# COMPOSING(MEDIA) = COMPOSING(EMBODIMENT)

*bodies, technologies, writing, the teaching of writing*

*Edited by*

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Into Between—On Composition in Mediation*

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> *These are physical things, he had come to understand, memories. All that we feel, pain and hatred and love and happiness, they aren't some existential experiment of the mind, but they played themselves out in the body mainly, and the thoughts came after, a justification of what the body already knew.*
>
> —Patrick Thomas Casey, *Our Burden's Light*

> *. . . There can be no history of the body that is not at the same time a study of the various media that constitute embodiment as such.*
>
> —Bernadette Wegenstein, *Getting Under the Skin*

The following writing, put down a few days after my father died, reminds me of hearing his last breath. He was in the family room, where we'd put his hospital bed; from his bed he could see out into the green and azalea backyard where, in earlier years, he'd moved and worked so often. This writing also tells me about ways I have learned to feel:

> Life leaving a body still looks like a leaving, like breath or movement or animation removing itself. The body does seem discarded, an emptied out shell or container or glove. No wonder we once said, "I have a body" instead of "I am a body."
>
> Seeing a body go from alive to not, how can we then believe that bodies are other than things that hold us—some real us? How can we not believe that bodies are what keep us from being what we are meant to be?
>
> Seeing a quiet death of another goes a long way toward explaining Plato's belief that our life's task is to master the body so that we can attend to the internal. We are to make our bodies tractable rather than demanding; we are to focus on what within that body but separable from it seems most truly human.

In the days following my father's death, I would write at the dining room table, surrounded by varying numbers of family. I was trying to keep up with an online class and other work, and I was also writing to reflect and to plan, given my new familial responsibilities. In memory those evenings are silent and still, at least from my perspective, focused as I was on my writing while some jumble of my mother, my siblings, and my nieces and nephews chatted or made dinner.

In the days following my father's death, I also made many phone calls. Months later, I can recite from memory the list of questions that the United States Social Security Administration asks, questions that can require almost twenty minutes of phone keypad letter typing and that can still end in frustration when the machine at the other end cannot translate 7-2-4-9-3-3-2 into my father's mother's maiden name. I can also still feel—my body remembers—my back slump when I had to redial and go through the process again. I still feel the delight of getting things set up right, finally, for my mother.

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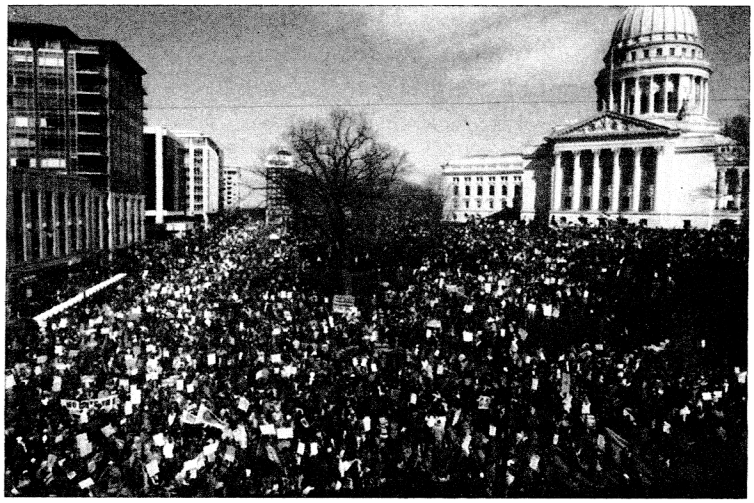
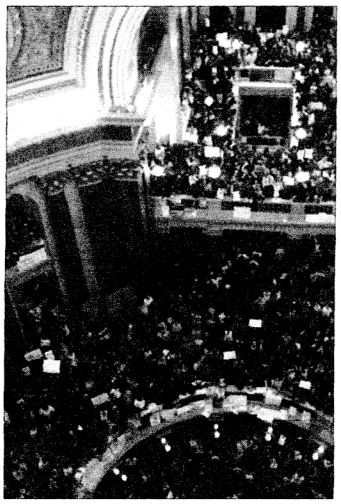
The protests in Madison, Wisconsin during February and March 2011 were primarily intended to insert views like those below into current political discussions. People were there to be to be seen together—and by being so unitedly visible, they were there to have effects on a legislature that otherwise seemed to feel no need to pay attention because (evidence suggested) those with much more money and so access were shaping the law.





■■■

Two related sets of assumptions about bodies and media ground this collection's essays. The first has to do with the first paragraphs above, about the feelings of embodiment; the second explores tensions between those feelings and the knowledge that we are also experienced from outside, observed and shaped as part of a culture and its institutions.

I develop these two sets of assumptions in this introduction to explain how this collection came together and the ordering of chapters in its two parts and also to explain why we think considering composition through media and embodiment matters now in writing classes.

## ASSUMPTION SET 1: MEDIA = EMBODIMENT

As philosopher Merleau-Ponty argued, your body is your primary medium—taking *medium* here in its grounding sense of that which is between, in the middle. Without our bodies—our sensing abilities—we do not have a world; we have the world we do because we have our particular senses and experiences. But this is not to say that we come to be with finished bodies and then start sensing, or that some unmediated way of being exists prior to or grounding our sensuous experiences; N. Katherine Hayles, for example, is careful to distinguish between such a static notion of a body and the processes of embodiment: "In contrast to the body," she writes, "embodiment is contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture, which together compose enactment" (*How We Became Posthuman* 196). For example, the doctors described in a recent *New York Times* article, "As Physicians' Jobs Change, So Do Their Politics," do not seem to have changed their politics only or primarily because of rational deliberation with others; instead, it is the felt, often nondiscursive particularities of their embodied experiences of mothering or shift work that affect the doctors' temporalized opinions and actions: "Because so many doctors are no longer in business for themselves," the article argues, "many of the issues that were once priorities for doctors' groups, like insurance reimbursement, have been displaced by public health and safety concerns, including mandatory seat belt use and chemicals in baby products" (Harris).

