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TOWARD A COMPOSITION MADE WHOLE

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CONCLUSION
Realizing a Composition Made Whole

> *New maps of writing . . . will devote a layer to the where of writing—not just the places where writing occurs, but the sense of place and space that readers and writers bring with them to intellectual work of writing, to navigating, remembering, and composing.*
>
> —NEDRA REYNOLDS

At the end of *Geographies of Writing*, Nedra Reynolds (2004) speculates that college students, "as agents who move through the world, know a great deal more about 'writing' than they think they do" (176). It is not a matter of them "holding out" on us, refusing to admit what they know, it's that we "haven't studied their moves" closely enough (176). In order to study their moves, Reynolds contends that we need to develop maps of writing that foreground "not just the places where writing occurs, but the sense of place and space that readers and writers bring with them to the intellectual work of writing, to navigating, remembering and *composing*" (176; my emphasis). Here, Reynolds underscores the importance of attending to the affective, embodied, and material dimensions of writing and advocates studies that detail how texts are carved "out of time and space in particular circumstances that differ for each writer" (3–4), and to this I would add, *in each instance of production*. Like Reynolds, I too am convinced of the importance of theoretical, research, and pedagogical frameworks that help to illumine the spatial, temporal, embodied, affective, and material dimensions of writing. Yet following Lemke

(1998), Medway (1996), Prior (1998), and Witte (1992), I have argued here for the importance of developing still more comprehensive maps of literate activity—maps that represent more than the spaces, tools, and strategies associated with the intellectual work of writing and the production of written texts. Instead of adopting a single mode perspective on communicative practice, new maps of composing would examine the way writing functions as but one "stream within the broader flows of" meaning-making and person-making activity (Prior 1998, 11). These new maps of composing must work to highlight semiotic remediation practices by examining the various ways that semiotic performances are re-presented or re-mediated through the combination and transformation of available resources (human, nonhuman, and natural). Put still otherwise, attending to writing as, indeed, a crucial part of—*but not the whole of*—what it means to compose is a necessary first step in working toward the realization of a composition made whole.

Following Cynthia Selfe (2010), I would argue that it is crucial that we commit to expanding our disciplinary commitment to the theorizing, researching, and improvement of written discourse to include other representational systems and ways of making meaning. As Selfe argues,

> the inclusion of multiple modes of rhetorical expression represents a simple acknowledgement that a literacy education focused solely on *writing* will produce citizens with an overly narrow and exclusionary understanding of the world and the variety of audiences who will read and respond to their work. In the twenty-first century, we live in an increasingly globalized world where people speak different languages, come from different cultures, learn and make meaning in different media contexts and with different expressive modalities. In such an environment, although writing retains a privileged position, literate citizens, increasingly, need to make use of all semiotic channels to communicative effectively among different groups and for different purposes. (606)

Indeed, if one believes that it has become, and will continue to become, increasingly important for literate citizens to "acknowledge, value, and draw on" a range of composing modalities, and if one believes that individuals are advantaged when provided with opportunities to learn to

manage "their own communicative efforts in ways that are rhetorically effective, critically aware, morally responsible, and personally satisfying" (Selfe 2009, 642), we can no longer afford to continue wondering *if* more than one thing is possible. Rather, we must work toward ensuring that more than one thing *is*, and *will continue to remain*, possible. And by "more than one thing," I refer not only to increasing the kinds of compositions that we, and that our students, produce. Working toward a composition made whole also demands that our theoretical, research, and pedagogical frameworks closely attend to the various purposes that writing serves. And we must do so without losing sight of the way writing shapes while taking shape from other activities and semiotic systems. Working toward a composition made whole requires us to resist the privileging of questions like "What makes writing good?" or "Is this written text written well?" Instead, we must *also* begin asking questions about the purposes and potentials that writing, when combined or juxtaposed with still other forms of representation, might serve: "What work does (or can) this accomplish?" And more importantly, perhaps, "What difference does it make to accomplish that work in this way as opposed to any of the other ways one might imagine accomplishing the same or similar kinds of work?"

