the discourses of others we must let them "wash over" us, as opposing as discourses and frameworks might be.

From a yogic perspective, by suggesting a "washing over" of the discourses of the Other, Ratcliffe invokes an invitation for inward practice. In addition to understanding, responsibility, I add, enters the scene as an outcome for a reinvented form of listening. Thinking through Ratcliffe's methodology from the perspective of yogic listening, one can observe how conflicting discourses are constantly and continuously flowing through internal consciousness and external worlds. "Big mind" and "small mind" are both simultaneous possibilities that one must internally "stand under" moment to moment in response to the viewpoints of others and the ego.

Yogic listening reinvents rhetorical listening by turning it inward and forcing individuals to face complexities, intricacies, and the narrowness of personal histories making up ego. Yogic listening reinvents Ratcliffe's work amplifies the "standing under" goal of rhetorical listening to difference to its inner limits. People are responsible for responding to different social positions and views without forcing commonalities. But they must also listen to the multivalent idiosyncratic psychologies, which come along with the internal discourse of the ego. As yogic listening reinvents rhetorical listening, people are inwardly responsible for the ego.

Schiffman & Patanjali

Schiffman's text *The Art and Practice of Moving into Stillness* concurrently demonstrates the rhetorical move of reinvention. He derives his theory of yogic listening based upon the first

lines the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali,* a text dated to the third century A.D. Not much is known about the author of the *Sutras*, Patanjali. The fact that *Patanjali* remains an anonymous and mystical figure is not well explained by current translations of the *Sutras* either, as there is no written evidence of a disciple. As an act of reinvention, Schiffman appears to appropriate concepts of "big mind" and "small mind" from the first few *Sutras* of Patanjali. The second and third sutras 1.2, and 1.3, are translated as follows: *yogas-citta-vritti-nirodah,* or "Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of consciousness," between ego, or *ahankara,* and *purusha* (termed *citta* in the above Sutra), which can be understood as the limiting of the full control of the ego over consciousness as it responds to the internal and external world. The state of yoga is the connection to some part of consciousness which does not fluctuate, which is not always changing based upon stimuli. Yoga, or union of "big mind," as Schiffman articulates it, thus, tempers the influence of ego.

In order to restrict the fluctuations of consciousness, the yoga practitioner must develop awareness, sometimes called "witness consciousness," of fluctuations. It is the *cultivation of awareness* of the "fluctuations of consciousness" or ego that is linked to the unification with "big mind" or *purusha.* Awareness, or "witness-consciousness," is both connecting with "big mind" while at the same time "restricting" the "fluctuations" of ego. This is the second sutra offered by Patanjali and one of the most referred to definitions of yoga. According to the second sutra, yoga is not only the clearing of the mind or the development of "witness consciousness." Patanjali goes on to say that if the fluctuations of consciousness diminish or cease, "citta," or consciousness, unifies with *purusha*, or "big mind."

The third sutra states *tada-drastuh-sva-rupe-vasthanam,* or "then the seer [i.e. the Self] abides in [its] essence" (28). By the practice of yoga, the practitioner dissolves the "fluctuations"

of the mind and unifies his/her consciousness with "big mind," *purusha,* or essence, reaching a state of union or yoga. The practitioner relaxes the "fluctuations" of the ego (as the "seer"), and "abides in essence," or *purusha*. The practice of clearing of the mind and "abiding in essence" is the way the practitioner listens (28).

This act of "witnessing" and "abiding" is the act of yogic listening. The choice of the practitioner to "abide in essence" and overcome any constitution of consciousness by the ego is a mode of listening. It is a mode of choosing to opening up space to hear "big mind." The practitioner is no longer mistaking the changing ephemerality of the material world (*prakriti*) for *purusha,* or the "pure spirit" of the universe. The unification of ego mind, or *ahankara,* with *purusha,* is the goal of yoga.

From Schiffman's contemporary perspective, yogic listening requires the repeated practice or the conscious remembering to "listen" for the messages of "infinite mind" by first clearing the mind. Schiffman terms this clearing as an act of "squeegying the mind." To "squeegee" is to bring the mind into clearness through awareness of the breath, an awareness of the part of consciousness beyond the ego and intrinsic to *purusha*. Yogic listening necessitates the diligent practice of psychologically letting go of ego desire by opening up space in the mind. This serves as a practice to become aware of and unify with *purusha* and thus "abide in [its] essence" (28).

Reinventing Rhetorical Listening and Standing Under Discourses: Uncovering Yogic Principles

In reinventing rhetorical listening from a yogic perspective, what emerges is an alternative mode of listening to the self while simultaneously listening to the Other not conventionally taught in the Western university. In her essay "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for

Interpretive Invention and Cross Cultural Conduct," Krista Ratcliffe writes "listening has almost ceased to be theorized or taught as a rhetorical strategy," as she sets out to "recover" listening as a means to create a rhetorical tool and pedagogy, reimagining the function of Burkean identification in rhetorical theory. Ratcliffe positions listening, as her title suggests, as a generative "trope for interpretive invention," resignifying listening as an empowering way to communicate, analyze, interpret, and create, rather than as passive, non-generative and abeyant (196).

Viewed from a yogic perspective we can observe letting go of the ego as an internal requirement within Ratcliffe's construction of "standing-under" the discourses of others. Ratcliffe notes that "*understanding* means more than listening *for* a speaker/writer's intent," or for ego-driven interests that result in "appropriation," "Burkean identification (smoothing over difference)," "to agreement (only affirming one's view of reality)," and involves hearing someone else's point of view, which may be in opposition to our own. She calls for "standing under" the voiced experiences and perspectives of others in spite of disagreement without trying to change it, and in spite of personal discomfort which may occur (205). Self-interested listening or the ego-driven interests of the listener are made subordinate to understanding discourses that inform, surround, and invisibly frame all of our perspectives. Ratcliffe shows that to stand under several discourses at once, we see how our own values and assumptions might inform how we listen to others. Her proposal for rhetorical listening makes possible the inner observation of the values and assumptions of others without distorting them.

What inwardly must occur for yogic listening to reinvent and inform the methodology of rhetorical listening is the rendering of quiet in the ego-mind as a means to "stand under" the discourses of others. The pause within that yogic listening teaches - the squeegying of thought in

the present moment - is a concrete method for the way to reach a position of "standing under" and letting alternate discourses "wash over" us without forcefully identifying with or appropriating them to satisfy our ego's motivations.

As her project aims to resist the compensation and appropriation demanded by Burkean identification, I uncover how Ratcliffe crafts a mode of resistance that is yogic. This mode resist forceful Burkean identification as a way to understand and diminish the dominance of ego inwardly. It does not require listeners to find positions in common if they are not there. Most significant, however, it requires the practice to dissolve the ego when confronted with views, ideas and positions different from our own or inscrutable from our position. Suspending judgement by means of listening creates a sense of responsibility, which is at once a form of resistance to Burkean identification and a form of surrender to the needs and desires of others. As these two yogic and rhetorical theories interlock, we do not force things in common, and we inwardly focus on the space in mind other than desires of ego so we are responsible for others' needs, too.

Rhetorics of Silence/Fearlessness toward the Future

In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence,* Cheryl Glenn reiterates the assumption "silence is too often read as simple passivity in situations where it has actually taken on expressive power," when it could actually signify empowerment, other-centered emotions, and deliberate choices such as attunement to a situation or awareness of how other people might feel. These can form a mode of resistance against oppression or dominant discourses (xi, 18). Glenn argues silence can be a way for "new voices to be heard," and contends "rhetorical power is not limited to words alone," as subjects can deploy silence [and listening] to resist the domination of others in addition to many other functions, such as "reverence" or "buying time," which dominant groups

conflate as weakness or submission because of assumptions about the way people should or will uniformly express contention in situations of oppression (23).

Most people do not think of silence and listening as the most effective way to resist oppression. A commonplace assumption is usually that to overcome adversity or oppression, one must speak up and "find his/her voice." To begin Chapter 2, Glenn deploys bell hooks's famous assertion as an epigraph - that "moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed...who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals" (20). Glenn deploys hooks to argue the power of the opposite progression -- the alternative valuation of silence over, or equal in strength, to speech. The trajectory of moving from speech into silence may feel counterintuitive for the field of rhetoric, a field which promotes the rising up and speaking out and being resistant, persuasive and contesting by using acts of speech. Within her deployment of hooks, Glenn resituates assumptions about silence and speech - that speech is not always *the* "gesture" of "defiance," and silence can serve to defy. Glenn illustrates how this assumption in and of itself can be damaging to those who choose to be silent.

Glenn's reconceptualizes silence as a rhetorical strategy, which acts as an "invitation into the future, a space that draws us forth." Yogic listening emerges as a practice in Glenn's work in the "space that draws us forth." I point to the practice of yogic listening, which accompanies a state of "fearlessness," as Schiffman terms it, emerging in Glenn's articulation of an "invitation into the future." This invitation invokes an open space in which decisions are not firmly decided about who is powerful and who is not (Glenn 160 Schiffman 306). The space invoked by silence, Glenn shows, is also a state of "fearlessness" brought on by the practice of listening and clearing the mind. It is freedom from space in which individuals react and speak based on ego.

Considered from a yogic perspective, silence becomes a path into unknown discursive

space generative in ways we cannot predict as we work against dominant discourses, negotiate internal conflicts, and respond to conflicting positions of others (160). Within Glenn's usage of hooks is a valorization of a turning inward in situations of oppression. This act of turning inward is neither passive nor weak nor incidental. Turning inward involved in yogic listening can also be experienced as a way to "struggle side by side" with others and also with egos. It is giving in tonot saying anything and trusting in the space of silence. Reading her from a yogic perspective, Glenn affirms it is useful and powerful to be quiet inside -- and listen inside -- before the next move is made.

When reinvented from a yogic perspective, we uncover within Ratcliffe and Glenn's rhetorics of listening and silence as a call for both a 1) a silencing of the ego, or "small mind" as well as 2) a listening to the voices beyond the ego Schiffman terms "big mind." Both of these inward practices cultivate a sense of responsibility and fearlessness while communicating with others, especially others who are different.

Fearlessness: Knowing You Don't Know

According to Schiffman, yogic listening is also understood as "mentally listen[ing] inwardly as though you were waiting to hear a message" and "know[ing] you don't know," in order to create space through silence as a means to hear messages from an expansive "big mind" (330-332). We clear the mind to make room to hear "big mind," and quiet the ego.

Simultaneously, we generate open space of the mind to make room for the positions and perspectives of others to coexist with our own, without necessarily trying to change them.

"Knowing you don't know" is crucial for standing under the discourses of the other. "Knowing you don't know" is one way to transcend the limitations of Burkean identification, identifying with one another only through commonalities. In order to understand one another, we

must at first recognize the impossibility of total familiarity with the experiences, feelings, thoughts, positions, and discourses of another person. The awareness of "knowing you don't know" catalyzes a sense of fearlessness of difference. To "know we don't know" is steeped within the proposals of Ratcliffe. To capitulate to "know we don't know," is a way to integrate the necessity for internal acceptance and psychological openness to the positions of other first by quieting ego.

Using yogic listening to reinvent theories of rhetorical listening and silence, Ratcliffe and Glenn's texts reveal the modes of silence and listening through which the listening/silent subject experiences "yoga." In a state of yoga, the subject evinces the "purpose…[of yoga practice]... to facilitate the profound inner relaxation that accompanies fearlessness" (i). As Ratcliffe characterizes "standing under" discourses, rhetorical listening and rhetorical silence require a mode of "relaxation" into "fearlessness" while attempting to relinquish control of relating only through what we can identify, only through commonalities. The "relaxation" into "fearlessness" requires perceiving difference fully in another person, "knowing we don't know," and then relaxing into that perception. It takes a kind of fearlessness to let very different perspectives and alternate discourse "wash over" us without attempting to change them. As alternate discourses come into contact with our specific subject position, we can reframe their "washing over" as a mode of awareness which suspends judgment, appropriation, and manipulation. From a yogic perspective, relaxing into "fearlessness" and operating from openness is called for when, in a rhetorical situation, it is clear that alternative perspectives need to coexist without either stakeholder of disparate perspectives trying to change them.

The Personal and Political In Writing Pedagogy

Saran's concept of "Indic individuality," or the yoking of "personal autonomy" and a

sense of "porous selfhood," serves as a frame for the turning inward (and outward) that yogic listening requires as it reinvents contemporary theories of rhetorics of silence and listening. By recontextualizing rhetorical scholarship of listening from a yogic perspective, one begins to see how the personal ("turning inward") weaves a thread to the social and political ("standing under" the discourse of others in the social world.)

Some scholars in comp/rhet already use listening as a rhetorical mode to forge a connection between the personal and political contexts of the classroom. In an article in which she brings "spirituality" into her writing classroom, Gesa Kirsch heeds Glenn and Ratcliffe's call to explore silence and listening as pedagogical tools and analyzes her experiences in a 2009 essay, "From Introspection to Action: Connecting Spirituality and Civic Engagement." Kirsch shows how "[contemplative] practices open up space for reflection, insight, and discovery and intuitive hunches" on topics in the classroom believed to be strictly analytical or academic (11). While Kirsch focuses her attention on secular and popular "contemplative" practices of "spirituality...mindfulness, reflection, and introspection," she also values listening as a core tenant with which to shape the way students engage with one another and with her. She describes the classroom environment she creates as possessing an "emphasis on deep listening, not instant critique," while there is listening to hear how "narratives unfold," in order to "hear a writer's voice." For Kirsch, listening is a path to develop analytical skills and point out nuances of language in one other's writing, such as motifs and metaphors (7). Significantly, she underlines the assumption that there is a "linear progression from personal narratives to other kinds of writing," contending the writing classroom can be a location to blur the lines between the personal, spiritual and social. Students are encouraged to make their own personal significance out of cultural or political issues about which they write and discuss (8).

As Kirsch's work demonstrates, yogic listening too, necessitates the transcendence of boundaries between personal narratives and inner monologues, and their connection to issues and problems of collective or societal importance. The personal and the political are valued equally and are considered useful to one another. In "Making Ourselves Vulnerable: A Feminist Pedagogy of Listening," Wendy Wolters Hinshaw explores the merging between the personal and the political as it unfolds for her as an instructor. In the moment of teaching she describes how an emotional moment surfaces for her. Her mind and body react, and listening play a role. "By listening to my students' resistances to feminism, to critical race theory, or even to methods of critical thinking more broadly, I become more aware of the sources of my own identifications" (324). She witnesses herself feeling stirred, compelled to persuade her students to identify with her line of thinking. Listening allows her to inwardly negotiate a response to commonalities and differences with students. Instead of getting caught up in ego, represented in that circumstance by emotion, she comes from responsibility and fearlessness toward the unknown and unfamiliar positions and contexts of others.

Both Girsch and Wolters Hinshaw listen inwardly to emotional reactions of their teacher-selves and their students without trying to alter the manifestations of these reactions. This in-this-very-moment practice of listening in the classroom demonstrates the significance of turning inward to transform personal energy to shape constructive collective energy in the classroom. In the moment of turning inward, listening impels the teacher and students to embrace the unification of the personal and political as rhetorical and pedagogical tools. Both teachers and students may witness, listen to, and deploy very personal feelings, which make them vulnerable. This can occur at the same moment of discussion of social issues relevant to the classroom at large, which put individual egos at stake. By taking rhetorical listening inward, the quieting of

the ego affects the culture of the whole classroom

A Personal Example of Rhetorical Listening Reinvented by Yogic Listening: Inwardly Perceiving Congruence between Seeming Incongruence

At the beginning of this chapter I explained an experience in graduate school in which I tried to navigate several conflicting interior discourses. I had to learn to listen to internally flowing discourses, discerning them all at once. Not an uncommon predicament, I felt conflict between my personal perspective and the vocational perspective into which I felt tenuously accepted. Graduate school and getting a Ph.D. was something I had always wanted. I never thought I would actually get into a doctoral program. Like everything else I fantasized about and never thought would be a reality, it took shape vastly differently than I had ever imagined.

As a strategy not to give up, I had to develop another methodology from which I was viewing myself and my graduate work. I was disappointed. I could not really locate myself in the seminar with my peers or in my writing. I felt like an outsider whose interest in New Age ideas was not relevant or professional. Graduate school felt at first to me like it was a location in which professors relegated a specific way of thinking to a specific time and place. That was not really me. I felt the personal struggles of my life such as my relationships had led me to academic study but I couldn't articulate how. I wanted a way to fit into my graduate work how my mistakes led to my triumphs and healing as well as the reverse. This way of converting the relevance of the personal to course content was a way of thinking that was not encouraged.[18] I worried the personal seemed full of "presuppositions," as my professor had advised.