"Embodiment," in this understanding, calls us to attend to what we just simply do, day to day, moving about, communicating with others, using objects that we simply use in order to make things happen . . . until those objects break or don't do what we want and so tease us into a different attitude: we try to take the objects apart—to analyze—their parts and processes so that we might fix them. Heidegger's distinction between the "ready-to-hand" and the "present-at-hand" not only names the difference in attitude we have about a hammer that works and one whose head has separated

from its handle; Heidegger's distinction urges us toward acknowledging this difference and understanding that our ways of being are most often simply engaged with getting things done: we act through the various understandings we acquire through moving and interacting and engaging, using—being—the bodies we are.

> The media revolution so transformed the notion of medium and reality that our body—formerly declassed as merely a medium of, or means to, the real (hence subordinate, reflective, distortive)—now gets elevated, as our central medium, to the status of constructor and locus of the real . . . . Once reality is seen as a construction, the media that construct it can no longer be disdained. (Shusterman 144)

Heidegger did not name technologies and media (now to use the more general sense of *media* as books, magazines, films, television shows, radio programs, web pages) as extensions of our bodies—that was McLuhan. For McLuhan, technologies and media enable us to extend what we can do with our given sensory apparatus. Our relations with our technologies and media are not one way, however. Not only does a hammer or a piece of writing, for example, enable us to extend our reach but it also modifies our sense of engagement: it shifts how we feel what is around us or how we sense those with whom we communicate; our senses reflex and shift in response to these mediated engagements, and in further response we then modify our media toward our shifting ends. Given the contemporary range of media objects with which we engage, W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen argue, in their introduction to their collection of *Critical Terms for Media Studies,* that—when we speak now of media—"what is at stake is more than the form of a specific content," more than any medium serving simply as a carrier for content; instead, we are discussing "something that opens onto the notion of a form of life, of a general environment for living": "Media Studies can and should designate the study of our fundamental relationality, of the irreducible role of mediation in the history of human being" (xii).

And so, again, our bodies—our primary media, to draw on the first sentence and observation of this section—are not fixed; they are mutable. We come to be always already embedded—embodied—in mediation. Our relations with our media matter, in other words, and (this is one lesson we take from the philosophers and thinkers just mentioned) we therefore need to consider our engagements with our media if we and the people in our classes are to learn about our embodiment and so what we consider ourselves to be and to be able to do in our worlds.

Those of us who teach writing need, then, to consider media that use the alphabet and to ask how such media engage with our senses and contribute to our embodiment. We need to do this both theoretically and in praxis. This introduction climbs into the theory as a way toward praxis; the other chapters often mix both, while the pedagogical activities we offer in this

book provide students openings for exploring how the media with which they work encourage certain embodiments.

To take on the media with which we writing teachers seem most clearly related, we can start with Ong's arguments from *Orality and Literacy* about books, and with the simple descriptive recipe he gave: a book is made of

> lines perfectly regular, . . . all justified,
> everything coming out even visually. (121)

The repetitiveness of the visual patterning of books, made possible by printing technologies, led Ong to argue that books give us a "hypervisualized noetic world" (127). Like McLuhan, Ong attributed much to the spatial relations that printed pages convey to our eyes and so to our behaviors: for example, the intense regularity and evenness of a page of print shows us and so creates for us "an insistent world of cold, non-human facts" (122). Ong argued that another "consequence of the [book's] exactly repeatable visual statement was modern science" (127), that print "fostered the desire to legislate for 'correctness' in language" (130), and that print "was also a major factor in the development of the sense of personal privacy that marks modern society" (130). You are probably familiar with such claims about how books, as they extend us toward each other but then work back on us, can be understood to shape how we are embodied in our worlds.

But a limitation colors these particular forays that consider how print media work on us, for with them it is as though bookish effects are limited to the attitudinal and not the sensuous. Under the descriptions of both McLuhan and Ong, sight is a passive sense: it is as though, for them, we open our eyes and stuff just pours in; it pours in and works on us directly, causing all that other stuff. Under this telling, sight itself is unchanging and unaffected by mediation, and so there is only one way for it to function; it is assumed here that everyone sees in the same ways and so will be affected in the same ways by what they see, everywhere and at all times, ahistorically, aculturally, apolitically.

In response, here (for example) is the political philosopher Iris Marion Young, characterizing and calling into question a certain "logic . . . in Western philosophical and theoretical discourse" (98), in which

> rational thought is defined as infallible vision; only what is seen clearly is real, and to see it clearly makes it real. One sees not with the fallible senses, but with the mind's eye, a vision standing outside all, surveying like a proud and watchful lord. This subject seeks to know a Truth as pure signifier that completely and accurately mirrors reality. The knowing subject is a gazer, an observer who stands alone, outside of the object of knowledge. (125)

And—discussing the development of modern science—here is Donna Haraway, similarly questioning that notion of seeing that allows us to think we can be (if we are male) "modest witnesses":

> Enhancing their agency through their masculine virtue exercised in carefully regulated "public spaces," modest men were to be self-invisible, transparent, so that their reports would not be polluted by the body. Only in that way could they give credibility to their descriptions of other bodies and minimize critical attention to their own. This is a crucial epistemological move in the grounding of several centuries of race, sex, and class discourses as objective scientific reports. (*Modest Witness* 32)

What both feminist philosophers point to (as many other theorists have, feminist and otherwise) is how vision—as it is conceived by McLuhan and Ong, as it has tended to be conceived in the West—is more complex and changeable than conceived and, as conceived and applied, has consequences we should not wish blindly to accept.