In suggesting that we need to work toward a richer, more comprehensive theory of composing—one that still includes *but is not necessarily limited to* writing or the production of written texts, and one that treats the composing process as a dynamic, multimodal whole—I am cognizant of some of the challenges and difficulties associated with facilitating this shift and putting those theories into practice. Put otherwise, making the shift from a narrow focus on writing/written texts to a consideration of a much broader tradition of composing—one that considers both linguistic and nonlinguistic sign systems—will likely not be accomplished swiftly, easily, or without resistance. In fact, following a point raised by Patricia Dunn (2001), "it may seem at first absurd to question an over-emphasis on writing in a discipline whose *raison d'etre* is, like no other discipline, for and about writing," and whose scholarship has been focused primarily on writing—its complications, uses, improvement, and benefits (15). Yet as Dunn goes on to argue, we can "still believe in the primacy of language even as we hold it suspect." That is to say, we "can respect other signs of intellectual insight" and pursue richer understandings of the potentials associated with other representational systems, "even as we self-consciously promote writing as our area of expertise" (29–30).

Broader, Braver, and More Familiar

If we are to be successful in pursuing richer understandings of the potentials of other representational systems and communicative strategies, it is crucial, as Dunn and others have maintained, that we continue to work toward "broader, braver," and more comprehensive conceptions of terms like "'knowing,' 'text,' 'reading,' and 'writing'" (Dunn 2001, 4). To this list, I would also add terms like *composing*, *technology*, and *multimodality*. As the example offered at the start of chapter 1 was intended to demonstrate, classrooms have always been multimodal spaces equipped with a range of technologies (both new and not-so-new), spaces that require students to negotiate a streaming interplay of words, images, sounds, scents, and movements. It is not that the multimodal nature of texts, composing spaces, classrooms, and/or literate practice is new. What's new is our attention to them. What's new is that we have begun "calling into question of the dominance of print as a communicative and/or expressive form" (Moje 2009, 352).

Given the degree to which and the ease with which multimodal texts and strategies tend to be misunderstood, subject to ridicule, if not roundly dismissed, it is crucial that in addition to broadening notions of concepts like *writing*, *reading*, *text*, *technology*, and *composing* we make a concerted effort to resist (and/or encourage others to resist) the tendency to identify as "childlike," "merely creative," "expressivist," "artistic," "nonacademic," or "experimental" texts that explore the meaning potential of other modes. As Cheryl Ball (2004) notes, texts are often labeled experimental when (or simply because) audiences are not used to recognizing their meaning-making strategies. Thus, for readers who are expecting—and perhaps it goes without saying, but for readers who have been taught to privilege—traditional, linear arguments, "the confusion between generic uses of aesthetic and scholarly modes can cause them to dismiss the text altogether" (411). Although Ball is primarily concerned with new media texts, I suggest that any text that incorpo-

rates more or simply other modalities than a particular audience has grown accustomed to runs the risk of being labeled as experimental (or weird, kooky, fanciful, expressivist, merely creative, and so on) and, as a result, can be dismissed easily and rapidly. The same can be said about texts that do not immediately conform to the audience's expectations. Certainly, this has long been my sense of how the ballet shoes featured in my introduction were received and subsequently understood by the member of the audience who asked if the composer of the shoes had put her footnotes on a shirt.

I suggest that one way of troubling "the marriage between comfortable writing pedagogies that form our disciplinary core and the entire range of new media for writing" (Faigley and Romano 1995, 49), requires us to "defamiliarize the familiar" (Samuels 2007, 111) by rendering more visible the taken-for-granted assumptions, technologies, and dimensions of composing processes that have become invisible, and so, seemingly natural over time. With this, however, we must also work to make the seemingly strange or unfamiliar aspects of multimodal texts and strategies appear less strange and unfamiliar. At the end of chapter 4, I suggested that one strategy for dealing with those who may too quickly dismiss the highly purposeful and rigorous dimensions of unfamiliar-looking texts involves directing their attention away from the look, sound, or feel of a final product and toward a consideration of that product *in relation to* the complex processes composers employed while producing that text. In chapters 3 and 5 I described and illustrated two different ways to illumine products in relationship to the complex processes composers employ throughout the course of creating a text, object, or live event. Of course, as we know, texts that look and sound familiar can be quickly or carelessly thrown together, thereby rendering them largely devoid of much purpose, substance, or scholarly potential. Certainly, the same can be said about texts that employ unfamiliar strategies, modes, or conventions. My point is that we need to make a concerted effort to develop ways of examining final products—whether they are in keeping with our expectations or not—*in relation to* the processes composers employ. Additionally, we need to continue broadening our understanding of the multiplicity of modes, genres, moves, and strategies that might result in extremely compelling, purposeful work—work that simultaneously challenges and enriches our understanding of the various ways in which, and resources with which, meaning might be made.