Part of the reason my interests and perspective felt so distant from graduate school was that our program depended upon insular language and discourse that the students had to

[18] Though it was never explicitly discouraged, either. As a consequence, it might have made it even more difficult to figure out what I was doing.

perform.[19] I didn't realize there was any posturing happening until later. Some of us were much better at performing than others (I was not good.) I still do not feel I have mastered it. I questioned how using specific language and showing knowledge of particular authors (e.g. Zizek stands out in my memory) cohered with a yogic path, so dependent on finding authenticity within.[20]

From the perspective of yoga I was able to believe that all hardships presented themselves as part of the "unfolding," everything was unfolding as it should, even very painful stuff. And yet I was in graduate school, feeling low and lowly, rejected, left out. It felt naive to only see this as part of the "unfolding." I asked myself how my yogic path fit into the rest of my life. I knew these were not real problems. They were "first world problems." When things became hard, no matter how long it had been, yoga was always there for me. I wondered how to narrow its fullness of perspective for the contrasting "academic" perspective, which was based on competition between colleagues and friends and the commodification of writing in for professional advancement what I once found to be fascinating, transcendent ideas.

What I could not see then was even though I considered myself "yogic," I was letting my ego monopolize my thoughts and thus my relationships, work, and life. My ego prevented me from fully diving into graduate school and letting it be what it could be for me. I had to let the conflict and the messiness of the disconnect between my inner and outer just sing on their own and take me where I needed to go. Only then could I find any peace and actually do my work.

This recognition was validated by the terminology that Mary Catherine Bateson uses in

[19] We read David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" in my Composition Practicum class. I enjoyed reading it, but it was over my head at the time of the assignment. In it he argues that undergraduate students learn to "approximate" and perform the academic discourse without fully feeling part of it.

[20] I hesitated to use the word "authenticity" and "truth" as they would be called into question in a graduate level English course. Words that held meaning for me turned out to be vacuous and are considered problematic, which I never knew before.

her discussion of incongruence in *Composing a Life Story.* Her expression of listening (although she does not use the term explicitly) is a sharpened way to draw together the aspects of the narratives of our lives, which appear not to fit together as we take stock of them inwardly. It is an appropriate description of dismantling the power of the ego when listening to the personal narratives of the events, tasks and mistakes of our lives. The ego wants the life story to take perfect shape. The desire for the shape of the story dominates thinking. Bateson advocates for the welcoming and reshaping of "discontinuity" with regards to one's life narrative. She asserts the way one "composes" the story about one's life can point to "discontinuity" and its consequent mistakes and failures.

Alternatively, one can "compose" in order to see the connections and "continuity" in a life narrative, using "multiple interpretations" at once to define and understand the story and oneself as its author and agent. As Bateson puts it, "it's clear those who stay the course with their commitments are those who are able to ride the changes and to adapt...they are able to bridge all the superficial changes...they are people with an extraordinary capacity to translate (125). By listening to the narratives of our personal path and constructing them in such a way so they emerge as congruent and contingent, rather than as incoherent, random and full of mistakes, Bateson demonstrates the ego's function in the story's authoring. The ego will often preclude the understanding of each stage, failure, or tragedy as necessary for the next step of a life.

Conceiving of the story as continuous requires taking the ego out of the driver's seat of the story's composition. Bateson's notion of the "capacity to translate" between discontinuous events in one's life occurs when the ego loses its power. She encourages an act of translation, or yoking parts of personal stories together, as a means to reinvent personal narratives which substantiate inward history. Because I thought of myself as making mistakes, being unfit for

graduate school, I construed my life as incoherent and congruent. These were times in which I thought that yoga could no longer help me. I thought I had left the path. I thought suffering in the university was a totally insurmountable battlefield of competitive suffering, for which yoga held no answers.

When I widened my perspective beyond my ego, a quote from Ram Dass resonated: "If you think you are enlightened, spend a weekend with your family." Before graduate school I thought I had "progressed" on my spiritual path. But the triggers and ego-laden problems from my past -- insecurity, jealousy, uncertainty of my intelligence and writing skill-- emerged in their fullness when I began. The quote reminded me yogic teachings extend to all moments of life even when they appear unrelatable. Listening to the seeming inapplicability of yoga in graduate school and letting what felt incongruent, as Ratcliffe suggests "wash over me," like a discourse or a social position I did not yet understand, helped me get access a glimpse of *yogic agency* I again remembered was there all along. Academia and all of its flaws, as well as the baggage it brought up for me served as the most suitable arena for yoga practice in spite of my initial assumption that it was fragmented from the rest of life. Now I could take this understanding and trasnfer it elsewhere, to the next disconnected momenton an inevitably messy path. Life.

Union[Yoga] of Yogic Practitioner Selfhood with Academic Selfhood through the Study of Composition and Rhetoric

When I feel like a victim of the discourses surrounding me, or I feel too influenced by the cultural constructions of what "I should be" as a woman, academic, mother, etc. I rely on pausing and listening - listening to conflicting discourses both internally and externally. I clear the way for "big mind" to swoop in and I open up awareness to "stand under" the discourses and try to "get" where others are coming from. I deploy the practice of listening as a way to ground me

back into what I know and what I don't yet know and what I might never understand. I listen in order to witness sneaky ways my ego will try to control an inward problem or inquiry. I listen to the position of others in order take me out of my limiting narrative dominated by ego. As a yogic vision and a rhetorical perspective have started to come together as time has passed (though not as I had originally thought they would), my personal intersection of *yogic agency* with the agency felt from certain analytical perspectives of rhetoric, (for instance, from Krista Ratcliffe), began not with additional terms and concepts in language but with a feeling I could not well articulate and thus the absence of a feeling of authority to discuss it.

Learning that listening could be conceived of as a rhetorical tool allowed me to integrate a yogic perspective, empowering and opening my perspective, rather than narrowing my conception of comp/rhet scholarship and the rigor of analytical thinking from which it originates. Learning that listening could be a rhetorical tool was the first instance in which I did not abandon my alternate or personal views in order to feel rhetorical, analytical and persuasive. While disconnect and disciplinary rigidity was deepened and sustained by some of my more conventional coursework and professors, my comp/rhet professors and the ideas we discussed helped me to evolve and feel a sense I could translate from an inner sphere to an outward one.

This ability to listen and thus to yoke my perspectives is rooted in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the work of Linda Flower, as well as the Sophists, Ellen Cushman, Susan Jarratt, Michel Foucault, Marx, Kenneth Burke and Judith Butler, among others. I came away from text-based conversations with my advisors and felt clear and free in my mind. The ideas within these texts, broadly construed here, deeply resonated within a part of myself that knew I had the power to construct my own story in spite of conflicting discourses and apparent incongruence. This is a self I sometimes struck upon when I practiced yoga. My yogic

perspective felt validated for the first time as I saw within these Western texts the illuminating message that language not only shapes knowledge but also, language shapes how we construct the ideas of our 'selves,' and the feelings which come along with the self.

Conclusion: Listening as the Ability to Stay with Anything

As I rewrite the feelings of dejection I felt in Professor Kleinman's classroom and recast them as a site of learning the power of an inward listening practice, rhetorical listening itself becomes inward. The reinvention of rhetorical listening as yogic demonstrates both: 1) a mode of responsibility in the ways we manage inward response to difference or the feeling or sense of *not* identifying with another person, and 2) a mode of fearlessness of the unknown discourses of others as well as the unknown discourses within ourselves. Both of these aspects of self emerge when ego is cleared and quiet. When agents fail to find common threads between each other, listening becomes a practice which enables difference to fully emerge in all of its qualities. Differences between people are not erased in order for the ego to find things in common.

The resistance to the erasure of difference thus happens inwardly and individually. Jack Kornfield elucidates listening as a response to discomfort arising with the inability to identify with one another. He describes it as the inner courage of the "ability to stay with anything." In his self -help book *After the Ecstasy, The Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise On The Spiritual Path*, Kornfield, one of the founders of the Insight Meditation Center, a popular meditation retreat center in western Massachusetts, recalls the story of a senior dharma teacher, Ruth Denison, who "fails" during a public lecture and deconstructs expectations of herself as an awakened teacher using the tool of listening to do so. He explains how Denison's husband had developed severe Alzheimer's and was under her care around the clock. She frequently had to leave retreats to take care of him. During one dharma talk, she starts telling a story about how her

husband forgot about some cooking and left the stove on and then burned part of the kitchen. Immediately after, she tells the story two more times. Kornfield writes, "many in the room became frightened and upset for this woman, who it appeared, was beginning to show signs of Alzheimer's as well" (209). This instance turned out to just be one night of memory loss.

Because of her incoherence, Denison admits she is failing her students and for that reason it is a very important talk to witness. Kornfield identifies this story as evidence of Ruth Denison's "true presence," in which she tells her students they have been part of something extraordinary, their teacher's failure. Kornfield crystallizes the incident as illuminating the core of yogic practice, or the "ability to stay with anything" (211).

As such, Kornfield shows the strength Denison accesses inwardly amongst difficulty and fearfulness. Denison reveals *yogic agency* as she demonstrates the willingness and skill of reframing a moment of suffering and fear, inner contradiction and conflict, into a moment of learning and awareness. She is supposed to be the "awakened teacher," according to her ego, especially. We observe her listening to herself and her students' listening to her and she thus breaks down previously held notions of who her students think she is. As a consequence, she allows for an alternative discourse, a conception of the imperfect and flawed teacher emergent in the form of the "ability to stay with anything." This includes even the most painful and vulnerable moments in life, or the moments which don't seem to go with the rest. Perhaps the "ability to stay with anything" by listening inwardly to self and Other is something we could work to practice with our students. "The ability to stay with anything" in moments of silence and listening is a way to be *yogic agents* while confronted with layered constructions of ego-dominated conflict and incongruence, as well as the seldom recognized suffering of the university classroom.

CHAPTER 4

YOGIC AGENCY AND AHIMSA: OPEN RHETORICAL SPACE AS NONVIOLENT PEDAGOGY

> Suppose a young man makes a comment on the war or on civil rights or on some other current topic. The person he is talking to then says: "Well, you're just saying that because of your relations with your father." The young man naturally objects: "Of course I had a father, but look at the facts." And he starts bringing out the journals and newspapers and presents facts and statistics from them. Another rejoinder: "You must have a terrible Oedipus complex; you're getting so excited about this." And the young man then says: "Look, I've had some fights with my father, but I've read the paper and I have an independent interest in the civil rights question. It has nothing to do with my father." To which the response is, "Well, your denial just proves how deep your Oedipus complex is."This type of Freudian rebuff has the effect of what John Henry Newman called "poisoning the wells." It gives its victims no ground to stand on.

Newton Garver, "What Violence Is," written for *The Nation* in 1968

> I could tell you about the astonishing things I have learned this semester from student writing: that somebody's father runs around the kitchen every morning, clucking like a hen, pretending to lay the breakfast eggs; that old ladies in Guyana like to trade their needlework for "valiums;" that somebody's grandfather carved Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, donkey and all, on a garden squash; that when you are kicked by your father at the base of your spine, it feels like hitting the 'crazy bone' of your elbow. I could tell you these things and more...but what would that have to do with nonviolence? Oh, war begins in banality, the suppression of the personal and the idiosyncratic.

Mary Rose O'Reilly, (58-19) *The Peaceable Classroom*

I was not enthusiastic to teach about nonviolence to undergraduate students during my first year as a doctoral student. I assumed my students wouldn't be engaged with it, because when I learned about it in my high school world history course, it felt very distanced from my life. It was about India and colonization.

When I began practicing yoga a few years later, nonviolence, or *ahimsa,* one of the *yamas*

or restraints of the Yogic system, was referred to within a context of non-harming to oneself and "self love," which failed to resonate with me. It sounded like a self-help cliche. Self- love was becoming trendy, and it was difficult for me to articulate how it was different from being conceited.

During my first semester teaching first year writing, Eli, now my chair and then my graduate practicum professor, selected a passage from Gandhi's essay on *satyagraha* (truth-force or soul force) for T.A.s to annotate and review with undergraduate students. At first, I thought he must have chosen this passage because of its SAT vocabulary - it had words like "eschew," and "vernacular." (I have since learned this was not the reason). We went over the terms in class and I taught annotation to the students who hadn't learned it in high school.

The next class session, when we began to review the passage, we came to the last line: "Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yield**s** to it, can effectively be passive resistors." In that moment, I observed the dichotomous way in which Gandhi constructs the inner life of the subject in language. Gandhi identifies a mode of subjectivity he calls "brute nature" within people, or the instinctive, innate physical or psychological, violent part of oneself capable of coming to the surface when provoked. Then, he refers to the "latter" or what [the brute nature] yields to. This is a notion of the part of the subject practicing *satyagraha* (truth-force) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence), able to restrain the "biological self" or *brute nature* in spite of a provocative situation.

The dichotomy was the first moment in graduate school in which I could forge a connection between feelings and ideas that I worked through in my yoga practice and the language and analysis constituting my "English" practice.

After reading, I asked my students. "Who drives?" Most of the students raised their

hands, a little proud. “O.K.,” I said. “What does it mean to “yield?”

“To let someone go,” said one student. “To stop and wait,” said another. “Right, good” I said. “So how does that relate to someone’s “brute nature?”

First, we talked about fighting. Then we discussed what emotions one’s “brute nature” might consist of: anger, jealousy, competitiveness, lust, possessiveness, fear, urges to harm or injure physically and psychologically. We discussed the “latter,” or the “nonviolent self,” constituted by *satyagraha.* The nonviolent self can *yield*. It can stop and wait. It lets someone or something go or pass. It expands itself enough to diffuse the force of the former, or “brute nature.”

The distinction between these two rhetorically constructed manifestations of subjecthood, the brute nature and nonviolent *satyagraha,* undergirds this chapter. By distinguishing between two possibilities of subjecthood, the forceful drives of “brute nature” and the expansive awareness exerted from *satyagraha* as Gandhi conceptualizes it, I expand and extract two conceptions of the subject to shape a vision of university pedagogy, which I term the *open rhetorical space* and the *blocked system.* These pedagogical modes substantiate *yogic agency* in some composition and rhetoric scholarship. In this chapter, I reinvent rhetorical theory by Judith Butler and Lynn Worsham from a yogic perspective.

Nonviolence is not just words used casually in conversations about political protests or alternatives to violence and war. Nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and *satyagraha* are read here as social and internal constructions of language. By analyzing these yogic concepts as rhetorical constructions, I extract the linguistic conceptions of nonviolence within contemporary theory. Specifically, I reinvent and uncover the ways in which Judith Butler, who frames some thinking in our field, unwittingly advances a theory of yogic nonviolence.

Butler and Worsham [without meaning to] argue for yogic nonviolence in their writing. From their writings, I work to create the dichotomous pedagogical terms of *open rhetorical space* and the *blocked system.* I conceptualize pedagogical macrocosms as amplified representations of the inward microcosmic Gandhian nonviolent subject. I reimagine the distinction between the dichotomous Gandhian subject driven by "brute nature" and the subject guided by nonviolence and *satyagraha,* to become two modes of university pedagogy. The latter formulation of *open rhetorical space* adds another pedagogical perspective to my project's conception of *yogic agency.*

Teaching and Learning in a blocked system.

In the epigraph to this chapter, Newton Garver fabricates an instance of what he calls "covert personal violence." In such interactions, one person locks another into his or her way of seeing while denying the "Other" linguistic space for inquiry and contradiction. As Garver shows, one man misrepresents another's comment as emanating from an "Oedipal complex" and corners him into a "Freudian rebuff." The first man thereby misconstrues all remarks to follow as originating from problems with the second man's father. In his article in *The Nation* in 1968l Garver expresses that such psychological traps "give... victims no ground to stand on," as they invalidate the theoretical foundation, the arguments and the nuances of "victims'" thinking (820). The rhetorical and critical perspectives of the "victims" are falsified no matter what they might say to extricate themselves from projections of the rhetorically dominant. The latter's point of view is too encompassing of the rhetorical situation to circumvent. This is"covert" form of violence, an implicit violence, of what seems to be a nonchalant conversation. Popular thinking at the moment might label it a "microaggression." What is a remarkable about this mode of violence are the ways it happens without the "victim" or the "perpetrator" acknowledging it as an

instance of violence.