In place of the singular vision presumed by McLuhan and Ong, Haraway writes that she "would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere" (188). In somewhat parallel fashion, Martin Jay has argued that "the privileging of any one visual order or scopic regime" ought to be replaced by "ocular eccentricity": Jay encourages "the multiplication of a thousand eyes, which, like Nietzsche's thousand suns, suggests the openness of human possibilities" (591). Jay has argued, for example, that people living in the Baroque period had different ways of seeing from people living during the Italian Renaissance, who saw differently from those who lived at the same time in northern Europe; each of these ways of seeing articulated, Jay argues, to epistemological and so ontological habits of the time.

Others extend these arguments still further, to try to get us not only to the possible multiplicities of sight but also to the multiplicities of our other senses. Anthropologists Constance Classen and David Howes, for example, have individually and in edited collections described the sensuous hierarchies of other cultures in other times and other places—with, instead of sight, some cultures privileging hearing, smell, or a sense of heat as the primary epistemological sense—and they have told of the mortal consequences that can result when cultures with different sensuous epistemologies and cosmologies come up against each other. (Think here of theories of the Great Divide played out not only attitudinally but with guns.) Other writings about the sensuous also show how the work of McLuhan and Ong has, over time and (importantly) woven together with the calls that arose with

identity politics in the 1960s to attend to differences in bodies, opened our eyes not only to a needed critique of sight but also has turned our attentions to other senses, their actions, and their locations: look, for example, at the long bibliography on these matters at the end of Howes's edited collection *Empire of the Senses* or at Madnar and Vodvarka's book *Sensory Design*, Marks's book *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, or Caroline Jones's edited collection (with pieces by Latour, Haraway, Turkle, Stafford, and Classen, among others) *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art.*

In *Bodies in Code*, Mark Hansen argues that to "expand the scope of [our] bodily agency . . . transforms the agency of collective existence" (20). Hansen argues that—when we use digital technologies *not* for their "representational or simulational capacities" (25)—digital technologies can shift our sense of bodies-as-primarily-eyes to sensing how embodiment is also through skin and other senses; such expansion can happen, that is, when we use digital technologies not for their visual capacities but for their "enactive potentialities" (25). When we shift, he argues, from observational to operational engagement within our worlds, digital technologies can "facilitate new kinds of world-construction and intersubjective communication" (31). Hansen's examples of digital works that do this sensory expansion are primarily installations; the other books listed above similarly point to artworks and to science-art collaborations as the places where we can re-engage and experiment with sensory connections other than the relentlessly visually reductive.

> Written literature has, historically speaking, played a dominant role for only a few centuries. Even today, the predominance of the book has an episodic air. An incomparably longer time preceded it in which literature was oral. Now it is being succeeded by the age of the electronic media, which tend once more to make people speak. At its period of fullest development, the book to some extent usurped the place of the more primitive but generally more accessible methods of production of the past; on the other hand, it was a stand-in for future methods which make it possible for everyone to become a producer. (Enzensberger 272)

Compositions that move us out of printed books as the primary means of communicating with each other, that is, are the compositions that these various scholars argue we need if we are to move away from a way of being in the world that focuses (literally) our attentions in limited, reductive, dangerous-to-Others ways. These scholars are not arguing for us to do away with books, of course, for they make their arguments in books—but they do ask what other sorts of arguments are possible when we broaden our senses of the texts we can make for each other through the possibilities of the digital. What might be possible if we encouraged a democracy of the senses in our teaching instead of a hegemony of sight?

But that is getting somewhat ahead of the work of this edited collection you hold in your hands. What you hold in your hands, still and after all, is a book and so participates in and is limited to certain mediations—as our first chapter, "Drawn Together: Possibilities for Bodies in Words and Pictures," explores explicitly in its considerations of the embodying differences between words and pictures on book pages and how only a mix of words and pictures enables, now, a particular sexual orientation.

◆ In this book,
*our work (to summarize the assumptions I have laid out*
*in the previous pages) is*
*to offer further arguments, tied to analyses of differing*
*kinds of media,*
*that what any body is and is able to do*
*—and how any one body differs from other bodies in its*
*affective and physiological capabilities—*
*cannot be disentangled from the media we use*
*or from the times and cultures in and technologies with*
*which we consume and produce texts,*
*especially texts (given that we are mostly writing teachers)*
*composed with some ratio of words.*

This collection can thus be considered groundwork toward wider sensuous engagements in writing classrooms. For that reason, we take seriously a need to engage with a wide range of media that use alphabetic text (with their entangled technologies and their histories) in order to explore how they participate in mediating our embodiments. In addition to the comics explored in "Looking like a Body of Words," then, the chapters of this book discuss *Wikipedia*, maps, computer interfaces, powwow regalia, queerness and multimodality, research methodologies, transgendered bodies and writing, blogging, art posters, "normal" writing, videogames, and videos.