Practicing What We Preach

Another way of making the seemingly strange or unfamiliar aspects of multimodal texts and strategies appear less strange has to do with increasing both the number and visibility of these texts and strategies. In addition to providing students with opportunities to produce (as well as to read, critically engage with, and respond to) a wide variety of texts, it is also important that we, as scholars and researchers, explore the potentials of different representational systems in our own work. Ball (2004) underscores the difference between "new media scholarship" and "scholarship about new media" (404) and claims that while composition and new media scholars have increasingly written about how readers can make meaning from images, typefaces, videos, animations, and sounds, composition and new media scholars do not often compose with these media. Succinctly put, Ball's point is that too often when it comes to new media scholarship, what "we preach is not what we practice" (408–9). Ball's contention is that if scholars continue to write about the "potentials of multiliteracies rather than acting through those literacies [it] will limit our notion of scholarship for the future" (408). According to Ball, for new media scholarship to move forward and develop, scholars must find ways not only to value these texts and increase both their numbers and visibility, but also to develop and articulate for others analytical and interpretational strategies for engaging with new media texts.

In a similar vein, but shifting attention back to the classroom, Selfe (2010) underscores the importance of faculty in rhetoric and composition serving as "role models" for students, "showing students that they, too, are willing to learn new ways of composing, to expand their own skills and abilities beyond the alphabetic by practicing with different modalities of expression that may be unfamiliar and difficult but increasingly expected and valuable in different twenty-first-century rhetorical contexts both in and out of the academy" (608).

Working to complicate and broaden key terms and concepts like *writing, reading, text, technology,* and *composing* while increasing the visibility and familiarity of texts that explore the potentials of linguistic as

well as nonlinguistic sign systems are crucial first steps toward realizing a composition made whole. Yet as Dunn (2001) notes, proponents of multimodal approaches also need to be prepared to take a more "proactive stance" with students, colleagues, and administrators who may be skeptical or even dismissive of such approaches (153). For Dunn, one strategy involves underscoring the narrowness and limitations associated with more traditional approaches. Another strategy requires that we ask skeptical or dismissive colleagues to articulate and justify their goals and choices just as we, as proponents of change, are often expected to do (153). Because not all practitioners of multimodal approaches are in positions to underscore the limitations of their colleagues' approaches or to ask them to explain and justify why "they're still supporting conventional term papers" (156), it becomes important to anticipate and be prepared to respond to arguments or challenges by those who would prefer that writing courses remain as they have been traditionally conceived and practiced.

Writing First, Consciousness-Raising Second

A variation of one concern was voiced in the 1950s by those opposed to a communications approach to first-year composition, namely that "writing comes first, consciousness-raising second" (George and Trimbur 1999, 687). The often-repeated claim is that there is not enough time in the semester to cover what instructors traditionally have been expected to cover and that adding on additional lessons or tasks to teach other communicative modes and/or to teach students reflective skills (metacommunicative awareness) would make doing everything, or *doing anything*, virtually impossible. I do not mean to belittle this concern, but insofar as WAC and WID initiatives have been motivated by the belief that students cannot possibly, in a single semester or two, learn, practice, and become proficient in *all* the kinds of writing they will need to do, it seems to me that the writing course as it has traditionally been conceived might benefit tremendously from (quite literally) some retooling.

Throughout this book I have underscored the importance of theorizing, researching, and teaching writing in the context of, or in relation to, other communicative modalities. In terms of pedagogical practice specifically, I have argued that by creating courses that increase the mediational means (or suite of tools) students are able to employ in their work we help to underscore for students the fundamentally multimodal aspects of all communicative practice. Creating courses that provide students with a greater awareness of, *and ability to reflect on*, the ways in which writing intersects and interacts with other semiotic systems does not necessarily make for more work. It makes for different work, perhaps, and work that I believe we should have been doing all along. But it need not result in more work.

First, based as it is on the idea of treating writing in relation to other semiotic and activity systems, an activity-based multimodal framework for composing does not recommend that instructors devote *X* number of weeks of the semester to writing, *X* number of weeks to a consideration of the visual, *X* number of a consideration of the spoken word, and so on. In fact, the framework has been engineered in ways that expressly resist the isolation and individual treatment of these different modalities. It does this by requiring students to attend to how language, *combined with still other cultural tools or mediational means*, shapes communicative practice. In this way, instructors need not worry about having to cover in three or four weeks material to which they typically devote the entire semester. In fact, treating writing *in relation to* other modalities means that the purposes and potentials of alphabetic text can be attended to throughout the course of the semester, provided, of course, that those purposes and potentials are treated with a mind toward the way other semiotic systems (such as the visual aspect of the writing, the texture of the paper, screen, or surface on which the writing appears) impact one's reception of the text.