I create the pedagogical term of the *blocked system* to identify pedagogy that is formed of violence, marked by obliviousness. The *blocked system* is fraught with a notion of a subject driven by Gandhian "brute nature." The manifold elements of a *blocked system* signal what I observe to be tacit violence enacted by competing individuals in a university writing classroom.

For both students and teachers, the contemporary university experience is predicated upon individual gain and the desires and drives of the ego. Using the argument of J. Elspeth Stuckey, in *The Violence of Literacy* (1991), I draw out the metaphor of the writing classroom being clouded by an obfuscation of an ego-driven *blocked system.* I declare the current university pedagogy *blocked* as I allude to George Feurstein's term "nescience," which he deploys in his translation of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.* That is, I wish to highlight the ways in which university pedagogy is founded upon "nescience," or ignorance and unawareness. What goes on in a writing classroom demonstrates unawareness that ego/brute nature is a linchpin of teaching and learning. This results in a kind of unintentional pedagogical violence difficult to discern in everyday experience.

Stuckey contends "literacy...fails to disengage itself from the exploitation of illiterates and the loss of opportunities," and consequently the "violence of literacy is a form of "social violence (121)." In her view, teaching literacy, although assumed to be helpful, is entangled in power relations, which oppress certain populations. The teaching of literacy privileges one way of seeing over another, and thus privileges how one group's perception of the world over another.

The *blocked system* is substantiated by a form of social violence, reflective of Stuckey's position that such forms of covert violence "disavow[s]" students' authority over their own reading, writing and thinking (112). As a composition teacher, I perpetuate "social violence"

when I maintain my authority over course content. Although I might teach liberating ideas and self-expression, I still make the last call on what is "right" or "good" in my classroom. As a result, it feels like my core vision of teaching, learning, writing, texts, and ideas is not being passed on to my students. I explain this in detail later in the chapter. In those isolating moments, I view my position as the teacher, no matter my efforts and intentions, as a *blocked system.* Reflexively, my students view themselves as *blocked systems.* And, to that end, we are *blocked systems* working within the logic and requirements of a classroom in a university, another *blocked system.* The *blocked system* as a pedagogical mode is a macrocosm of the construction of the subject as possessing a core "brute nature," a version of self which acts upon ego and bases action upon immediate needs of survival, as Gandhi illuminates in a definition of nonviolence.

The *blocked system* encourages reactionary behavior based upon the impulse for personal individuation, competition, and divisiveness between students and students, and students and teachers. The *blocked system* stems from the lack of awareness, or from nescience of the way the ego dominates the writing classroom. "Social violence," as Stuckey describes it, constitutes the *blocked system.* She deploys Anthony Wilden's as a framework of social violence. "Social violence" is "the passive violence of the refusal to recognize overt or real violence. It may be expressed in deeds; in *positions, stances, attitudes, rules, codes, manners, inertia, cynicism...at all levels, in words*" (my emphasis 63). Wilden and Stuckey's respective concept of social violence shapes the "violent" attitudes circulating in the writing classroom.

Most significant to the *blocked system* is that teachers and students fail to see how an interaction is linguistically violent, competitive, or ego-based. The *blocked system* dominates language, interactions as well as, as Stuckey writes, "codes, manners, inertia, cynicism" in the classroom (63). The word "blocked" connotes the obstruction of seeing and the failure to

understand how we are stuck. Members of the writing classroom are permeated by a *blocked system*, thus they cannot ascertain how ingrained interactions limit, silence, and narrow relationships, potential and ideas.

Blocked System as Promoting Separateness: Teacher-Student and Student-Teachers in the Blocked System

Paulo Freire articulates an ideal teacher/student dynamic clearly in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He describes a classroom in which "the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer the- one-who-teaches, but one who himself is taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (67). As much as I want to consider myself a teacher whose students are empowered agents of their own learning, I find, to use Stuckey's words, "positions, stances, attitudes... codes, [and] manners" materialize between myself and my students (63). This leads to the feeling that my internal philosophical goals for student learning are not being transferred to my students.

When I evaluate my teaching, - Freire's terms "teacher-student" with "student-teacher" does not qualify my relationships with students. When it comes down to it, I am a grade giver and an attendance taker. If I am honest with myself, I often show my students what they should do to succeed in class. I am the "home base" as to whether they're doing it "right," no matter how much pedagogical theory I read, no matter where my heart is. This dynamic allows students in the classroom to know what to do next and how to do it. Yet, to use Garver's terms, there is a "covert" violence there. Or as Stuckey writes, there are set "positions" of "attitudes" and "manners," which form violence, even if my students and me fail to experience violence as it lives in the classroom.

Schooling at so many levels facilitates division in the classroom, between students, between faculty, and between students and faculty. In *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability,* Robert Yagelski describes "schooling" as a system that "fosters a way of being in the world that is characterized by disconnection: We exist individually in the world, not of it; therefore, we see the earth as something for us to use - and to transform according to our desires - rather than conceiving of ourselves as fundamentally part of the living earth" (xiii). The feeling of "disconnection," and the consequent manipulation of other people and institutions "according to our desires" results from feelings of isolation and alienation. It is sustained by the concept of the separate "classic Cartesian self," Yagelski argues. He believes the "classic Cartesian self," a conception of disembodied selfhood that American public schools uphold, is exemplified by power relations in the university writing classroom.

In "The Feminization of Composition" (1991) Susan Miller shows a sense of disconnection between students and teacher is central to the composition classroom. The course itself, she writes, is the "symbolically essential way to verify the social and moral credentials of those admitted to the university…[the academic language taught is] a formal system that now has public consequences," which students must worry about living up to. The verification process of each student is led by the "designated mother/power figure," or composition teacher. In spite of intentions to dismantle stereotypes of the teacher figure, Miller contends that "deeply held images" substantiate unconscious relational practices "even among the people whose characteristics and practices contradict them" (528). A teacher can want to establish an alternative dynamic with students, or a dynamic closer to the "teacher-as-student" dynamic, which Freire holds as an ideal. But "deeply held images" Miller believes, sustain the forces of what I am calling a *blocked system.* Classroom members reproduce the symbol of the "designated

mother/power figure" required for hierarchy in the writing classroom. The survival of ego, or "brute nature" relies on a conception of hierarchy, both for the powerful and the inferior.

Thus, the *blocked system* is characterized by an unequal power dynamic constituted by separateness: student vs. teacher, student vs. student, and student vs. institution. A *blocked system* entails the experience in which a student and teacher are preoccupied with individual achievement. Both students and teachers rely on Stuckey's "positions, attitudes, rules, codes [and] disavowals," to sustain teacher authority and preclude student led learning (63).

The *blocked system* is founded upon the assumption that at "core" people are driven by fundamentally biological forces, which result in individuals' preoccupation in the classroom with personal rather than collective gain. Yagelski illustrates ego as the belief in the "primacy of the individual," rather than the valorization of communal needs and goals (15). The notion that individuals are definitive and isolated beings in the world also relies on a persistent **failure to perceive** ("nescience') the interrelatedness of the individual with the collective. In a *blocked system*, students strive against one another to comply with teacher's predilections, hoping for good grades. This is how students have always been taught, punished or rewarded in many American schooling contexts, which is perpetuated in the freshman university writing course.

Pedagogical Examples of the Blocked System

Every English teacher hears the question. Each time we assign an essay, a hand goes up. "How many pages does it have to be?" Or, a day or so before the assignment is due: "The sheet says 6-8 pages. What if I can only write five?" I try to assign essay prompts in which students are personally driven in such a way they will not worry about the length. I look to students to demonstrate authority regarding page requirements. Let them decide if an essay is "too short" or "too long," as long as he or she said what needed to be said. But students still believe it most

important to follow the "rules." Following the rules of essay length too often appears to come prior to engagement, generation, and expression of one's own ideas. Writing classrooms in students' pasts probably made essay length a way in which students are recognized, praised, punished or blamed.

Another common occurrence: at the beginning of each semester, I tell my students any paper they get back from me can be resubmitted for a higher grade. After I hand a paper back to a student, sometimes, three hours after reading my critique, the student sends the essay back, tailored to my feedback, word for word. But, something feels wrong, forced, contrived and asymmetrical. I don't want my students to read, write, think, to fulfill my "requirements," (whether they refer to the number of pages or the content of the essay) or my opinion of what is "good."

Continuously, the dynamic seems to unfold this way. This revision process, although intended to benefit students by encouraging the reworking of one's own ideas, serves to deny students what Stuckey calls "access to knowledge and self and social consciousness…[and] control, " as students base essay changes on verbatim cues from the teacher (1991, 114). Our relational dynamic reinstates dependence on the teacher to determine what is "right," "true," and "acceptable" for students to succeed in the writing classroom.

I do not blame the students. What else can they do? What other priorities might they work from, having been taught to work for good grades and to please the teacher? I do blame myself. What strikes me most is how my inward principles as a teacher regarding implicit violence and the possibility for nonviolence do not come through to an everyday moment such as this one. I slip into this same unequal relational dynamic with full awareness. Unsure how tobreak free, I wonder how to give more power to my students. And I wonder how to motivate students enough

to desire the power for themselves.

Another example in which signifiers of a *blocked system* surface are the introductions and conclusions of undergraduate essays. After receiving piles of essays which begin "Race is an important issue in America," or "Society is full of injustice," I talk with students about coming from a specific position or location when they begin an essay. I tell them, "you are the author," so if you don't come through the most in this essay, we need to make it more specific, more about your experiences, examples, ideas and analysis. Not surprisingly, students approach me a lot with "test" introductions. "Is this better?" "Is this more what you want?" Sometimes, it is better. It's a personal example or a more rigorous analysis of the text. On other occasions, a student's rewrite continues to feel rote, generic, or cliché.

Within the same class discussion, I always ask "What are you taught in high school about writing conclusions?" Any composition teacher with one semester's experience will report hands go up to say: "Restate your thesis. Reiterate your argument." To try to dismantle this viewpoint on conclusions, a viewpoint that seems only to reinforce the blind following of a rule or format without knowing the reason to do so, I refer to Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's take on writing conclusions. In *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, the authors stress the importance of a "so what?" and a "who cares?" to conclude academic essays in which the author amplifies an argument thereby showing its broader implications to a particular audience (70-79).[21]

Some students end up writing congruent, thought-provoking conclusions. Other students seem not to feel worthy of the opportunity to enlarge an idea. They may not be sure what that

[21] While their methodology is in some ways solipsistic - in some ways they rule out other ways of analytical writing and thus other kinds of thinking - Graff and Birkenstein situate the writing of conclusions usefully for teaching purposes. Enlarging the argument or, "raising the stakes," as the authors call it, is for my students something many express that they want to do but struggle to execute. Like the other examples I discuss in this section, I too struggle

looks like. Perhaps they have not read enough academic writing. Perhaps it feels too bold to assert oneself from the lowly position of college freshmen, or perhaps students want to hand an essay in and be done with it. This makes me I wonder what I am doing wrong, assuming I am the problem or the defect in the classroom, exerting inward violence against myself as a teacher, too. More evocative conclusions, I think, would come from a kind of perspective in which a student searching inwardly, rather than looking outwardly for teacher approval. More evocative conclusions would demonstrate power is believed to come from writing. In the end, the best books filled with evocative writing come from a kindness and truthfulness toward oneself.[22] I wonder how to engender such humility in my students toward writing and themselves.

The problems of the preoccupation with the length of essays, the problem of rote processes of revision and resubmitted essays, the annoyance caused by the vacuousness of introduction and the indifference felt by repetitious conclusions reveal just as much "nescience" or lack of understanding among students as it does about myself as a teacher. Both the ways in which I try to manage these matters *and* the student's response to that management illustrates the argument of David Bartholomae, who warns "learning" often becomes "more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention and discovery," in his 1986 essay "Inventing the University." Bartholomae contends the first-year writing course is founded upon the project of students "extending themselves" into "specialized discourse" by which students are "appropriated" or are "appropriated by" (11). First year writing students must "approximate" and thus learn the "set phrases" or "commonplaces," which introduce them to discourse of the academic community.

What Bartholomae shows us without saying so is that the whole system is rigged, so to

---

with this same problem as a writer.

[22] Working on it myself.

speak, without showing composition teachers what to do about it, necessarily. What results is students rehearse academic literate practices after some exposure without ever really feeling the practices mean something to them. Bartholomae's argument shows us both the symptoms and the cause of the *blocked system*. The "positions" and "attitudes" (Stuckey's terms) that Bartholomae critiques are reinforced by first year writing pedagogy. What causes first year writing to be a course in which students reiterate academic discourse results from the failure to recognize "social violence," and the ego's presence in the classroom at each moment. What is missing from writing classes is the nonviolent practice of willing the ego to "yield" inwardly. What could happen is that inward nonviolence within one person would enact nonviolence in the collective.[23]

The question about essay length, the word-for-word revisions, the rote intros/conclusions I receive evoke a feeling I often experience. This is a feeling that something I cannot name is stopping my classroom from being what I hope it to be. This is the feeling that I am unable to share personal feelings and philosophies about "English" [reading, writing, texts, ideas] with my students so much so that they become agents of learning in my classroom. It is a feeling of being blocked by ego, which I forget all the time. For these reminders, I am thankful as they whisper to me what I am failing to see when I believe I am liberating my students with ideas and essay assignments. They help me to remember my students' position in relation to my own position in the writing classroom. It is a feeling we are all in the classroom only to fulfill one requirement or another. These reminders bring awareness to a possibility of a space beyond these requirements, beyond blockage of the ego. It is a space in which we expand understandings of what the writing classroom is for and come together as teachers and learners.

[23] The practice of "yielding" connects to the energy in the classroom. Nonviolent "yielding," as Gandhi suggests, takes place inwardly. Collective nonviolence springs from nonviolence toward oneself, one's classmates, and one's teacher. It supplants the prescription of norms. Because of the way we operate in the writing classroom, teachers and students overlook the role of individual/inward nonviolence and the consequent classroom unity it could bring to the

Breathing Space into the Blocked System: Open Rhetorical Space Upheld by Nonviolence and Satyagraha

I attempt to open the *blocked system* or the pedagogical term which relies on the subject as possessing a "brute nature" in the writing classroom. I look inward at the personal use of language constructing ego to illustrate an alternative pedagogical mode I define here: *open rhetorical space*. The yogic theory of nonviolence or *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* emerges within contemporary rhetorical theory. By extension, *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *satyagraha* (truth-force) may constitute a pedagogical theory for the writing classroom termed *open rhetorical space*.

For Gandhi, the practice of *ahimsa* demands the renouncing of the dominance of the ego. That is, it invites the opening up of the language bound within the identifying mechanisms of ego. Nonviolence requires the letting go of language making up self, which leads to competing with others for individual gain. In 1913, in an essay for *Indian Opinion,* Gandhi writes "in spite of the vast system of organized Government and mechanical contrivances to make men happy [and] the modern world is *pressed down* [what I conceive of as blocked] with the weight of misery and affliction...family affection and patriotism [are] not enough...passive resistance...involves *sacrifice of self*." The "sacrifice of self," or renouncing of ego, involves diffusing the inward language of ego. (79-80). Gandhi quotes Huxley: "the law of the survival of the fittest is the law for the evolution of the brute, but the law of *self -sacrifice* is the law of *evolution* for the man," and characterizes Darwinian laws of survival of the fittest as based in hierarchy and competition. The "law of self-sacrifice" leads to inner growth. It is not based on

writing classroom experience.

hierarchy. The "law of self-sacrifice" constitutes a pedagogy of *open rhetorical space* in the writing classroom. *Open rhetorical space* requires the "brute nature" or the ego to "sacrifice" itself or "yield" (Gandhi's term) to the nonviolent self. "Evolution for the man" Gandhi writes, is the growth of the individual inwardly. It results from the diminishing the interior power of "brute nature."

Gandhi's remark regarding Darwin is subversive even now. The Western university valorizes Darwinian principles of evolution as "laws" with scientific foundation. "Science" diminishes the validity of ideologies in popular culture and mass media. But laws of evolution are, of course, as Gandhi points out, laws which assume people are at core inherently motivated by rivalry and opposition. Evolution, thus relies on a the concept of an innate "brute nature" of the subject.