And how can the domination of both old (television) and new (computer interface) media by old white pricks be resisted? (Nakamura 103)

In addressing such a range of media, we do not in this book argue that digital technologies profoundly change our possible embodiments; we leave those arguments to others (such as has been implied by my quotation from Hansen or upcoming references to Stiegler or Wegenstein) precisely because we do work with writing, that old medium: we wish to understand writing's particular and varying embodying possibilities, as in the chapter on comics or in the chapter that follows it, Paul Walker's "Pausing to Reflect: Mass Observation, Blogs, and Composing Everyday Life." "Pausing to Reflect" compares the mass observation movement of

the 1930s with current blogging practices, advocating for us to reflect on "how any technology may have the capability to increase everyday life's influence on collective knowledge" (44) and so on the mediating possibilities of attending to embodiment as we live it. The anthropologists who organized the mass observation movement asked "ordinary, hardworking folk" (46) to write on specific days over a number of years; Walker argues that these writers, "by their reflection and our knowledge of their words, achieved a degree of authorship and validity by consciously, even enthusiastically, projecting their everyday life—and its infrastructure—during their 'ordinary' lifetimes." Their writing offers insight into why bloggers write now and challenges us, in our uses of digital media, "to compose ourselves meaningfully, balancing how we embody everyday practices, power, literacy, want of attention, culture, and identity" (59) through understanding how we have and can use written words in shaping our lives with other individuals.

As Walker's chapter compares diaries to blogs, Matthew S. S. Johnson's chapter compares the processes of embodiment assumed in composition textbooks to those assumed in computer game manuals and games. As players choose the qualities through which they will understand themselves while playing, they come to understand the possibilities of experiencing complex, ready-made worlds from different perspectives. Johnson argues that

> perhaps recognizing where playing a game and practicing academic discourse (a binary in many of our students' minds if there ever was one) intersect—in consciously formulating and exploring identities and/or various manifestations of the "self"—we can re-evaluate a stagnant set of ideals for which both audiences (teachers and students) have traditionally privileged the one over the other. (70)

Johnson thus suggests strategies we might use to help students consider differing embodiments across differing media, with the hope that this will encourage more exploration in writing activities.

As Walker's and Johnson's chapters show, writing opens possibilities into understanding relations between writing and newer-media technologies—but it also potentially shuts down potentials of new media. David Parry, in his chapter on *Wikipedia*—"How Billie Jean King Became the Center of the Universe"—argues that, for now, "*Wikipedia* is valued precisely because it fulfills librocentric criteria" (76): it addresses older concerns—and in so doing forecloses the new. Similarly, Jason Farman's chapter—"Information Cartography: Visualizations of internet Spatiality and Information Flows"—demonstrates how current mappings of the internet can offer "no entry point for embodied interaction that resembles the user's process of navigation"(85) because such mappings do not attend to the embodied

understandings viewers bring from their experiences with earlier media. Both of these chapters challenge us to consider our attitudes toward mediation as we work with new (and old) media in our teaching and research.

In "Multimodal Methods for Multimodal Literacies: Establishing A Technofeminist Research Identity," Jen Almjeld and Kristine Blair describe what happens when—in the processes of Almjeld's dissertation's being written—feminist theories, very much concerned with embodiment, overlap with a committee's disembodying approaches to new media and theorizing. In its reports on the potentials for mediation within the dissertation process, the chapter raises questions about the limits of control over mediation not only for feminist scholars and for scholars researching online technologies but also for those of us who direct dissertations.

Finally, for fleshing out and pursuing our first set of assumptions about embodiment that shape our book, there is Jay Dolmage's chapter "Writing against Normal." Dolmage asks, reflectively and through examples from students who used a wiki for revision, whether "a composition pedagogy that ignores the body might actually limit our ability to make meaning" (125). The class activities Dolmage describes have students up and moving in space but also engage them in much messy and emotional response and thought, leading Dolmage to argue that

> to "compose" the body is to examine the shadows and scissions that differentially constitute embodiment. Likewise, if we want to truly understand embodied writing, perhaps what we need to most closely study are not ideal, complete texts, but the messy and recursive process of composing, as we break our ideas apart through language. (125)

Dolmage writes his chapter "not to proscribe a process, but to find ways to emphasize the situatedness and partiality of communication, to draw attention to relationships and choices and the feeling for moving across ideas, genres, and mediums" (124); he writes therefore to emphasize the necessary embodiedness of teaching if it is to encourage students toward curiosity about their own embodiments through the mediations of learning and writing.

Through describing such teaching, Dolmage's chapter turns our attentions to the next set of assumptions that shape the second part of this collection. This next set of assumptions pushes us to ask not only how media and mediation embody us but also how—and why—we ourselves should mediate bodies, including and especially our own.

### ASSUMPTION SET 2: MEDIATING BODIES ^ MEDIATED BODIES

The second set of assumptions that underlie the work of this book's chapters is characterized by the differences between the two stories with which

I opened this chapter. This set of assumptions engages with a tension between the two stories, a tension between the felt experiences of an interior—being a body that composes, writes, and communicates—and a bodily exterior, of being one person among many, subject to study and impress from above or outside, mattering only because of one's part in composing the many. This tension plays itself out in our composition classes as we decide whether to teach

> ONE: that writing is about expressing one's particular experiences.
>
> or
>
> TWO: that writing is always and inescapably part of larger social, cultural, and political structures, institutions, and systems and that individuals and (perceptions of) agency are always and only effects of those structures, institutions, and systems.

You are probably stuttering at me now over the broadness of those two perspectives. I imagine that you are articulating, in response, your teaching position that fine-tunes and particularizes across what I have just offered. But I doubt that your position disengages from the tension between *the felt experience of being an individual body that can act* and *the achieved-through-research-and-observation-and-experience outlook that we operate (and are operated) only within larger systems that determine what we can be and what we can do.* And we cannot deny that this tension has structured and continues to structure the field of rhetoric and composition.

In 1994, this tension was the subject of John Trimbur's review essay, "Taking the Social Turn: Teaching Writing Post-Process." Discussing books by Bizzell, Knoblauch and Brannon, and Spellmayer, Trimbur writes that

> one might say that these books result from a crisis within the process paradigm and a growing disillusion with its limits and pressures. When process pedagogy emerged on the scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s, process teachers and theorists sought to free themselves from the formalism of current-traditional rhetoric and return the text to the student composer. But the distinction between product and process, which initially seemed so clarifying, not only proved conceptually inadequate to what writers do when they are writing, it also made writing instruction appear to be easier than it is. As Bizzell notes, by polarizing "individual creative talents" and "the oppressive institution" of schooling (182), the process movement led teachers to believe that they could simply step outside the institutions and discourses of schooling in order to release an authentic language from their students. (109–110)

There is, of course, also the debate between Bartholomae and Elbow on precisely these matters, published in 1995; there is also—ten years later in 2005—Richard Fulkerson's essay "Composition at the Turn of the

Twenty-First Century," which argues that two "theories of value" shape pedagogy in Rhetoric and Composition: "an expressive one" and "the newest one, 'the social' or 'social-construction' view, which values critical cultural analysis" (655). In classes shaped by the first set of values, writing "is a means of fostering personal development, in the great Socratean tradition of 'knowing thyself'" (667); in classes shaped by the second set of values, "students read about systemic cultural injustices inflicted by dominant societal groups and dominant discourses on those with less power" (659).

This tension, structuring our field between expressivist and social-constructionist/cultural studies approaches, is equivalent to a tension that has structured philosophy and psychoanalytic theory in the last century. Let me explain this other tension, and then explore it through a historical tracing of media studies, to suggest what might as a result be useful for rhetoric and composition.

His body throws two shadows:
One onto the table
and the piece of paper before him,
and one onto his mind.

(from "In His Own Shadow,"
Li-Young Lee)

To describe this other, equivalent tension, I can turn to philosopher Richard Shusterman, for example, who argues that the wide range of approaches to our bodies that he studies can be classified as *experiential* or *representational*: the first focuses "not on how the body looks from the outside but on the aesthetic quality of its experience" while the second "emphasizes the body's external appearance"(142). Or I can turn to media and film theorist and documentary filmmaker Bernadette Wegenstein, who in her book-length study of our contemporary understanding of bodies writes that both psychoanalysis and phenomenological approaches have worked with an understanding that there is a separation of

> the subject of the body (the body as it is perceived through one's own body) from the objectified body (the body as it is perceived by the world)—a distinction between the subject of perception and the socially constructed body, between the psychoanalytic *I* and the *Me.* (29)

Wegenstein shows how Lacan, for example, argued that we come to "perceive our bodily selves . . . through a deceptive image that is framed by somebody else's gaze (in the beginning, the mother's or her substitutes), or by the frame of a screen or interface of some kind (mirror, computer interface, television screen, etc.)," and that through this externalized recognition we come to a sense of "corporeal unity" and so self (26); for Bergson, a "body is at the same time mirror or screen for the images [attached to it as identities] from the outside and the perceptive center"(29). Both Lacan and Bergson, then, like Merleau-Ponty, understood our embodiment to happen through culturally developed identities being placed on us by

others while at the same time we come to experience ourselves as sensing interiors. Rhetoric and Composition is not alone, then, in trying to work with what Wegenstein argues is a historically situated—mediated—sense that we are fragmented between a perceiving and a perceived body, between a potentially expressive mediating body and a body that exists only in mediation by others.

*To note, then: we understand "identity" as externally available categories for social belonging; one can take up identities and perform them, and they become part of one's embodiment, shaping one's sense of body and its relations to others—but they are not comprehensive of embodiment.*

Let me then examine one strand of considerations from Media Studies of this tension between mediating and mediated bodies, to help me situate the chapters of this book's second part and to suggest productive approaches for working with this tension in Rhetoric and Composition. Note that I use "productive" carefully in the preceding sentence for it is a concept that repeats itself in the several pages that follow and that shapes the arguments I will make; in what follows, please watch for movements from productive to passive and back to productive in analyses of bodies mediated by the new communication technologies of the early twentieth century.

Formative twentieth-century European studies of media asked us to attend to how the then new media of photography and film were not simply a superstructural aftereffect of economic change; instead, such media were capable of changing our sensibilities. Theorists like Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer, Debord, Enzensberger, and Baudrillard (all of whose writing will soon be discussed) understood not only that the new mass media, because of their scales of production and distribution, required mass audiences and large amounts of capital, but also that the structures of these media—their particular compositions and modes of production as well as their industrial articulations—enabled new relations between audiences and texts and hence new sensory registers, new embodiments. Please bear with me in these few pages as I summarize and present their observations.

Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," for example, argues that, because they are no longer tied to tradition and the singularity of paintings—to the "aura" of paintings—photography and film (to quote from a commentary on Benjamin)

> have the ability to brush aside the precarious legacy of bourgeois art and nineteenth-century culture, namely the stratifying rhetoric of genius, uniqueness and awe, which in Benjamin's eyes had become conceptually untenable and politically dangerous in a time of totalitarian rule. And because the structural logic of film, because of its constitutive technique of cutting and editing, privileges discontinuity over durational extension, rapid interruption over

> contemplative stillness, shock over awe, it produces viewers and consumers who do not submit to the authority of artistic work but instead seek to assimilate it into the itineraries of their social and political life outside the theatre. The media of industrial culture convert the meditative and absorbed viewer of the nineteenth century into deliberate and active users of cultural materials. (Koepnick and McGlothlin 9)

Distracted by rapid discontinuity, that is, those audiences were thus potentially deliberate and active users of culture, given Benjamin's understanding of film logics. He noted, however, that (and now I use Benjamin's words), society "has not been mature enough" to make good use of those deliberate and active users:

> If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war.