According to Gandhi, however, self- suffering, rather than winning and making others suffer, as a result of "self sacrifice," is the path of *satyagraha* or truth-force. Self-sacrifice occurs by diffusing and transcending the ego. The practice of the "brute nature" "yielding" to a nonviolent part of subjecthood is the inward abdication of the ego from dominance in the mind. Gandhi believes this is the true path to inner growth. The "law of self-sacrifice" is open to all who are willing to inwardly extend beyond the inwardly concretized competition perpetuated by ego. The personal growth felt through self-sacrifice is found by overcoming a life solely driven by the inner and outer discursive representations of egoistic separateness. "Self sacrifice" requires letting go of the impulse for "self-preservation" of "brute nature."

My concept of *open rhetorical space* appropriates the process of Gandhian "yielding" or "self-sacrifice" to signify an alternative mode of pedagogy. Put another way, Gandhi's advocacy for self-suffering and sacrifice as a path to self-evolution offers a pedagogical perspective useful

for the writing classroom. It offers a pedagogy which deconstructs and dismantles the ego as key and dominant in the writing classroom. *Open rhetorical space* is an alternative response to verbal and nonverbal language that depends on the individual believing at core he/she needs to rival and oppose others.

Open Rhetorical Space: Judith Butler and a Nonviolent Perspective of Subjecthood

Constituting the definition of *open rhetorical space*, I reinvent and uncover current rhetorical texts. which tacitly teach a nonviolent vision of subjecthood in which ego or "brute nature" is not held as inwardly dominant. Judith Butler demonstrates an iteration of the practice of nonviolent "yielding" in her book *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative.* In this post-structuralist work, Butler characterizes "brute nature" as it "yields" to a nonviolent self practicing *satyagraha.* From the perspective of a yogic reading, a concept of nonviolence surfaces as Butler shows the rhetorical agency possible to be exerted by a subject constituted by a speech act deemed harmful or violent. Butler reframes the ways in which a subject who has been "interpellated" by injurious language is viewed as able to resignify the terms his or herself and thus exert rhetorical agency. The subject then identifies his/herself in his or her own terms.

From a yogic perspective, I extract the ways in which practices of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* arise within the linguistic space Butler constructs. The space she constructs is one in which those who are "interpellated" by speech acts by figures or discourses in power do not capitulate to "foreclose the future of [a] life within language" and instead foster "a future in which the signifier remains a site of ***contest***, available to democratic articulation" by agents occupying the space (125). Butler re-conceives of this space of "interpellation" as a situation in which one can in fact demonstrate rhetorical agency rather than victimhood. Instead of being stuck within the terms that people/discourses/institutions designate, agents recontextualize or resignify

designating terms in their own way, within their own circumstances. Rather than being constituted as a victim by someone else's language, the space Butler illustrates redirects power back to those being designated by language. The linguistic space Butler points to reveals the dichotomy of "brute nature" and of the practice of "yielding" to resignify violent speech acts.

"Brute nature" as an innate essence is represented by Butler's power relation between the individual declaring a violent speech act and the consequent feeling of victimhood by its recipient. It is demonstrated by hierarchy and separateness between people caused by language and discourse. Nonviolent subjecthood, on the other hand, is the inward practice of "yielding" through the resignification of speech acts. Nonviolent subjecthood is invoked by Butler's hope that words can be resignified and opened up rather than permanently hurtful. Within the linguistic space Butler points to one extracts yogic practice in which "brute nature" "yields" to a nonviolent, agentic iteration of subjecthood. *Ahimsa* or nonviolence surfaces in the linguistic space in which agents resignify and recontextualize in ways they choose, rather than capitulate to victimhood in language. Nonviolence in the classroom requires opening up inwardly, rather than shutting down, the terms by which agents are named.

Open Rhetorical Space & Satyagraha, or Holding to Truth

Alongside *ahimsa* or nonviolence is *satyagraha*, "holding to truth." Gandhi's conception of *satyagraha* means that truth is something to be "lived" through actions and decisions. Truth is not something told or taught with solidity. Heinrich Zimmer unravels Gandhi's *satyagraha* in *Philosophies of India* as a compound Sanskrit word which means "holding (agraha) to the truth (satya)," or upholding and supporting truth in the "principle" of its "power" (169-170). "Truth" in the context of *satyagraha* is something to "hold together" "as manifest in *dharma*" (translated as path, law, etc.) (169). From a yogic perspective, truth is not meant in the way Western

philosophers most commonly understand it: as words which concretize reality and are empirically verifiable. Truth is not as Plato theorizes it, or the epistemological foundation for Western thinking as something outside language, or transcendent, eternal and unchanging.

Rather, *satyagraha* is the practice of "holding" or "clinging" to the pursuit of inward truth, rather than pinning it down and foreclosing it in language outwardly. *Satya* is not articulated in words but is instead, lived and upheld by nonviolent action.

In a basic sense, the meaning of *satyagraha* can mean holding onto what feels true and right in the moment for an individual, which may well be different for what is true and right for someone else. Gandhi writes in *Harjian,* an Indian newspaper in 1940, "It was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence." He shows his audience "truth" is something for which he searches but never pins down. When he "finds" nonviolence, he accepts it as another practice of holding onto an inward practice which feels true, which feels like an alternative to ego. In this statement, there is a violence assigned to pinning down truth. Therefore, there is *ahimsa* in the act of "yielding," or the opening up of language inwardly. Likewise, *satyagraha* is considered a practice of "holding to truth," which is the dismantling of a notion of absolute truth. "Holding to truth" is a continuous practice. It is not the fetishizing of an "essence" or the desire to uncover "truth" as a solid thing.

One might link *satyagraha* or "holding to truth" to the movement discrediting "foundational truth as the basis of knowledge," as Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie quote Stanley Fish. In "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research," (1995) the authors stress the importance of "interrogating the historical, political, and social contexts of our knowledge," in order to open up inner dialogue to a broader possibility of contexts. In a similar way, practicing *satyagraha* requires the subject to become inwardly honest

and careful with oneself about where one's "truths" originate (526). Opening up the language of contexts as they relate to inward knowledge of oneself struggles against the dominance of ego, and the subjectivity of "brute nature" in the writing classroom.

The practice of holding to truth without pinning it down also emerges in Butler's work when it is read from a yogic perspective. In the rhetorical space she carves out in *Excitable Speech,* a space in which the "last word" (read: essential truth) is "important to forestall" (read: not pinned down) the signifier and the role of language remains unlocked, free, fluid, boundless. The classroom within this theoretical framework designates members as not locked into social positions, identities, feelings, or separate roles by means of language, as would be in a *blocked system*, stuck in prescribed roles, embedded in unawareness. Gandhi calls for "self-sacrifice" and suffering of the ego, or letting the ego overcome itself, in a way. His aim is to evolve the individual as he/she struggles inwardly with "brute nature," without awareness, in a state of nescience.

From a contemporary rhetorical standpoint, I construct o*pen rhetorical space* by taking the notion of "yielding," the self- sacrifice it requires, and the notion of *satyagraha* from Gandhi's writing and yoke it together with Butler's concept of the power of "resignifying" language on one's own terms. A concept of *open rhetorical space* in the classroom reinvents and uncovers the possibility for nonviolent subjecthood within Butler's work, a nonviolent subjecthood, which "yields" to "brute nature" and all the relationships, language, positions and manners, which come along with it. Thus "yielding" is another inward discursive practice, which makes more democratic the outward-facing relational dynamics of the classroom.

As I quoted him at the beginning of this chapter, Gandhi writes that "only those who realize that there is something in man *which is superior to the brute nature in him*, and that the

latter always *yields* to it, can effectively be passive resistors" (322). When viewing Butler's work from this yogic perspective through the lens of the notion of inwardly "yielding," one recognizes the possibility for an alternative subjecthood, or the possibility for a pause, the act of yielding, the expansion of inner life, the shifting of the language of truths determined by the agent, rather than words making the agent a victim. When Butler proposes for a space in which we do not "foreclose the future of life within language," I argue, she proposes a nonviolent yielding which does not try to pin down names, relationships, identities or social positions in language (125).

She frees up space in words, in conversations. I point to that space as one that is shaped by *ahimsa* and *satyagraha.* The space liberates those cast in terms by someone else. From a yogic perspective, Butler's rhetorical theory can be offered as both an inward-looking and externally-facing theory of nonviolent language and naming. As a consequence, what yields is a nonviolent way of identifying ourselves inwardly and thus outwardly in the writing classroom. The writing classroom can thus serve as a platform for a nonviolent way of living.

Open rhetorical space invites members of the classroom to diffuse the overarching rhetorical dominance of ego by means of inward nonviolence. This nonviolent vision is predicated upon an alternate view of the signifier, as Butler says, as a "site of contest," or shifting, and open, and a space of possibility rather than finiteness. In Butler's imaginary, one "forestalling" the "last word," resists the final instance of pinning down terms and ideas in language. There is a violence in pinning down terms. There is a nonviolence leaving them open for re-interpretation, resignifying, reenactment, and recontextualization. When she is read from a yogic perspective, Butler suggests that we hold onto a sense of personal truth, personal agency, inward strength with language by opening up contexts and resignifying terms without shutting words down when talking to/about others. Reading her work from a yogic perspective

illuminates the space of "yielding" possible within consciousness. This revisionary understanding allows for the opening up of terms and language within the inner dialogue we speak inwardly to ourselves. This is a form of self love operating in the writing classroom, beginning with way we use words inwardly.

A Pedagogical Example of Open Rhetorical Space

I share an example from my student life to exemplify *open rhetorical space.* It is one instance in which I learned to "yield" inwardly within myself; practicing *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* while inhabiting the linguistic space Butler depicts as a location of resignification and recontextualization. This anecdote forges a connection between non-school and school learning by engaging with the social attitudes and emotions, which are usually only considered relevant outside a classroom context.[24] In this lesson, I navigate my own interior landscapes of subjecthood and the language with which I constituted my subjecthood. I experience myself as "brute nature" and as "yielding" practicing *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. I examine this example of the pedagogy of *open rhetorical space* in a university classroom context.

Red Light/Green Light

Once, as an undergraduate during a three-hour Intermediate Acting class, we played red light/green light. It felt like a total waste of time. I was so annoyed. Our teacher, Janet, was a stage actress who worked in Boston in avant garde theatre, Shakespeare, and taught us in what is called the Michael Chekhov method. She gave all of us harsh feedback, but I felt like she had nothing positive, ever, to say to me, especially. Of course, as these things work, I would have died for a crumb of her praise. For our final project, Janet assigned me the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to read with a male student who read lines in a monotone. There was zero

[24] In John Dewey and the Challenge of Classroom Practice (1998) Lucille McCarthy and Stephen Fishman analyze how the philosophy of John Dewey valued "non-cognitive" "learning" or the "attitudes, emotions, and moral

chemistry between us. To make matters worse, I felt like I could not do the scene without reciting the lines like I had heard them on television or the movie *Roxanne* one thousand times before. I resented that assignment, and I felt hemmed to a corner as someone I was not, while all my classmates rehearsed complicated scenes from *A Winter's Tale* and *Troilus and Cressida* that no one had heard before. Looking back, I think Janet was trying to give me a push.

Weeks earlier, on red light/green light day, Janet called "green light," and we ran toward her. She called "red light" and we froze, sometimes for more than five minutes. This kind of exercise was typical for acting majors. We froze a lot. I usually waited my way through it, rarely resting within the stillness or taking the time to try understand the value of the "freeze" and its application to acting. I kept losing at red light/green light that day. My classmates kept reaching Janet before I did. Usually, I disengaged during these kinds of activities. Again, I waited my way through, rolling my eyes inside, and thought: why couldn't we rehearse some scenes or do something more productive?

Toward the end of that day, I realized we were not indeed rehearsing any scenes. I needed to stop waiting for "class" to start. I had no idea about the relevance of this exercise. As I began to accept this was all we were doing, something changed inwardly. I started to dive into the game. Still to this day I am not sure I would be able to articulate the game lesson's as far as its relation to acting. A few hours into the exercise, though, when I started to "play to win," as Janet worded it, she seemed to recognize my inner change. What happened first was Janet called "red light" at one point when I was very close to her in a squatting position. I froze in a squat for a long time. I kept breathing to stay still through discomfort. For the first time, when she called "green light" I reached Janet before anyone else. After that moment, I became engrossed with the

---

dispositions which drive and shape" such learning (21).

game, but also with the lesson of the game, whatever it was. Which is to say, I stopped evaluating the usefulness of the lesson.

After pushing through a moment of difficulty in the squatting pose, I observed a change in my thinking. Instead of feeling lazy, cranky, burdened, untalented, I felt myself working hard at the game. I had a moment in which the game illuminated inward potential; the game allowed me to work to become what I wanted in the moment. I was not just, at core, without grace or skill and thus an inept student in Janet's eyes, or at least in my own self-perception, or at least on that day. I was not clinging to my ego's construction of myself and all the language bound up within it. I was not thinking I was a bad actor compared to the others. I was not judging our class time for what was a waste of time, or for how I was gaining advantage or not. Rather, the game became about my potential to change and inhabit my position in my body and mind with with stillness, skill and confidence.

By overcoming my analyzing mind, by dissolving my "brute nature" or ego if only for a moment, by shutting down my pinning-into-certainty mind, I saw a glimpse of transcending ways in which I narrowly saw my teacher and our dynamic. If only for a moment, I expanded the ways in which she may well or may well *not* construct me as an actor and a student. In a sense, the egoistic part of my subjecthood, my "brute nature," yielded to open and view myself as always changing and always within a notion of potential in discourse. This notion of potential necessitated a kind expansion inside myself, nonviolent inward space in the classroom: *open rhetorical space.*

Janet always seemed to call "red light" when I was in a difficult physical pose. In those moments I froze more deeply and I struggled less. When she said green light, I had fun and worked harder to play the game. Later in the semester when I was struggling through *Romeo and*

Juliet - as the winding trajectory of yoga practice always illuminates, the struggle returns regardless of any momentary revelation - Janet reminded me: "Remember red light/green light, you were so fierce, Abby." I don't think I ever thought of myself as fierce, ever. Previously and without awareness, I had constructed myself in my teacher's mind as an uncommitted, mediocre actor who lacked innate skill. In that moment Janet reconceptualized "me" in the classroom with the signifier of fierceness. All I had to do was work harder and play with more commitment. I let go for a moment of who I was in class. Janet's resignification of my potential allowed me to revise my understanding of myself in the classroom, and because I remember it thirteen years later, in life. The classroom matters outside the classroom.

Even more significant was the lesson that acting is not really about innate talent. It came through, rather, as about strength and bravery amidst space. In that instance, acting emerges as "fierceness" within potential. The practice of acting transforms the "brute nature" quality of subjecthood, which aims to predict and pin down, into a quality of the ego "yielding." By yielding the ego gave up its usual machinations and attachments it constructs inwardly in words. "Yielding" serves as a means to experience what can be. From this perspective, acting becomes *open rhetorical space* within the exercise of red light/green light. As a consequence, I changed my thoughts about myself and my craft in spite of attitudes coming toward me from outside or surfacing from voices inside. Janet helped me generate the terms to supplant the limiting space of egoistic thought and language patterns for a space of potential. She helped me to perceive a inward space of fierceness resulting not from violence or competition, but from expansion beyond preconceived limitations. She helped me manifest one form of *open rhetorical space* in her classroom. This is one example of a pedagogy of *open rhetorical space* in which a teacher made me an agent of my thoughts bound within language, no matter my complicated feelings

about her.

By means of this exercise, I dropped into the *yogic agency* by means of my interior yielding. In the inward space generated by the exercise I embodied one orientation toward the "process" that Susan Jarratt articulates in *Feminism and Composition: In Other Words.* This is a mode of "process oriented pedagogy" which imagines the subject in potential, rather than in set terms and power relations. As Butler articulates it, the subject is a rhetorical agent rather than a victim of rhetoric. As my teacher Janet shows us, it is a subject in a space of fierceness. From my yogic perspective, it is a "process" of accessing nonviolent fierceness, or an opening toward inward truth, which results from the practice of the ego "yielding" on the inside. Janet helped me to affirm to myself that I am a subject inside a space of rhetorical potential. Or, what Susan Jarratt sees as the space of "movement toward a more radical conception of the subject" which requires "reinventing [the] early insight [of] process," a writing pedagogy made popular in the 1960s and 1970s by compositionists such as Peter Elbow and Donald Murray (8).

In the introduction to her anthology inspired by post-structuralist thinking, Jarratt amends Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that "both woman and writing, it seems, are made, not born," invoking again the construction of a subject in an clear space beyond prescribed constructions in language (8). The instance in Janet's class in which I inhabited *open rhetorical space* in which my ego or "brute nature" "yielded" to an alternative nonviolent, non-controlling subjecthood, advances what Freire calls "true dialogue" between myself and Janet. In Freire's words, our communication is "engaged…thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than a static entity" (92). This mode of dialogue brought awareness inwardly to my thinking inthe classroom. And, it helped me to see how I concretized when I needed to diffuse my ideas of myself in the classroom.

At first my ego, the part of my subjecthood steeped in "brute nature" sought praise and recognition from my teacher. I displayed laziness and indifference toward an activity appearing as if it would not bring me graspable benefit. As time went on I saw potential within myself to recontextualize the activity and myself within it from a position of "fierceness." But it also catalyzed the surrendering to gentleness with myself and with my teacher. Only through the willingness to open and make contact with the experience of red light/green light firsthand - not clouded by the mental constructions surrounding it - could I inhabit *open rhetorical space.*

The Blocked System and Open Rhetorical Space: Gandhian "Brute Nature" in "Going Postal"

A final example of the two versions of subjecthood and aligning pedagogy explored in the context of violence and nonviolence come to the fore in the work of rhetorician Lynn Worsham. An essay of Worsham's elucidates the dichotomy of Gandhian "yielding" as a mode of subjecthood and "brute nature" as an essence to the subject. Correspondingly, I reorganize the pedagogical modes of the *blocked system* and *open rhetorical space* as they become visible as concepts in her 1998 essay "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." Worsham contends the university creates a fictitious subject who reacts to anger and commits brutal acts of violence in public spaces, such as the university itself. I refigure the subject within Worsham's essay as contemporary example of Gandhian "brute nature," the aspect of egoistic subjecthood inclined toward impulsive violence.

The notion of "going postal," Worsham explains, arises out of instances in which postal workers channel the feelings caused by monotonous working conditions into violent acts. Worsham analyzes the notorious "Central Park jogger" case when a woman was assaulted and raped, from which the term "wilding" surfaced. The group of men initially charged with this

particular crime turned out to be innocent, although this revelation did not surface until after Worsham wrote the essay. Nonetheless, by considering what has become racially loaded and psychologically normalizing terms "going postal" and "wilding," Worsham shows how "pedagogic violence" occupies space in the university classroom. "Pedagogic violence" and the subsequent "schooling" of "emotion" perpetuate dominant discourses with regards to violence and subjects who commit violent acts. The university and its educators are complicit in reinscribing "pedagogic violence" and thus rhetorically construct an impulsive, inexplicably violent being who commits unfathomable brutal acts "defined by a poverty of reason" (1001).

By means of "pedagogic violence" the subject is vaguely conceived, effaced, pathologized and constituted by a lack of "reason" or a lack of ability to be understood by those who further pedagogy from positions of power.

Worsham illustrates the linguistic construction of the violent subject constituted by "brute nature." Her illustration of an innately violent subject deprived of the ability to reason shows the complicity of university educators in perpetuating pedagogic violence. By explicating this complicity of university educators, Worsham argues the lack of teaching the social and cultural forces at work reproducing brutal violence "ensure(s)...the misrecognition of the enemy…[and] the misrecognition of incidents of going postal as pathological or purely criminal behavior," instead of educators encouraging the analysis of collective emotions underlying violence (1020).

From a yogic perspective, Worsham's essay shows how "brute nature" as a signifier of subjecthood coheres to a "dominant pedagogy" when it comes to acts of violence in all registers - psychological, rhetorical, and physical. The subjecthood of "brute nature" helps to uphold competition and separateness necessary for the university to keep narratives of the system operating within the status quo, what I call the *blocked system*. Worsham points to the capitalist

and consumer narratives the university implicitly "teaches," which align with the embedded enraged emotions of the subjecthood of "brute nature."

Her call to rhetorical scholars and educators for a refiguring of the signification of brutal acts of violence amounts to a textual invocation for *open rhetorical space*. Within Worsham's call, I locate *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* emerging in *open rhetorical space.* The pedagogical perspective offered is one in which rhetorical scholars disavow the pathologizing and scapegoating of individuals. This is a nonviolent pedagogy. Instead of victimizing individuals in competition, constructing "going postal...as purely criminal behavior of isolated and disaffected individuals," Worsham casts "radical educators" as the analytical authority able to reconfigure violent incidents and people. She contends instances of "going postal," "defined by a poverty of reason," now "demand another explanation," formulated by rhetorical scholars in the writing classroom (1001, 1026).

I imagine the role of nonviolent language and *satyagraha* within the pedagogy she proposes in which she "demands another explanation" (1026). An alternate explanation is uncovered from a yogic perspective. That is, violence is not defined by the core inability to be rational by certain individuals. Like Gandhi says, all individuals possess the quality and skill of the "brute" "yielding" in order for the nonviolent self to come forward. Thus, the solid, innate subjectivity of "brute nature," ideally, does not exist in yoga.

Since the "brute" who commits violence does exist in Western thought, Worsham believes the field of rhetorical studies ought to investigate its sources, which means instead of defining violence by the lack of essential ability to be reasonable, she advocates for "critical pedagogues" to write, research and teach students about the complex social forces causing violent emotions and its consequent acts. The redefining of violence is the duty of radical

thinkers, or people who claim to be "radical educators" or "critical pedagogues," but who do not live their practice in the academy as they perpetuate a concept of the "brute" (1021). She argues "critical pedagogy works against itself to remystify not only the objective conditions of human suffering but also the varied experience of suffering" (1021) Worsham advocates for critical educators to develop understanding of violence in classroom discussions not as a disparity between normal and pathological subjects, but as awareness of the contexts, causes, manifestations and nuance of human suffering.

What yoga offers to the Worsham's theory of violence are inward-facing practices demonstrating how "brute nature" can in fact "yield" to nonviolent ways of being, talking, writing, and reading and other tasks relevant to teaching and learning. These inward practices help to constitute the pedagogy of *open rhetorical space.* They are inward-facing reframes in which individuals conceive of the social and cultural forces causing violence as they are at work within individuals in the university classroom. Yoga invites the experience of a quality of subjecthood of the "brute" "yielding" to a nonviolent part of subjecthood. Yoga reveals inwardly that the nonviolent part of the self can, with practice, subsume the impulses of brute force.

Open rhetorical space is a space of inner violence yielding to inner nonviolence. It is a space amplifying the nonviolent part of ourselves as powerful, or as Janet would say, "fierce." As Judith Butler defines it, this nonviolent space is an inward space in which terms and words and identities are not "set" in "advance" (125). Only through a recontextualized analysis of the terms shaping emotions and consequent violence can we conceive of causes of suffering and violencein non-stigmatizing and resignified ways. And only then can those who identify in words as radical thinkers live their practice by breaking down the pathologizing of a few individuals in the classroom and pedagogic spaces at large.

Conclusion

Only by crafting an outwardly intentional, inwardly rhetorical vision of nonviolence in the classroom can we regard the Vedic maxim "War begins in the mind," the attention it deserves.[25] War begins with the *language* of the mind and how that language spins out into conversations with the people around us. The language of the mind binds us to identities or ideas of ourselves. The same language can expand our vision of our capabilities. By means of the expansion of inner language, we consider the ways in which inward "brute nature" can disintegrate its power in order to influence the states of violence or nonviolence between individuals, institutions, races, or nations.

What is vital for a nonviolent writing classroom and pedagogy is the fluidity of language, identities, and power relations. Solidified iterations of perspectives, positions, mannerisms and conversations privileging one person's thinking over another too often controls interpersonal relations in the classroom.

From a yogic perspective, as articulated by Gandhi, the act of "yielding" involves the practices of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha.* Within these inner practices, "brute nature" steps back and allows for nonviolent action to emerge from a clearer space, or a space which does not narrow what a person can or cannot be. From the rhetorical perspective, *open rhetorical space* abides by the words of Judith Butler and Lynn Worsham. *Open rhetorical space* resists using terms in a way which shuts down thinking, or as Butler writes, "foreclose[s]" the "future" in set words. *Open rhetorical space* also works against essentializing, medicalizing, minimizing, diagnosing and obfuscating emotional pain, which sometimes leads to violent acts.

[25] This expression is thought to come from the Rigveda, one of the texts known as the "Vedas." Some linguists believe the Rigveda originated between 1500 and 1200 B.C.E..

Open rhetorical space brings together yogic and rhetorical concepts with the hopes of uncovering *yogic agency* within our field. I clarify and sharpen a vision of nonviolence that is not limited to sit-ins and protests. A concept of rhetorical nonviolence unfolds in the individual mind in internal tensions arising every day. *Open rhetorical space* involves a revising of the language of inner selves in the context of violence. It is the continuous inward practice of diminishing the power of the brute within, with the hope of letting a nonviolent self come to the fore. Only then will a vision of separateness between people begin to be disintegrated. Only then will the expression "war begins in the mind" become a collective understanding influencing tangible forms of aggression and destruction.

CHAPTER 5

YOGIC AGENCY AND HEALING: UNDERMINING RHETORICS OF TRIUMPH WITH THE GUNAS

> Happiness is the Truth –

Pharrell Williams

> The first of the common rhetorics is so obvious as to require little comment. Because disability is typically considered inherently "depressing," it is most acceptable as a subject of autobiography if the narrative takes the form of the story of triumph over adversity. In this formula, a successful individual takes pride in, and invites the reader's admiration for, a recounting of his/her overcoming of the obstacles posed by disability. Needless to say, these lives that fit this paradigm misrepresent the experience of most people with disabilities... These may be "true stories," but they are not truly representative lives.

G. Thomas Couser "Conflicting Paradigms" 2001

> The *gunas* - sattva, rajas and tamas - which are born of matter, bind the immortal dweller-in-the- body fast to the body. Sattva, being stainless, is luminous and of the nature of peace and serenity; it binds by creating attachment to happiness and to knowledge. Rajas, the essence of passion, is cause of thirst and fascination; it binds the dweller-in-the-body by attachment to action. Tamas, finally, is born of ignorance, and bewilders all embodied beings; it binds by inadvertence, indolence and sleep. Thus, while tamas darkens judgment and attaches to miscomprehension, rajas attaches to action and sattva to happiness.

Bhagavad Gita 14.9

In her 1996 essay "Rhetoric and Healing: Revising Narratives about Disability," Jackie Rinaldi conceives of therapeutic possibilities for rhetoric as she describes the experience of a ten-week writing course in which she and a co-teacher work with individuals who have MS. Rinaldi's project rests on the assumption writing can be a task through which people change perceptions of the obstacles of their lives. While Rinaldi listens to group members' account the ways in which symptoms of MS impair movement through life, such as walking and holding things, daily acts able-bodied perspectives take for granted, she affirms the power of rhetoric to

renarrate the thinking surrounding the body and illness. She writes, "at the core of therapeutic rhetoric is an assumption that any experience of failure is amenable to being reconstructed that makes failure tolerable, even beneficial according to a different set of values." Rinaldi derives the therapeutic nature of rhetoric both from contemporary theory and from ancient sources such as the *Encomium of Helen* as well as Plato's *Phaedrus* (822). Her suggestion to normalize a "different set of values" in terms of what is perceived to be "failure" of the body and mind is investigated in this chapter from a yogic perspective.

Recalling the examples of the authors in her writer's group, Rinaldi shows how "rhetoric can be healing, rather than merely agonistic," and calls for rhetorical educators to make central the "link" of "rhetoric with healing" (833). This chapter responds to this call, as I consider healing as possible by means of a renewed rhetorical perspective. My intervention illuminates the connection between the field and healing as invigorated by yogic philosophy. More specifically, I point to the emergence of the yogic elements of the *gunas* functioning as rhetorical tools within texts exploring discursive dimensions of affect and healing. Expanding upon Laura Micciche's argument for an exploration of affect in composition, because "affect is embedded in language, persuasion, and meaning," I analyze texts which focus on rhetorics of happiness and depression (270).

The *gunas*, when positioned as tools that "link" rhetoric with healing, serve to undermine more popular and conventional rhetorics of happiness and depression. The yogic perspective of the *gunas* challenge narratives of triumph and narratives of overcoming depression and sadness, both of which presume in their narrative structure the possibility for a permanent state of happiness. This presumption, I argue, precludes a sense of healing. The *gunas* are helpful to dismantle the presumption of one day arriving at a state of lasting happiness that remains with us,

a presumption which makes life more painful. Therefore the *gunas* offer an alternate story regarding achieving happiness and staying in a happy state.

The Gunas

David Frawley, Ayurvedic doctor and scholar, defines the *gunas* as three primal qualities of nature. The qualities are *tamas, rajas,* and *sattva.* They are physical and psychological states in an individual. But they also reflect the shifting states of external reality. The *gunas* can be both inward and outward facing. In *Ayurveda and the Mind: The Healing of Consciousness* (1996) Frawley identifies *tamas* as a force creating inertia and even death and destruction. A person affected by *tamas* will be tired and sluggish, and may be addicted to certain habits and thus inert and stuck. A quality of *rajas* will remove a person from a *tamasic* state, as *rajas* is characterized by movement, energy, and activity (12). *Rajas* is the attitudinal and emotional concept containing desire and lust, greed, and thirst after monetary success, status and recognition. *Rajas* can also be present while seeking spiritual knowledge and progress. While *rajasic* states feel good at the time and bring some form of happiness, they are not considered *sattvic,* or what Frawley characterizes as "intelligence" which "imparts balance." *Sattva* is associated with a kind of purity, contentment, rhythm and clarity that is not heavy and stuck like *tamas* nor overly active and based in ego like *rajas.* It has been thought to be a balance between *tamas* and *rajas,* as it contains both "stability" and "energy" (9).

Frawley notes the Sanskrit word *gunas* has been translated as "what binds," because "wrongly understood they keep us in bondage to the external world" (30). Feeling attached to any state, *tamas, rajas* or *sattva* keeps a person stuck in the "external world" or shifts of matter, which I explicate later. Therefore, none of these states is a location to which a person arrives and remains without changing. While *sattva* seems to be most "yogic" and healthiest, one must not

"wrongly" understand it as the attitude or affect with which one stays, becoming attached to the *sattvic* state. As Frawley intimates, we are "bound" psychologically to the *gunas* if we assume we must arrive at a *sattvic* state and remain there. *Sattva,* and the longing or fighting to stay in a state of *sattva,* in turn produces the greed of *rajas*. Most important for the purposes of this chapter is to recognize the impermanence of the *gunas,* or quality of being and quality of matter. The *gunas* transform throughout the day, throughout experience, and throughout a lifetime. The *gunas* continuously change. People move through the states of the *gunas* and the states of the *gunas* change while they surround people in reality.

Within the system of the *gunas* nothing is lastingly polarizing, absolute or permanent, and "qualities" of nature are always becoming something else, often their opposite. Since death and destruction are necessary for rebirth, *tamas* can be is useful to beget *sattva* in certain situations. In other words, although *tamas* is related to loss, death and lack of motion, it is still seen as a necessary cleansing state in order reach to a sense of clarity. All three *gunas* catalyze the changes of material life or the shifts and manifestations of nature, what is called *prakriti* in Sanskrit.

Because they constitute nature, or *prakriti,* the system of the *gunas* is whole and lawful in and of itself despite the apparent undesirable traits such as those connected to *tamas,* like stuckness or laziness. One instinctively tries to avoid death and decay, invalidating and disparaging inaction and inertia. Yet *tamas* is needed, as the "qualities" of "substance" provide a stable foundation for *rajas* and *sattva* to arise, as well. An obvious example is the ways in which *tamas* prepares the way for *rajas* is through the process of the decomposition of a dead animal's body. The dead body enriches the soil and thus provides the substance and foundation for new growth and activity - or *rajas.* The blooming of the flower fulfills desire for beauty, although temporarily. The flower moves through the state of *rajas* as it fulfills desire. The stillness and

cleanliness of the flower reveals clarity of *sattva* - a balanced state between growth and decay. Heinrich Zimmer identifies the *gunas* as "transitory in so far as their changing details...but enduring in their continuous passage itself," as the *gunas* are a corollary to the ever-shifting cycles of nature and matter or *prakriti* (316).

According to a yogic system, the ego, or *ahankara* sustains the presumption that the *gunas* fully constitute reality. But the *gunas* only constitute *prakriti*, or the shifts of materiality and nature. This presumption only leads to a false assumption that the *gunas* are all there is to life experience. This is attachment to the material aspects of the universe. The *gunas* are not all there is to the yogic path, yet they are necessary and inherent shifts to both inner and outer reality.