Benjamin's prescience of war strengthens his arguments at the same time it saddens.

Following World War II, in "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Adorno and Horkheimer similarly found that film's structures rendered audiences distracted, but rather than audiences then becoming actively engaged with culture they become passive receptors: for Adorno and Horkheimer, culture and entertainment *are* industries, seeking "standardization and mass production" like any other industry and supported by the capital of "the most powerful sectors of industry—steel, petroleum, electricity, and chemicals." Media audiences are therefore treated as consumers, reduced by what they watch:

> The stunting of the mass-media consumer's powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have to be traced back to any psychological mechanisms; he must ascribe the loss of those attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves, especially to the most characteristic of them, the sound film. They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts.

Consumers, as products of this industry, are themselves subject to mass production and standardization; the industries of media production, for Adorno and Horkheimer, are so large that any possible idiosyncrasy or individual creative productivity, before it can start,

> has already been suppressed by the control of the individual consciousness. The step from the telephone to the radio has clearly distinguished the roles. The

> former still allowed the subscriber to play the role of subject, and was liberal. The latter is democratic: it turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same. No machinery of rejoinder has been devised, and private broadcasters are denied any freedom.

Audiences—consumers—under this telling are kept from activities that are productive on their own behalf.

From 1967, Debord's "Society of the Spectacle" analyzes the media situation when passive, placid consumerism is all there is. See, for example, his thesis 160—"The spectator's consciousness, immobilized in the falsified center of the movement of its world, no longer experiences its life as a passage toward self-realization"—or thesis 43:

> At this point the humanism of the commodity takes charge of the worker's "leisure and humanity," simply because now political economy can and must dominate these spheres as political economy. Thus the "perfected denial of man" has taken charge of the totality of human existence.

But there are implications here of what should be the case instead of passivity: consider thesis 203—"To effectively destroy the society of the spectacle, what is needed is men putting a practical force into action." Action and production are what then enable individuals to stand up to the pacifying structures of the mass media.

Enzensberger, in a piece published in 1970 and analyzing "the industry that shapes consciousness" (261), is overt in his calls for certain kinds of action, as when he writes that

> every use of the media presupposes manipulation. The most elementary processes in media production, from the choice of the medium itself to shooting, cutting, synchronization, dubbing, right up to distribution, are all operations carried out on the raw material. There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated but who manipulates them. A revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator. (265)

Observing that the then new "electronic techniques recognize no contradiction in principle between transmitter and receiver" (262), Enzensberger urges "a collective, organized effort" (267) for taking advantage of these "subversive potentialities of the electronic media" (269): audiences will become transmitters of their perspectives rather than passive receptors of the mass media. Before I say more about this turn toward production, let me bring in Baudrillard's response to Enzensberger. Baudrillard, in a piece

published in 1972, criticizes Enzensberger for taking up the transmitter-message-receiver coded model of communication and for then simply calling for that model to be reversible, as though receivers should become transmitters and transmitters should become receivers. For Baudrillard, this "fails to place the mass media system in check" (286) for it does not allow response. Instead, Baudrillard offers graffiti as it was used in the 1968 demonstrations:

> Graffiti is transgressive, not because it substitutes another content, another discourse, but simply because it responds, there, on the spot, and breaches the fundamental role of nonresponse enunciated by all the media. (287)

Baudrillard is not denying the need for audiences to be producing texts; he is arguing over how that production should function.

I have, of course, shortchanged each of the essays I have so quickly summarized in the last few pages and I have shortchanged their differences, but not to the extent, I believe, that the point I want to take from them is incorrect: through the response of these essays to each other and to the mass media, we see acknowledgment of the tension with which I started this section and arguments about how that tension needs to be sustained. That is, in understanding that we are (to use Wegenstein's formulations) each a subject—a body perceived through itself, through its own mediations—at the same time we are each also objectified through others' mediations of us, the essays I have just reviewed argue against any tip in the balance between those two positions. In reading from Benjamin through to Baudrillard, we see burgeoning awareness that the mass media, while potentially setting up structures that could change our relations with a stultifying past, instead have been set up to deny subjects their own perceptions and any abilities to produce their own media and mediations based on those perceptions. In other words, under some conditions (which should be changed), mediation happens in only one direction, from structures and institutions onto individuals.

Why should production matter so much in the thread I just traced through the media theorists I summarized? For one possible answer, we need to turn back to a specific nineteenth-century philosophic concern; then we can once again pick up this book's response.