Beyond the *gunas,* and crucial to understanding the yogic system, is what Zimmer points to as an undifferentiated oneness. *Purusha,* or what Zimmer terms the "life-monad" and what Erich Schiffman calls "big mind," is independent of the constant fluctuations of the *gunas.* "The *purusha* and the *gunas* are equally real," Zimmer writes, while intimating only by viewing reality with the awareness of *purusha* can the practitioner conceive of the co-existence of *prakriti* and *purusha.* A conception of the relationship between *purusha* and *prakriti* can also be characterized as "Spirit" and "nature." Vasant Lad explicates the terms "according to the Vedic system," which he says teach that the "human being is a miniature" of the play between *prakriti* and *purusha* (7). One can observe the *gunas* at work both inwardly and within the shifts of external reality, or a microcosm within the macrocosm. Likewise, the *gunas* are forces working within the ephemeral but constant shifts between nature (*prakriti*) and unchanging oneness (*purusha*) in the universe.

Narratives of Triumph, Narratives of Overcoming

Narratives of triumph and narratives of overcoming are rhetorical locations from which to observe the play of the *gunas.* What is emergent in these narratives is the ways in which authors,

I argue, construct *sattva* as a landing place, a home base, as the end of journey toward happiness. Without meaning to or terming it as such of course, authors demonstrate how this narrative construction depends on the assumption *sattva* is an enlightened state to reach, which lasts and remains.

For instance, in the preface to his book *Authentic Happiness*, positive psychologist Martin Seligman describes his frustrations as a psychologist in a field that aims to "reliev[e] the states that make life miserable" such as depression and other mental illnesses. Seligman believes there must be a "science" which attempts to understand "positive emotions, build strength and virtue, and provide guideposts for finding what Aristotle called "the good life" (ix). "The good life," who continues, "is a life wrapped up in successfully using your signature strengths to obtain abundant and authentic gratification," which involves capitalizing upon one's inner virtues in a habitual way to ensure lasting satisfaction in life. Seligman assures his reader that this satisfaction, earned once one mobilizes his or her "signature strengths," is also "authentic" and verifiably "real" (249). Seligman wishes to shift the focus of psychology from negative emotions and pathologies, such as depression, to positive ones such as happiness and virtue. He views such positive emotions, for instance kindness and originality, as tools with which to overcome negative emotions, such as sadness and amotivation. As Elle magazine applauds on the back cover of his book, Seligman proposes a "plan" for "finding lasting happiness" and offers a story of overcoming bad feelings predominating one's life by supplanting them with good feelings.

In a similar key, Western research often re-appropriates Eastern contemplative practices as the "answer" to Western problems such as discontent and depression. Yoga and other contemplative practices are depicted as means by which to attain lasting states of happiness and overcome negative affective states. In another book which argues how to engineer happiness

based upon empirical studies, *Health, Happiness, and Well-Being: Better Living Through Psychological Science,* in a chapter entitled "Chilling Out: Meditation, Relaxation and Yoga," Anne Malaktaris et al. claim "yoga classes" prove to be a "promising area for the area of relaxation and meditation techniques," just as "meditation practices...foster compassion…[and are] correlated with reduced stress induced immune and behavioral responses"(152). The authors explicate research on the psychosomatic benefits of Eastern practices, arguing they make readers feel happier and produce "better living." In this story, yoga, or meditation, is affixed as the happy ending, thereby promoting yoga as the means by which one can achieve long- lasting happiness. The story solidifies another dynamic of overcoming a bad feeling, with yoga as a vehicle. Such "research" commodifies yoga and other Eastern practices. It obfuscates the nuance of the theory within practices by aiming for specific, Westernized results.

Such narratives of overcoming diseases, affective states, disabilities and diagnoses are challenged within the scholarship of the rhetoric of disability. The discipline of disability studies seeks to deconstruct and diffuse the power of sweeping and oversimplified ways of understanding experiences of illness, psychological or physical. The aims behind this rhetorical work are complex and layered. One objective of disability studies is to eradicate the mythology of those who "suffer" from "negative" emotions, or that "negative" impairments and disabilities must be fixed, their bearers must be pitied and/or corrected. This assumption characterizes people with disabilities as incomplete or in some way wrong as individuals. In their essay "Disability, Rhetoric and the Body" James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki- Wilson express one of the underlying assumptions of disability and disease: "when Americans think, talk, and write about disability [or disease] they usually consider it as a tragedy, illness, or defect that an individual body " has" - that is, as personal and accidental, before or without sociopolitical significance"

(2). Disability studies intends to subvert popular narratives, which portray the disabled body and mind as "afflicted" with disability or disease, or essentially "defective" and therefore meant to be fixed, given charity, or overcome. The problem with narratives of overcoming or charity is that they inadvertently erase the particular experience of disabled bodies and the idiosyncrasy of individual bodies. Within narratives of overcoming, we do not end up learning about and listening to actual people. Narratives of overcoming instead solidify a narrative of disability and disease aligning with preexisting beliefs about what bodies should and should not be.

By proposing a therapeutic model for rhetoric, Jackie Rinaldi struggles with this very problem of preexisting beliefs about bodies and minds. She believes writing can be a vehicle through which ingrained presuppositions about what is right and wrong about minds and bodies can be overturned and rewritten. She asserts, by encouraging a link between rhetoric and healing in the classroom, that "failure" of the body/mind can also be used constructively, depending upon how the story of failure is told.

This chapter approaches feelings or affects from this therapeutic perspective. I recontextualize the texts that follow to regard Laura Micciche's assertion that the field of composition centralize affect as a locus of analysis. She reminds her readers "teaching, learning and administration are not simply intellectual activities that one masters but a complex blend of emotional and professional issues that involve the whole person" ("More Than A Feeling" 454). By widening the scope of analysis in order to consider the emotional and affective dynamics of our work, a connection between rhetoric and healing is made. This chapter employs yoga as the healing rhetorical tool, which engages the dynamic between "negative" affects such as depression, and "positive" affects such as happiness.

The Depression Journals and the Gunas

Depression: A Public Feeling, by Ann Cvetkovich, is a book in the field of Affect theory which counters the narrative of overcoming negative affects, such as depression, in several ways. For instance, Cvetkovich describes the use of yogic practice without making it seem like yoga is the "answer." I'll describe this later in my analysis. More immediately, I extract the discursive and implicit use of the *gunas* as a rhetorical tool from what Cvetkovich calls "The Depression Journals." I thus demonstrate how no part of Cvetkovich's emotional experience is left out or brushed over in order to project happiness. Everything Cvetkovich experiences, even very negative emotions such as depression and immobility, is constructed as valuable for healing. Uncomfortable emotional states are depicted as relevant to her practice as an academic in their own right.

Tamas/Writer's Block

Arcing through Cvetkovich's narrative of depression are the *gunas.* Reread from a yogic perspective, *Depression: A Public Feeling* Ann Cvetkovich navigates the shifts of the *gunas,* specifically *tamas,* as it seeps in and out of her life. For my purposes, I identify "depression," and all its cultural stereotypes characterized by popular psychology and pharmaceutical commercials such as sluggish behavior, sleepiness, lack of appetite or overeating, and inability to focus or loss of interest in activities, as a state of *tamas.* David Frawley describes *tamas* as a "quality of dullness...and inertia [which is] heavy and obstructing in action...the principle of materiality [*prakriti*] or unconsciousness that causes consciousness to become veiled" (31). In a *tamasic* state, the ego cannot perceive or conceive of "big mind" as its illuminating abilities have become "veiled" or dulled. The *tamasic* state is a quality to which it is easy to become affectively bound,

as it at times feels permanent. It is characterized by a state of inertia, a state which remains the way it is. But the yogic system teaches *tamas* too, no matter how stuck, is indeed passing in one form or another.

In Part One, "Depression Journals," Cvetkovich constitutes depression in a description of a *tamasic* like state by exemplifying depression through the feeling of being inert or unable to complete academic tasks. She struggles to finish her dissertation and enter the job market. Describing the difficulty of attempting to grade student papers, Cvetkovich writes, "each paper took close to an hour...because I was incapable of following the logic of the arguments," noting that the only way to finish a stack of essays was to draw upon cliché and canned phrases she knew from other professors. She displays the lack of emotional investment in her work and also the compulsory performance academia at times requires of its faculty and students (47). Cvetkovich discusses the struggle she has writing, finishing, and sending thank you notes knowing full well that it is not complicated or a pressing task. This reader sympathizes with Cvetkovich under the stuckness and paralysis of depression through the visceral narrative of her struggle.

Tamas emerges as an affective force characterized by a feeling of being blocked or stuck. When reread from a yogic perspective, *tamas* is crystallized as a state Cvetkovich keeps returning to as signaled by her trouble with writer's block. Her focus on writer's block illustrates a state of *tamas*, contrasting the un-emotional and dispassionate way writer's block is usually characterized in the composition classroom. That is, writer's block is taken lightly in the classroom, met with the suggestion of brainstorming and prewriting activities. She shows through descriptions of agonizing emotional pain that writer's block is a state of *tamas*, a struggle within of inertia, or what Cvetkovich calls "depression."

Reread from yogic perspective, writer's block in "Depression Journals" as Frawley defines *tamas* is when vision is "obstructed," or "consciousness" is "veiled." What this shows writing instructors is they can revise understandings of writer's block as a necessary process of unveiling, or a necessary process of illumination, which begins in a state of "ignorance and delusion" and is simultaneously a vital part of the overall process (31). Instead of taking it lightly and therefore invalidating it as a painful experience, writing instructors can explore the usefulness of writer's block as an emotional and generative state.

As Cvetkovich shows, the "ignorance" corresponding to *tamas* is not suddenly eradicated by revelation and writing a masterpiece. *Tamas* is a state through which the author slogs. Writer's block, thus, is not an "affliction," by which some students are pathologized in isolation while other students are normal. It is more aptly characterized as a universal state which passes, eventually, and then comes back. It is characterized by discomfort and doubt, but also as touchstone on the path of writing. Cvetkovich does eventually finish her book, however she returns to a state of *tamas* in order to start and finish her subsequent one.

Depicting writer's block as Cvetkovich does generates a illustration of *tamas* as useful and intrinsic to the experience of being an academic. Therefore, in "The Depression Journals" the university is portrayed as a location in which great minds become immobilized and stuck. These minds are only sometimes generative of meaningful ideas and knowledge. As *tamas* emerges in "The Depression Journals," it helps to undermine the notion of minds producing research publications as holding the "answer" to the feeling of stuckness in the university classroom. As her story shows, Cvekovich has a bright and creative mind. Yet she still gets stuck over and over again. By articulating her "public feelings" of stuckness stemming from the academic environment, Cvetkovich reveals the absence of a discussion in the university classroom of the

difficult and understated yet painful emotions of daily life. She draws attention to the feelings springing from writer's block such as the stagnancy and incompetence, which come with it. Equally significant, through the unravelling of the socially constructed forces at work behind writer's block, Cvetkovich avoids a rhetoric of triumph or a rhetoric of overcoming depression in the academic context.

From a yogic perspective, Cvetkovich does not imply victory over *tamas*. The conventional narrative structure of depression - a narrative in which the individual overcomes inertia - is thus evaded. The rhetorical perspective offered by the *gunas* serves to subvert this narrative of overcoming *tamas* and offers an alternative. The *gunas* demonstrate *tamas* as it impels movement, which is not triumphant or productive of anything material. *Tamas* exists in order to be pushed through. Its importance lies in bringing the quality of being stuck or still without overcoming stuckness completely.

Rajas

In *Ayurveda and the Mind*, David Frawley describes *rajas* as being constituted by energy which is "ever seeking a goal or end that gives [the self] power" (34). *Rajas* emerges in Cvetkovich's journals as it acts as a rhetorical tool undermining the narrative of overcoming depression by mobilizing *tamas.* Without terming it as such, Cvetkovich enacts *rajas* in a section of her journals called "Swimming." She narrates the emotional response to her personal practice of swimming as an activity that has "at least saved the day, on numerous occasions…[because] it keeps you moving and hence strikes a blow against inertia." Swimming is a somatic release against the stuckness of her mind. Cvetkovich reflects on how she swims "in order to think" (50). Cvetkovich shows the ways in which physical activity activates emotional and intellectual inertia. She notes that after her yoga class, a "ritual," she returned home "ready to work again,"

as she used her "her body to tend to mind" clearing it enough so that she felt able to think. Like swimming, yoga [postures] are an "ordinary or insignificant" activity, which springs her from *tamas* to *rajas*. Yoga and swimming, for Cvetkovich, keep her going in a daily and diligent way with her academic work, rather than feeling inert and blocked (51, 54).

Rajas flows through "The Depression Journals" as ephemeral pleasures and activities, all with the author's awareness of its transience. Cvetkovich describes her experience with antidepressants in which she has trouble sleeping, is uninhibited in public, and is driven by *rajas*. She hesitantly uses the doctor's term "manic" to describe her response to Prozac as she narrates a turning point in her life in which she joins the "queer cultural life" in New York City, "wrote by day and played by night" (61). She admits to uncertainty as to whether her returned enthusiasm for life results from Prozac or from the allure of coming out into the richness and challenges of queer culture in the 1980s. Cvetkovich does not determine the origins of this stint of excitement and joyousness. Whether drug induced or not, she accepts what unfolds as is. She determines her desire, an emotion driven by *rajas*, for love, excitement and intellectual growth is a result of being "literally in the right place" (60). Without describing it as such, Cvetkovich recognizes ephemerality of the *rajasic* state, both inwardly and in the culture surrounding her. The outward and inward activity of *rajas* are part of her process of depression without taking into consideration whether or not she takes medication.

Sattva

While she explicitly states that she no longer uses antidepressants and does not advocate their use, I point the way *rajas* surfaces in Cvetkovich's story. *Rajas* is at work when Prozac enables within her the spontaneity and the courage to enter a Catholic church. During this instance, she experiences what she identifies as a "magical moment," as she viscerally feels the

sacredness of the church, its members, and the rituals of kissing the Virgin (52). She attributes to Prozac the desire to walk into the church on a whim and also to reconnect with her grandmother just before she dies, a relative with whom she celebrated many Christian holidays such as Easter. This meeting conjures a feeling of "sanctuary" for which she "thanks" the drugs although she does not necessarily "believe" in them. The drugs propelled her depression so she could reach the church and her grandmother.

Reread from a yogic perspective, the new desire and unprecedented courage Cvetkovich demonstrates can be termed *rajas. Rajas* gives her the power to mobilize herself. From the perspective of the *gunas*, *rajas* brings Cvetkovich into church. But the affective states she experiences there can be termed *sattva. Sattva* materializes from Cvetkovich's text as she declares the significance of the "slow and painstaking accumulation of new ways of living," in which one is "laid low by suffering...in order to come through to the other side" (55). The "other side" is not brought on with immediacy or ease. Nor is it the appearance of lasting happiness or material wealth or status. Rather, "new ways of living," what we can correlate with the *gunas* as *sattva* comes along through the gradual effort of cleansing daily habits. This clarity brings a *sattvic* state (55).

I derive *tamas* from the depiction of depression in Cvetkovich's story as a clarifying process by which one must withstand and push through dullness and lethargy. Then, one mobilizes by means of *rajas*, desire and activity, in order to experience *sattva*, or a cleansed state. Cvetkovich illuminates an instance in which she feels free and clear to write, a *sattvic* state. She is inspired by an argument of late scholar Lora Romero, who underlines the ambivalence but salience of "feeling blocked and feeling enabled" (67-68). After reading of Romero's experience, Cvetkovich is able to write a full, coherent manuscript herself. Something about the arc of

Romero's argument leads Cvetkovich to generate and shape her own writing. Romero demonstrates strength and self-possession as she allows the feeling of being at an "impasse" in writing, or, termed here, a *tamasic* state, which gives Cvetkovich momentum, herself, to write (68).

Cvetkovich identifies Romero and David Foster Wallace as writers who inspire her path. Yet they both took their own lives. Such an act demonstrates, ultimately, the epitome of inertia and doubt in the potential to break through stuckness into change. It demonstrates the effects of *tamas* on the mind as it reaches an extreme point. With this in her reader's awareness, Cvetkovich resists conventional narratives of depression in which individuals are defined by psychological diagnosis or chemical pathology. Her connection to these authors shows there are times when even the most depressed among us can be inspired or inspiring. At the same time, their lives indicate how the narrative of depression does not always end happily. From a yogic perspective, Cvetkovich shows her readers that *tamas* always returns. What a person does with *tamas* is another story.

Cvetkovich determines from the confidence in Romero's text "there is nothing wrong with our biology or our intelligence," she realizes, "sometimes we are just stuck," intimating through her journals the necessity of stuckness for stints of energy (*rajas*), which can lead to clarity and light (*sattva*) (68). Unearthing the function of *tamas* within academic work, Cvetkovich holds there is value to *tamas* and being stuck. She establishes within the "interstices" of "impasses" she was "sometimes healing [her]self," even if the impasses consisted of waiting and accomplishing nothing (69). Reread from a yogic perspective, one can see Cvetkovich constructing the *tamasic* state of immobility as painful and without function, and yet helpful in imperceptible ways.

By illustrating her transformed view of the function of depression, reread here as *tamas*, as a profound revelation for which she had to painstakingly work, Cvetkovich presents the mission as her project as "not to tell people what to feel or judge how they feel, but instead to find better ways to describe the complexity of what they're feeling" (74). Cvetkovich valorizes complicated and shifting emotions by illuminating, without intending to, her personal journey through *tamas, rajas,* and *sattva* and back again, in nonjudgmental terms. She implies the significance of the knowledge we are not going to emotionally arrive and remain anywhere. Reread from a yogic perspective, we are not going to arrive and remain in a *sattvic* state. One day we will *not necessarily* be cleansed of darkness and purified of psychological chaos. Sometimes there is no way out from depression; sometimes we are just "stuck" (68). Sometimes *tamas* is useful to us in ways unseen at the time, and sometimes it is not.

What is important to Cvekovich is the feeling that one possesses rhetorical agency to "describe the complexity of what they're feeling," without privileging or clinging to one way of feeling or being. This is a journey in itself. Rhetorically embodying the arc of emotions of the *gunas* with her journal section, Cvetkovich's scholarly approach epitomizes the changeableness of the *gunas.* Thus, she uncovers the way rhetorics of triumph and overcoming as non-substantive, but more significant, as discouraging to and erasing of individuals living with depression in the everyday.

The Promise of Happiness and the Gunas

Everything presses against you; you feel against the world and the world feels against you. You are no longer well adjusted: you cannot adjust to the world. The revolutionary is an affect alien in this specific sense. You do not flow; you are stressed; you experience the world as a form of resistance in coming to resist a world. Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* "Happy

Futures," (169)

Intrinsic to narratives of overcoming depression is the assumption of a happiness coming to fruition somewhere in the distance, a location every person is able to pin down. This further reinforces the notion without such happiness a depressed individual is somehow defective or incomplete. Specific lived experience shows a better future may or may not in fact come to be. One example of such a narrative of overcoming is a 2015 essay "What Psychological Science Knows About Achieving Happiness," in which Katherine Nelson et al. claim "using some of the most effective methodologies available, researchers have found that happiness can be attained via simple, cost-effective, non-stigmatizing...activities, such as writing gratitude letters or keeping an optimism diary," or activities the authors' research shows can produce "lasting changes" (265). To be sure, as the work of Cvetkovich shows, changing daily habits can change the way we feel on a daily basis. We might feel different and/or claim to others we feel less depressed and happier. What is problematic, however, is the claim that adding a few daily activities will lead to happiness. This claim assumes "happiness" is in fact a location we can uncover and at which we can arrive, achieve and thus sustain.

Sara Ahmed critiques the narrative of pinning down happiness as it connects to power and oppression. Certain disciplines such as positive psychology set out to prove "happiness" can be captured and made permanently available given the right habits and circumstance. In her 2010 book *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed dismantles the discursive structure of happiness as a "promise" in a myriad of disciplines and texts. She examines the language in the collective unconscious of how "happiness evokes a point that lies elsewhere, just over the horizon, in the very mode of aspiring for something" as a concept in opposition to protests and social movements linked to unhappiness, such as representations of feminists, queers, and "melancholic

migrants" (204, 125). In basic terms, people in those categories are constructed as "unhappy" because they are forced to protest social conditions. She points to the assumption "For some, the good life is the happy life," a notion linking happiness to being virtuous, calling upon the presuppositions set forth by Aristotle of the "good life," a concept generally admired in positive psychology. In that construction, happiness is a desirable state correlated to ability, health, and material success. Unhappiness is correlated with the opposite, or a state whereby the unhappy are regarded as possessing an undesirable socioeconomic status poor health. The unhappy are deemed part of the demographic expressing the "wrong" affective state.

I interpret from a yogic lens and find the *gunas* in Ahmed's work as she reframes the non-dominant discourses of "unhappiness" and "passivity" as equally valuable affective states of being as activity and happiness. Ahmed focuses on "suffering," specifically the suffering of those in positions of Other, whose lives may not coincide with trajectories and objects linked to happiness. She believes suffering, such as the misfortune of the oppressed in situations of political or social marginalization, serves as the impetus from which individuals "spring into action" (94). Ahmed suggests a softening of the harsh distinction between activity and passivity by cultivating a renewed perception of how activity and passivity influence one another.

There is an expectation happiness is demonstrated by activity, energy or the acquisition of things, or what a yogic perspective would call *rajas*. Reread from a yogic perspective, Ahmed demonstrates how *tamas* necessitates *rajas* and vice versa. Altering the popularly held perspective of the notions of active and passive, Ahmed argues, is believing unhappiness is "*more than a feeling that should be overcome*" (217). Unhappiness is not a temporary placeholder for happiness. Ahmed articulates this idea and argues the collective must reframe unhappiness by "sustaining our attention on certain forms of suffering" rather than forcing the

rhetoric to "move beyond suffering," by using suffering to prejudice some individuals for various reasons (216). Thus, we return to the notion that *tamas* is indeed useful, not an inward state meant to be erased or ignored.

I locate the *gunas* in Ahmed's contention that feelings of unhappiness manifest as "creative responses to histories that are unfinished" (217). She illustrates bad feelings in stories of the oppressed and of people whose lives appear in the process of unfolding and being figured out, such as migrants and queer people. Ahmed contends for a revisionary understanding of unhappiness as a critical lens by which we can rigorously cull the rhetorical influence and pressures of "the promise of happiness" (217). At stake for Ahmed is a "different relationship to all our wanted and unwanted feelings as an ethical resource" because to assume all people should express a unitary form of happiness shaped by objects thought to create a happy state "allows historical forms of injustice to disappear" (217). We need an alternative metric by which to measure emotions of people who lead lives colored by a multitude of systemic circumstances, many of which individuals cannot manipulate or control.

The Nonjudgmental Perspective of the Gunas

More significantly, the yogic system does not approach *tamas* or *rajas* from a position of judgement. The yogic system characterizes *tamas* and *rajas* as qualities inherent to a shifting trajectory, the yogic path. *Rajas* and *tamas* are not more necessary or more a part of the system than *sattva*. Put another way, an experience of inertia or desire is par for the course of the affective states of life. As Ahmed proposes unhappiness as "more than a feeling that should be overcome," the *gunas*, no matter how unpleasant or undesirable the experience of some qualities of our internal nature are, are not judged (217). For example, the dullness and depression of *tamas* represent nonjudgmental demarcations as to how one should proceed in *sadhana*, or daily

practice. Instead of approaching the *gunas* as solid affective ways of being in which we might characterize, analyze or diagnose another person who displays such qualities, in the yogic system we use them as information from which to critically determine by which practices an individual might be brought back into balance. In this way, we assume from the start the individual is whole and complete rather than defective and wrong and in need of correcting. The process of healing through the *gunas* is oriented not from judgment and diagnosis but with the aim of mobilizing *tamas* and *rajas* into a state of *sattva,* knowing full well that *sattva* is not a lasting state either. Yet *sattva* it is an affective state for which we aim continuously in yogic practice, or as we aim to balance *rajas* and *tamas.*

In *Ayurveda and the Mind,* David Frawley notes *tamas, rajas,* and *sattva,* are not in hierarchal relation to one another. It is important not to judge others who might express one quality more than another quality. He writes even a "spiritually advanced person" will show signs of *tamas* through various behaviors. A "spiritually undeveloped" person might behave with *sattva* by doing something "inspired" such as entering a meditative state, without intending to or realizing it. "We should try to see all three factors in our nature," he advises, "and try to develop our *sattvic* side," aiming to help our *sattvic* side predominate (18). The *sattvic* side is, I add, always and already in development, yet never wholly grasped.

The relationship of *rajas* to *sattva* in Ahmed's text demonstrates this nonjudgmental perspective of the *gunas* when it comes to affective states and inward emotional qualities. To illustrate, Ahmed contends that the "promise of happiness" as unending desire for socially valued objects is undercut when those objects prove only to be thinly veiled representations of the locations from where happiness arises. Reread from a yogic perspective, Ahmed demonstrates the power of *rajas,* or of the desire seeking objects, only to discover those objects only bring

temporary joy.

What follows in Ahmed's text is a clarified and alternative vision of *sattva*. *Sattva* functions to diffuse *rajasic* desire in order to consider other forms of the path of happiness. A *sattvic* mode of happiness, as Ahmed's text is interpreted from a yogic perspective, is one that is not a fixed promise or the dependence on happiness based on a "happy object," to start. *The Promise of Happiness* reveals *sattva* as a suggestion to lessen the "following" of "happy objects" in order to get "further" with happiness (217). I derive *sattva* from Ahmed's alternative form of happiness as she argues for the diminishing fixed expectations from the "promise of happiness" and opening up, or cleansing (to use yogic jargon) the discursive space for what can be. Cultivating *sattva* means turning to inward intelligence, abating thinking which will "anticipate [happiness] will accumulate from certain points," such as marriage, children or financial security and material wealth, all acquisitions conventionally inscribed within an upper middle class heterosexual matrix (220).

By arguing for an affective space of possibility rather than a set path to happiness, Ahmed undermines rhetorics of triumph and overcoming "unhappiness" in order to achieve lasting states of happiness. I locate the perspective of the *gunas* within her text in which *sattva* emerges as an affective state of clarity, illumination and balance. Ahmed contends for a space of possibility, not a promise fulfilled. *Sattva,* too is not a notion of the end of a path of happiness or happiness fulfilled. *Sattva* is also passing. But the power of *sattva* is that it is a state of balance, an affective state opening up space for inner awareness. The state of *sattva* clarifies room for inward discursive space of potential, balance, and inward facing intelligence instead of a prescriptive "promise of happiness," dependent on eradicating the stuckness and depression of *tamas* and obtaining the tangible objects of *rajas.*

Conclusion: A Focus on Affect in the Field and the Gunas

Laura Micciche investigates the context of the affective state of disappointment in the roles of a writing program in her essay "More than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work" (2002) and argues there ought to be a more transparent venue through which the function of emotion in analytical work is explicitly deconstructed in order to "make visible the pleasures and rewards as well as the frustrations and disappointments" of being a WPA (435). Micciche contends all feelings are influential factors within the role of WPA and they are often ignored. Disappointment, frustration, discouragement, and emotional struggle are feelings to dive into and understand intellectually rather than to pretend they do not exist. The *gunas* arise in Micciche work as a nonjudgmental perspective of affect, one which she suggests the field takes on. The *gunas* afford a cumulatively nonjudgmental angle of affect which fully constitutes *prakriti*, matter or material nature.

Yoga teaches that *prakriti* (matter) is always lawful and always shifting. The shifts, storms, and calms of the *gunas* are unavoidable both within inner reality and external reality. Simultaneously the *gunas* fluctuate while steeped in unchanging awareness or *purusha*, or "big mind" as Erich Schiffman calls it. The concurrent sustained psychological awareness, which envelops the *gunas*, persists. At the same time as the *gunas* continue to act within and upon us, one endures emotional fluctuations inwardly while sustaining awareness of those fluctuations within consciousness. Or, as Krishna articulates it to Arjuna in *Bhagavad Gita* "he who is unattached, who is not disturbed by the *guna*, who is firmly rooted and knows that only the *gunas* are acting," as he describes two simultaneous modes of consciousness (192). Two modes of inward emotion and outward reality coexist, one which is inside visceral experience of *tamas*,

rajas and *sattva*. One sustains awareness, perceiving the shifts without being pulled into them.

The lens of the *gunas* undermines narratives, designating affects and emotions acceptable and others as pathological or needing to be fixed. Micciche argues part of the problem with assumptions underlying WPA work is "feeling" is associated with femininity and irrationality. The *gunas* do not apply this judgment to emotion. The *gunas* conceive of emotions, feelings and experiences equally. All emotions are aspects of being human in a changing world. Feelings are churning as they are amidst a unified reality, or *purusha*. Feeling happy or successful is not a feeling one must reach and maintain. Thus "disappointment" is not something merely to "get over" to get to the next thing. It is an emotion we can examine in order to learn about a confluence of factors influencing our field.

From a yogic perspective, we do not attempt to erase, eradicate or malign specific feelings with weakness and subordination and then override these emotions with rational thinking. Rather, mobilizing the *gunas* we might sustain, endure, observe, and critique affective changes personally and interpersonally, and thus link dual [*prakriti* and *purusha*] awarenesses of internally swirling discourses of emotion.

By taking this nonjudgmental perspective of emotions and changing affective states into our academic discipline, we bring all people who feel one way or another, on one day or another, onto an equal playing field. We do not pathologize those with depression or valorize those who have obtained happy objects, such as nice houses or perfect seeming marriages. This mode of analyzing emotions and affective states responds to Jackie Rinaldi's call to use rhetoric therapeutically and link the study and analysis of "rhetoric" with "healing." The *gunas* illuminate an alternate narrative of healing which isn't triumph or overcoming certain affective states. The *gunas* value passing states, no matter how uncomfortable, as vital to the path. We must use our

words not to brush over discomfort but to use discomfort as and in conversation.

Yogic agency is found when one works to inwardly to heal without relying on narratives of overcoming or erasing emotions. Some emotions might not feel good but are the core of everyday experience. *Yogic agency* surfaces when we do not pathologize or diagnose some as demonstrating the "wrong" emotions, such as stuckness, and others as "right" or "good," because they outwardly demonstrate "happiness" in some way. Developing inward intelligence (*sattva*) and conceiving as valuable inward affective changes gives individual the power to control the inner relationship to experience. Healing will only be pinned down when we accept the inability to obtain a lasting feeling that society identifies as good, acceptable or happy. Only by undercutting traditional stories of overcoming in terms of affect might we uncover the inward power of *yogic agency* already present within rhetorical analyses of affect, our discipline, and ourselves.

CONCLUSION

> Abandon all hope of fruition
>
> Lojong Slogan, from *Training the Mind*, Chogyam Trungpa, 1993

> When all is said and done, most of the stages of spiritual practice are stages of grief work. We have to let go of our deeply cherished dreams and illusions. And there's no way we're going to let them go until we have pretty much worn ourselves out trying to make them work.
>
> Stephen Cope, Yoga and the Quest for the True Self, (1999, 296).

In *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers* (2008), Linda Adler-Kassner argues we must reframe pervasive stories characterizing student writers and composition classrooms as incompetent and inadequate. As a refrain, Adler-Kassner returns to one such claim from the *Chicago Daily Herald* that "students can't write" and "they aren't prepared" (2). She argues these public claims do not attend to the nuance of individual classrooms and teachers as well as the institutional barriers influencing teaching and learning. She believes a necessary intervention is to construct new stories about writing classrooms and writers. For Adler-Kassner, outward-facing action and clear, accountable communication with administrators is key to changing the stories and the consequent public perceptions of writing programs. Changing the way we frame the story, she believes, is the way to make change.

Without saying so outright, Adler-Kassner's outward-facing proposal for WPA actions to "change stories" allude to the necessity of individuals to turn inward to the personal and the interior in the writing classroom. Although she does not focus on the psychologies flowing beneath proposed actions in the social realm, her argument demonstrates how personal experiences shape the collective story in ways that often remain imperceptible. Most significant, collective stories can result in legislation and policy, which affect tens of thousands of students

and teachers.