Each media theorist I summarized was educated in the European philosophic tradition that grew out of Marx, who was in turn grounded in Kant and Hegel. Part of that intellectual tradition is a notion that ideas develop historically and systematically, such that those ideas—reason, for example—can be traced in a logical development that manifests itself in human institutions and beliefs. For example, Hegel presented all of human history

as a process of Reason coming to know itself in the world: he understood the development of democracies out of monarchies, for instance, as a spreading of Reason from one person (the monarch) into individuals who therefore come to know themselves as reasonable and so know themselves as active individuals free to make decisions in the world and so free to develop as moral agents. Marx, alert to the stunted and exploited lives of working people in the nineteenth century, shifted the ground of historical change away from reason: he came to understand, instead, that economic processes provide the base for how all other institutions and processes intersect and act—including relations among humans and including human sense of self and possibility. Like Kant and Hegel before him, he believed that the end (in the sense of pu rpose) of human existence is freedom; Marx defined freedom as the ability to be productive in the world, to choose and shape what one does as work—and to shape how one's work moves through the world in its uses by others. Josef Chytry (quoting Marx from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*) describes Marx's understanding of how being an individual is inseparable from being a producer: "Marx's concept of the object . . . culminates in a focus on the objectifying, creating activity of human being as individuality" (242). And (again from Chytry, now quoting what Marx wrote in response to James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy*):

> labor creates a product which brings enjoyment to its recipient while the laborer takes pleasure in fulfilling another's needs. This act of exchange thus makes the laborer aware of the mediation between the other and the human species as a whole; and to the extent that the other person senses his own essence as a member of the species, he confirms the laborer's being in his "thought and love." Finally, the laborer realizes the value of his individual activity by recognizing it as the actualization of his own communal nature. (244)

And, finally, words directly from Marx and Engels, from *The German Ideology*: "Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community." For Marx, roughly, the production of objects out of the stuff of nature gives us an understanding of ourselves within nature and within human community: human freedom is the freedom to do productive work in one's community. We cannot be fully human if we cannot work and see how the results of our work connect us with others.

At the time he was writing, however, Marx saw that historical developments had separated—alienated—laborers from their work: the bourgeoisie (factory owners, managers) took over from laborers all decisions about who would make what objects and how those objects would be circulated; the objects made by productive humans were turned into

commodities—objects not with the value of use but with the value of exchange—and so the real work of humans was made less real by being set free to circulate outside their control. This is what results (for Marx) when the bourgeoisie take over all the structures—the modes—of production.

What underlies the productive concerns of the media theorists I summarized, then, is some echo or memory of this understanding of what it is to be a free human: it is to be a being who can mediate from its particular embodied position within its community.

And this is not a perspective that has disappeared. In his chapter in the Mitchell and Hansen collection I cited earlier, for example, Bernard Stiegler describes two kinds of memory that function now, one embodied and individual, the other embedded in external media. Note not only that these two forms of memory align with the division between the mediat*ing* subject and the mediat*ed* objectified subject that has motivated this section of our introduction, but that Stiegler argues that this division is political, playing out in what we now (thanks to Deleuze) understand to be control societies in which what is at stake is, in no small part, the determination of what is remembered. Stiegler's writing thus echoes that of the earlier media theorists in, first, its concern that earlier mass-media structures put the control of memory construction-and-keeping in the hands of industry and, second, in its arguments that we need each and all to be producers and consumers of media at the same time, engaged in "interlocution," which Stiegler argues is possible with digital media.

Or consider Rita Raley's writing on tactical media, digital network-enabled "interventions and disruptions" of dominant regimes (6) that are meant to "provoke and reveal, to defamiliarize and to critique" postindustrial society and neoliberal globalization, with "uncertain and unpredictable" outcomes (7). Citing Hardt and Negri, and Virno, among others, to acknowledge that only resistance and dissent and not revolution seem possible, Raley describes tactical media as needing "a multitude of different creative agents, a multitude that fuses or is situated between the individual and the collective" (10); tactical media's epistemology is that "we are meant to interact and engage while simultaneously becoming aware of our own limitations and our own inability to make an immediately perceptible impact on the project as it stands in for the socioeconomic and political system" (18). What Raley describes is the mediating subject whose actions both acknowledge and resist the objectifying mediations of institutions.

What we end up with, finally, from all these writings that consider a mediating subject in tension with structures and institutions that (also through mediation) objectify that subject, is no dissolution of the tension that shapes this section as it has shaped Rhetoric and Composition. In the pages above in which I have tracked media theorists' descriptions of

an audience pacified by media alongside hopes for productive, mediating audiences, the subjectifying and the objectifying processes of media stay active—but some sort of balance of mediations is sought.

◆ In this book, then,

*we assume*

*—alongside our first set of assumptions about what constitutes embodiment and about a corresponding need for engagement with a range of media—*

*that embodiment has to be acknowledged as both active and passive,*

*felt by us as well as produced by us.*

Mediation is not to be performed only *on* one; one is to be actively engaged with mediation, with attending productively to one's own felt experiences and with learning how to compose media out of those experiences, media for circulating and eliciting engagements with others. This book is not about subtle analyses of the differences between (for example) Baudrillard's notions of response and Stiegler's notions of interlocution; we are, instead, collectively concerned with how, as writing teachers, we help both students and ourselves experience mediation both productively and reflectively. Because the ability to produce media objects and so to shape mediations has culturally been with corporations, industries, and institutions (an observation that grounds every media theorist I quoted),

*our collection emphasizes*

*what it is that enables subjects*

*—those on the "inside" of felt embodiment—*

*to take on productive, mediating actions*

*through written, textual possibilities.*

For those reasons, this collection includes "Activities" sections. These sections offer classroom activities (primarily designed for undergraduate audiences but extendable to graduate classes) in which analysis and production are mixed: with these activities we hope to engage students with differing media in order that they might alertly mediate their own experiences and so feel—and not only see (to return now to a concern of our first set of assumptions)—the potentials of their particular embodiment. How is it to construct and disseminate their own embodied memories?