Adler-Kassner uses the verb "telescope" to describe the ways psychiatrist Robert Coles, author of *The Call to Stories,* yokes the "discussion of his own stories...from *personal significance* [with] broader, *social significance*" as he narrates his work with children attending Southern desegregated schools in the 1960s. From the perspective of a psychiatrist, Coles tells the story of his difficulty relating to Black children. At first he thinks it is about him. In his mind, it seemed Black children feel apprehensive to open up to a "white Yankee physician," as he calls himself. Soon he realizes this is not necessarily the reason that children were hesitant to open up to him. These children, Coles witnesses, are part of a "nation's historical crisis." Although he could help with their personal emotions as a result of racism, Coles finds the most relevance in discovering "what the nature of *my* attention ought to be." As he refocuses his lens during sessions, he thus links the children's psychological experience with the stress brought on by external racial tensions, by which the lives of these children are pervaded (Coles 25, Adler-Kassner 4).

Cole's realization is Adler-Kassner's presentation of weaving the inward and outward together into one impetus from which social change is enacted. It is a means to illustrate an entry point of personal efforts and perspective reaching for social change. This leads her to build her project upon "personally grounded stories [which are] seen as a collective body, [which give] witness to a larger one that had gone relatively unexplored" (4). This weaving of the inward and outward illustrates the full fabric necessary for activism and change. Working to define *yogic agency* in my project has this as it core objective: to weave together the inward and the outward to envision a starting point for social change. Only individual accountability for our own egos will allow for concrete outcomes in an outward world, dominated by egos. Extracting the *yogic*

agency within the rhetorical and pedagogical text is a task of writing my own literacy narrative. It is my inward facing story of a way I read during graduate school.

Although Professor Kleinman found it unwise to do so, I reconceive of scholarship in our field as a means of "self-help." I want to give my readers the feeling individual power, of *yogic agency*, these texts have given me. The texts are reinvented as inward in order to illustrate *yogic agency*, or the feeling of having control of one's worldview in order to embody a way of perceiving we already have everything we need within us to become rhetorical agents of our lives.

I have thus proposed a way to read which also, to borrow from Adler-Kassner, "telescopes" between the personal and the social by offering nothing new, tangible or "real" to hold onto beside the practice of mobilizing power I strike upon within myself over my ego. I suggest the writing classroom could be a venue through which individuals search for the same power within themselves. The following final anecdote shows one articulation of this inward practice. This inward practice of observing my ego's power to make me feel too small or too big is one I forget and remember daily. This forgetting and remembering is the one touchstone of yoga practice I count on. [I always forget it in the moment] The teachings of yoga are so easy to see right through in a world like ours. But they are always there, too, to be remembered.

As an undergraduate Theatre Arts major, I took a class called Senior Seminar with Boston stage actress Lydia Phillips. There were only three of us enrolled in the class. We mostly talked informally. Two of us were acting majors while the third was an aspiring stage manager. Only the third is still working in Theatre. Lydia shared personal stories with us, but one stands out. I retell the story to my University of the Arts majors because many of them are acting majors, too. I share in part because I assume they can relate, and in part because I am still trying to hold what

Lydia intended to teach us in my everyday vision. I still try to remember her story when the whole of my perspective melts into momentary struggles and habits and limitations of certain thoughts - the suffering to which I return because I am human. Sometimes the story helps, and sometimes it doesn't.

Lydia's gifts as an actress and vocal artist, focusing primarily on works by Shakespeare, led her to a leading role at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. As she described it, Lydia reached a peak in her career by landing this job. Acting at "Milwaukee Rep" was an achievement she hadn't imagined she could realize. By contrast, though, Lydia was more moved by an inward revelation, which arose as she sat in the house one night before a performance. She told us that she recognized she had her 'dream job.' But she felt she had not, nor would she ever really, "arrive." I interpreted this as the attainment of a goal, of what once seemed impossible, was not the end of her story. Lydia still struggled and wanted more.

This might seem obvious to some. Not to me. We did not talk at length, the group of us, about this realization. Maybe we did not ruminate over it because none of us could fathom the weight (or, the lightness?) of such an understanding at such a nascent point in our careers. Or maybe Lydia seemed to tell this story in passing, not as a lesson to which we "arrived," either. I think back on it now as a concept to come back to inwardly, in all my work, in all my relationships, as a fluid truth I can live in the moment-to-moment, and a truth that helps me when I am looking for fixity or resolution in my life, relationships, or career. I think back on it when I am struggling because it is actually the only thing that feels true. And when I remember I will never really "arrive" where I think I should be, within the feeling of this "not arriving," an inward feeling of the power of space, awareness, openness, an inward power of *yogic agency*, once again returns to me. I say once again because I am human and interminably forget the

feeling of "I will never arrive," and the power available in remembering the feeling.

The truthfulness of the feeling Lydia describes of never "arriving" is the awareness of fluidity of experience and all in encompasses, what reverberates inwardly and outwardly with what I call a *tenderness toward groundlessness. Yogic agency* is defined by a gentleness towards a space in which we might otherwise be uncomfortable. Lydia's revelation in the theatre demonstrates and reiterates *yogic agency*, or the power-giving overlap of yoga and rhetorical agency as an intentional choice to exert tenderness toward groundlessness of life. *Yogic agency* is the vulnerability and surrender within the notion we might never feel triumph and resolve in the way we imagine it.

Yogic agency as it manifests as an inward choice to experience tenderness toward groundlessness is found in "yogic listening" when we identify or find commonality, or we choose to exert vulnerability toward difference when relating with others. To listen in the way Ratcliffe, Glenn and Schiffman suggest is to bring tenderness toward groundlessness and to open to the truth that relationships and communication are always in flux. Sometimes we will relate to one another, and sometimes we will struggle to.

Yogic agency is necessary to act without only thinking of the outcomes and products of our work. We keep our actions going through inward struggles resulting from failure, through discouragement and disappointment, through institutions and administrators saying no to us and making us feel small, as we just slog through without ever feeling done. *Yogic agency* is pushing through our actions anyway, knowing full well the outcomes are unknown, even when we know a productive outcome would benefit the lives of many people.

Yogic agency is the tenderness toward groundlessness inherent to nonviolent language we use inward speech to shape who we think we are. It is the open space created when we "yield"

inwardly during moments of arising tension when interacting with others. It is the resistance to fix other people and ourselves in words and the consequent open space created.

And tenderness toward groundlessness of *yogic agency* is inwardly withstanding emotions that feel arduous. It is opening up space to to heal by feeling life fully flow through us. It is letting feelings change and grow, not construing them into a story by clinging to some feelings and pushing away others. It is knowing the struggle is healing and the healing is the struggle.

The tenderness toward groundlessness of *yogic agency* is found in accepting that we will never "arrive" anywhere solid in both our inner and outer experiences. It is a softness toward the open-endedness of the stories we tell ourselves about others, action, and ourselves. It is withstanding the boring and silent car ride, the confusing lecture, the seemingly pointless group project, the frustrations with rules and policies of the institution. It is finding meaning and understanding in concepts and work and between people nonetheless. It is resisting and contesting, arguing and refining to get to a point all the while knowing sometimes it will work out and sometimes it won't.

The notion of "not arriving," of tenderness toward groundlessness, helps to sustain a fluid connection, yet never fully consummated link, between the inner and outer life in our discipline of composition and rhetoric This mode of feeling requires vulnerability and letting go as we face what was inwardly imagined, hoped for and feared, as it turns out another way still. Deliberately mobilizing *yogic agency* located within tenderness toward groundlessness is the only way that the realization we will never "arrive," will work for us. It is a way of affirming to ourselves that again that as *yogic agents* we already have everything we need inside to become rhetorical agents of our own lives.

Lydia's decision to teach us about her revelation that her career would never "arrive" anywhere fully satisfying and stationary and fulfilling demonstrates *yogic agency*, or a strength and skillfulness in making fluid her feelings within to the outer experience with us. It is a daily inward struggle to mobilize *yogic agency* in the classroom and take our personal strength outward. Taking our personal strength outward is beginning the way, as Adler Kassner says, and writing "personally grounded stories" by working with our own ego first, then with our students in the writing classroom and ultimately changing the story of the discipline of composition and rhetoric, and the influence it has on the lives of each of its teachers and students (4).

WORKS CITED

Adele, Deborah. *The Yamas & Niyamas*. On-Word Bound Books, 2009.

Adler-Kassner Linda. The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers. Utah State U Press, 2008.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness.* Duke University Press, 2010.

Aristotle. "Rhetoric." *The Rhetorical Tradition*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 169-241.

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing,* vol. 5, no. 1, 1986.

Bateson, Mary Catherine. *Composing a Life Story.* Grove Press, 1989.

Broad, William. "How Yoga Can Wreck Your Body." *The New York Times Magazine.* 5 January 2012.

Burke, Kenneth. "A Rhetoric of Motives." *The Rhetorical Tradition,* edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 1324-1340.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Routledge, 1997.

Campbell, JoAnn. "Writing to Heal: Using Meditation in the Writing Process." *College Composition and Communication,* vol 45, no 2, 1994, pp. 246-251.

Cohen, Judith Beth. "The Missing Body - Yoga and Higher Education." *The Journal of the Assembly For Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2006.

Cooper, Marilyn. "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted." *College Composition and Communication.* vol 62, no. 3, 420-449.

Cope, Stephen. Yoga and the Quest for the True Self. Bantam Books, 1999.

Crosswhite, James and Barbara Schoen. "Two Comments on James Moffett's Writing, Inner Speech and Meditation." *College English.* vol 45. no 4.,1983, pp. 400-404.

Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University.* UPittsburgh Press, 1998.

Cushman, Ellen. *The Struggle and the Tools.* SUNY Albany Press, 1998. Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling.* Duke University Press, 2012.

DeLuca, Geraldine. "Headstands, Writing, and the Rhetoric of Radical Self-Acceptance." *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning,* vol. 11, 2005, pp. 27-41.

Dilks, Stephen and Regina Hansen, Matthew Parfitt, editors. *Cultural Conversations: The Presence of the Past,* Bedford/St. Martins, 2001.

Eliade, Mircea. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom.* Princeton UPress, 1958.

Feuerstein, George. The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation and Commentary. Inner Traditions International, 1979.

Fishman, Stephen M. and Lucille McCarthy. *John Dewey and the Challenge of Classroom Practice*. Teachers College Press, 1998.

Fleckenstein, Kristie. "Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies." *College English,* vol. 61, no. 3, 1999, pp. 281-306.

Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement.* SIU Press, 2008.

Foehr, P. Regina and Susan A. Schiller, editors. *The Spiritual Side of Writing.* Heinemann, 1997.

Frawley, David. *Inner Tantric Yoga,* Lotus Press, 2008.

---. Ayurveda and the Mind: The Healing of Consciousness. Lotus Press, 1996.

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 1970, Continuum Publishing, 2009.

Gandhi, Mahatma. *The Essential Gandhi.* edited by Louis Fischer, 1962, Vintage Books, 2002.

Gannon, Sharon and David Life. Jivamukti Yoga: Practices for Liberating Body and Soul. Ballantine Books, 2002.

Garver, Newton. "What Violence Is." *The Nation,* 24 June 1968, 817-822.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence.* SIU Press, 2004.

Goldblatt, Eli. Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum. Hampton Press, 2007.

Graff Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing.* 2006. W.W. Norton, 2014.

Heinz, Erica. "Yoga Cliches: Part Deux: 'Go Deeper." *The Huffington Post.* 17 January 2011.

Hinshaw, Wendy Wolters."Making Ourselves Vulnerable: A Feminist Pedagogy of Listening." *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts,* edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Cheryl Glenn, SIU Press, 2011, pp. 264-277.

Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light On Yoga.* 1966. Schocken Books, 1976.

Jarratt, Susan. "Introduction." *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words,* edited by Susan Jarratt and Lynn Worsham, MLA, 1998, pp. 1-26.

Kalamaras, George. "The Center and Circumference of Silence: Yoga, Poststructuralism and the Rhetoric of Paradox." *International Journal of Hindu Studies,* vol. 1, no. 1, 1997, pp. 3-18.

Kirsch, Gesa. "From Introspection to Action: Connecting Spirituality and Civic Engagement." *CCC,* vol. 60, no. 4, 2009, pp. W1-W15.

Kirsch, Gesa and Joy Ritchie. "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research." *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 46, no. 1, 1995, pp. 7-29.

Kornfield, Jack. After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path. Bantam, 2000.

Lad, Vasant. *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies.* Three Rivers Press, 1998.

Lloyd, Keith, "Rethinking Rhetoric from an Indian Perspective: Implications in the "Nyaya Sutra." *Rhetoric Review,* vol. 26, no. 4, 2007, pp. 365-284.

Macker, Teddy. "A Poem for My Daughter." *This World,* White Cloud Press, 2015, pp. 72-78.

Malaktaris, Anne et. al. “Chilling Out: Meditation, Relaxation and Yoga.” *Health, Happiness and Wellbeing: Better Living Through Psychological Science,* edited by Steven Jay Lynn et al., Sage Publishing, 2015, pp. 142-168.

Manorama, “The Warrior Within Through the Bhagavad Gita.” *Luminous Shabda, Inc.,* 2010, Ananda Ashram, Monroe, NY. Wisdom Talk.

Mathieu, Paula. Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition. Boynton/Cook, 2005.

---. “Excavating Indoor Voices: Inner Rhetoric and the Mindful Writing Teacher.” vol. 34, no. 1-2, 2014.

---. “Being There: Mindfulness as Ethical Classroom Practice.” *The Journal of the Assembly For Expanded Perspectives on Learning,*vol. 21, no. 1 http://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol21/iss1/5/

Micciche, Laura. “The Trouble With Affect.” *Journal of Advanced Composition Studies,* vol. 26, no. 1, 2006, pp. 264-276.

---. “More Than A Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work.” *College English,* vol. 64, no.4 2002, pp. 432-458.

Miller, Susan. “The Feminization of Composition.” *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary,* edited by Richard Bullock and John Trimbur, Boynton/Cook, 1991, pp. 39-53.

Mintz, Judith. *Yoga Cultures.* wordpress, https://yogacultures.wordpress.com/aboutjudithmintz/. Accessed 23 February 2017.

Mitchell, Stephen. *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation.* Three Rivers Press, 2000.

Moffett, James. “Writing, Inner Speech and Meditation.” *College English,* vol. 44, no. 3, 1982, pp. 231-246.

Nelson, Katherine et. al. “What Psychological Science Knows About Achieving Happiness.” *Health, Happiness and Wellbeing: Better Living Through Psychological Science,* edited by Steven Jay Lynn et al., Sage Publishing, 2015, pp. 250-271.

O’Reilly Mary Rose, *A Peaceable Classroom.* Boynton/Cook, 1993.

Phillips, Stephen. A Brief History and Philosophy: Yoga, Karma and Rebirth. Columbia UPress, 2009.

Ram, Dass. *Be Here Now.* Lama Foundation, 1971.

Ratcliffe, Krista. Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness. SIU Press, 2005.

---. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and Cross Cultural Conduct." CCC, vol. 51, no. 2, 1999.

Ravindra, Ravi. The Spiritual Roots of Yoga: Royal Path to Freedom. Morning Light Press, 2006.

Rennie, Bryan. "Mircea Eliade: Eponym of the Hunmanities?" Review of *Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent*, by Mircea Eliade, *LA Review of Books*, 13 October 2016, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/mircea-eliade-eponym-of-the-humanities/

Rinaldi, Jacqueline. "Rhetoric and Healing: Revising Narratives about Disability." *College English*, vol. 58, no. 7, 1996, pp. 820-34.

Santas, Dana. "Beyond Namaste: The Benefits of Yoga in Schools." *CNN.Com,* Accessed 12 February 2017.

Saran, Prem. *Yoga, Bhoga and Ardhanariswara.* Routledge, 2008.

Schiffmann, Erich. *Yoga the Spirit and Practice of Moving Into Stillness.* Pocket Books, 1996.

Seligman, Martin. *Authentic Happiness.* Atria Paperbacks, 2002.

Stuckey, Elspbeth. *The Violence of Literacy.* Boynton/Cook, 1991.

Vats, Anjali. "(Dis)Owning Bikram: Decolonizing Vernacular and Dewesternizing Restructuring in the Yoga Wars." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 13:4, 2016, 325-345.

Wenger, Christy. Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy. Parlor Press, 2015.

Wilson, James C and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson. "Disability, Rhetoric and the Body." *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*, edited by James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, SIU Press, 2001, pp. 1-27.

Worsham, Lynn. “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion.” *Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol.18, no.2, 1998, pp. 213-245.

Yagelski, Robert. Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability. Hampton Press, 2011.

Zimmer, Heinrich. *Philosophies of India.* 1951. Edited by Joseph Campbell, 3rd. Ed, Princeton UPress, 1967.