Individual chapters of this collection also take up the particular assumptions of the past few pages, as when, in her chapter "Crafting New Approaches to Composition," Kristin Prins considers writing through the tradition of craft, which interweaves with this introduction's tilt to a Marxian tradition of production. In her chapter, Prins asks us to think of

writing not as the often abstract process of designing but as *making*, and, in so doing, directs our attention to our mediating capabilities when we produce media that differ from what corporations offer and when we engage in crafting, which

> implies a maker, tools used to shape materials into a made object, a user or users for that object, the time it took for the maker to learn how to use the tools and work with the materials, the time it took to make the object, relationships between the maker and thing made, as well as between maker and users. (152)

Following Prins's chapter, Aaron Raz Link—in "Bodies of Texts"—crafts an essay that demonstrates writing strategies for how to mediate against objective and limiting identities. At the same time, the writing calls its own assumptions about embodiment, theorizing, and writing into question as it discusses embodiments that look one way but have been arrived at through very different means. As a meditation on and mediation of a transgendered and ambiguously ethnic body, Raz Link's chapter wonders what is truly possible with written (especially written academic) mediation when none of its available means come close to satisfying the embodied being doing the writing.

In "Whose Body? Looking Critically at New Interface Designs," Ben McCorkle, working under the assumptions that we do want the thick sorts of situations for mediating bodies that Prins and Raz both describe, questions how writing teachers can then approach digital interfaces. After describing how some interfaces "assume unquestioned subject positions for the user" (174), McCorkle questions what embodied interfaces might be; he makes recommendations for how teachers of writing might actively engage in the processes of producing such interfaces so that the interfaces do not, finally, only "facilitate real-world practices of silencing and marginalization, in effect essentializing difference"(186).

Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes's chapter returns our attentions specifically to the acts and potentials of productive mediating bodies: in arranging their chapter so that it visually holds two narratives at once, narratives that curl around each other and sometimes foil our learned reading habits, Alexander and Rhodes demonstrate possibilities for "figuring the queer" (188). They also analyze two of Cocteau's films as another vector for questioning what it is to figure the queer, specifically through multimodality, and they present us with other mediations of their particular embodiments, showing us and discussing websites and photographs they have produced. They write that

> we make use of our converging alienations, our mesh of desire and want, in order to position ourselves to be—if only for a particular, rhetorical moment—and,

> more to the point of this particular work, to be sexual. Through the constant exchange/deferral of need, this self-positioning increases and sustains itself through its desire, serving as the engine of its own perpetual visibility. It is thus a generative, multimodal techne of self, with both somatic and representational consequence. (211)

Their chapter, then, both analyzes and demonstrates mediation that pushes against an external, objectifying mediation that would normalize and so limit embodiment—as does the chapter that follows it, Kristin Arola's "It's My Revolution: Learning to See the Mixedblood."

Arola considers the difficult external positionality experienced by mixedblood people in the United States, caught between Indian and white identities. Against that background, Arola also considers powwow regalia, which "function as an expression of dancers' lives and represents a range of the dancer's experiences: families, hobbies, dreams, and religious beliefs" (218): "It as an embodied visible act that evolves and changes, and that represents one's history, one's community, and one's self within that particular moment" (218). Regalia thus "firmly positions one within a shifting continuum of embodied identities" (219) and Arola argues—as Alexander and Rhodes do with their multimodal explorations—that regalia thus enables its wearers, especially mixedbloods, to mediate their embodiment outside traditional, usually restrictive, possibilities. Given that, she asks and analyzes how we might think of online social networking sites as regalia rather than as templates that encourage only those restricted possibilities for embodiment.

"Visible Guerrillas," Karen Springsteen's contribution to this book, shows us what mediations were needed for women to make a place for themselves in the art world of New York City from the late twentieth into the early twentieth centuries. Springsteen describes how the feminist activist group the Guerrilla Girls used media strategies of what Springsteen calls "appropriative reproach": it is a taking "possession of a commonly accepted or normalized form and altering it such that it is implicated in a design that disgraces, discredits, shames, or blames an offender"(234), a kind of culture jamming—and a kind of "powerful writing" that is "quite literally an effort to change how we see" (235). Springsteen's chapter, like the others I have discussed in line with the second set of assumptions that shape our book, offers examples of mediating bodies refusing to be seen only through the object positions held by others.

The final chapter of our collection is Kristie Fleckenstein's "Affording New Media: Individuation, Imagination, and the Hope of Change." Fleckenstein uses Coco Fusco's multimodal one-act drama *The Incredible Disappearing Woman* both as an example of how new media can be used

toward social ends and to initiate strategies for nondisembodied teaching and learning of new media. To ground her understanding of Fusco's drama and so her teaching, Fleckenstein turns to "what legal ethicist Drucilla Cornell calls the minimum qualifications of individuation: bodily integrity, access to symbol systems, and protection of the imaginary domain" (239). Fleckenstein's chapter ends with examples of two blogs produced by students, each of which demonstrates those qualifications and shows how the students have learned—through the qualifications—to mediate their experiences and engage with others.

As it emphasizes that embodiment is both active and passive, felt by us as well as produced by us through our own mediating practices, Fleckenstein's work thus also circles us back to our initial assumptions for this collection, that embodiment is an ongoing process to which we need attend and for which we need engagement with a range of media. Our writing classrooms similarly need to work across all these assumptions if we and the people we teach are to have thoughtful participation in our own mediating and mediated embodiments.

In this book—as we ask you to attend to writing as a technology that enables us to experience our bodies as *our* bodies while at the same time writing mediates those bodies in line with existing institutions—we hope we have offered both theoretic and practical support for helping us and students enact and reflect upon our embodied and embodying writing.