Second, following an argument made by Selfe (2010), it is important to note that students who participate in the kind of course I describe in chapters 4 and 5 will not be expected to learn (nor will instructors be expected to have the expertise to teach) the advanced or in-depth skills students might encounter in other courses, those that spend the whole semester focusing on a particular mode, genre, or technology (such as producing video documentaries using a program like Adobe's Premiere Pro). To suggest that students could, after a single semester or two, acquire an advanced, in-depth understanding and command of all the modes and representational systems they encounter in the composi-

tion course would be like expecting that students could, after a single semester or two in a traditional writing course, become expert at every kind of writing encountered there. Rather, in keeping with the goals of many writing courses, a primary goal of the composition course is to help guide students through a set of basic rhetorical processes, like the ones articulated by Selfe in the following passage. Selfe maintains that composition courses should provide students with opportunities for "analyzing the rhetorical context and purposes for communication tasks, thinking about audiences and their needs, conducting research on related communications and how others have addressed similar tasks; deploying rhetorical strategies of invention, organization, arrangement and delivery; composing drafts that address particular rhetorical contexts by combining modes of expression, responding to critically informed feedback on their own rhetorical communications, and offering feedback to other communicators on their own drafts" (607). Like Selfe, I wholeheartedly believe that "these rhetorically informed activities *are the proper context for composition classes*" (607). Certainly a salient difference between more traditionally conceived writing courses (that is, those that focus primarily on the production and consumption of alphabetic texts) and courses that invite students to explore a greater range of "expressive modalities" (Selfe 2010, 606) has to do with treating writing *in relation to* other semiotic systems. Instructors who may not consider themselves experts on visual, auditory, olfactory, or tactile modes can still focus primarily on the role that written text plays. The important difference has to do with refusing to ignore the presence or impact of these modes, and asking students to consider how other semiotic systems alter, complicate, expand, enrich, and/or shape one's reception of the written text.

We must find ways to underscore for students what has always been the case—that communicative practices are multimodal and that people are rarely, if ever, just writing or making meaning with words on a page. To this end, courses must be designed in ways that ask students to consider how literate activity demands of them the ability to negotiate a streaming interplay of words as well as images, spatial arrangements, sounds, scents, textures, and movements. To disregard the import of this sensory and semiotic interplay seems to me to place students at a

disadvantage when it comes to making and negotiating meaning both within and beyond the space of the classroom proper.

Where's the ("Academic") Writing?

Related to the concern about time allocation and modal expertise is the question about writerly expertise. Critics may ask what happens to writing, or more specifically, what happens *to the quality of student writing* in composition courses that require students attend to the complexly mediated and multimodal dimensions of communicative practice? Insofar as the framework articulated in this book advocates the importance of examining, both in our research as well as teaching, the way writing functions as but one "stream within the broader flows of" meaning-making and person-making activity (Prior 1998, 11), the short answer is that what happens to writing is that it is treated *in relation to* the other semiotic resources and activities that play a role in determining how, when, where, why, and with what (or with whom) one goes about the "busy work" of writing—of producing texts and getting them where they need to go (Trimbur 2000, 189).

This said, I am cognizant that a fair number of the texts my students have chosen to produce over the years have little resembled the kind of texts that are typically associated with writing courses (double-spaced, print-based, linear, argumentative texts). Because of this, I have had to be especially proactive when designing and assigning tasks and in-class activities. I have had to learn how to articulate for others (students as well as colleagues, potential employers, and so on) how, exactly, the tasks and activities I offer students have been intentionally designed in ways that provide them with opportunities to choose the representational systems that best suit the work they hope to do, *while still ensuring* that students are enacting characteristics or moves typically associated with the production of academic texts.

As a way of more concretely illustrating how the written texts students produce can be misread or misunderstood, I offer the following example of an exchange that occurred early in my teaching career. When this happened, I did not feel I had the power or authority to ask others to explain their pedagogical choices to me; nor did I feel particu-

larly comfortable with the prospect of pointing out what I understood to be the limitations of other people's approaches to writing instruction. Some years ago, I was again in the position of sharing samples of student work with an audience that included but was not limited to my peers. Toward the end of my talk, a woman in the audience, gesturing toward a student's research project that took the form of a board game modeled after Trivial Pursuit, said, "I see how this gets students thinking creatively, but where is the writing? When and what, exactly, are students expected to write?" Initially, I was surprised that the woman could have overlooked the tremendous amount of writing that appeared in and around the board game. Not only was there writing on the game board itself, but the question and answer cards that came with the game (these contained the bulk of the student's research) were filled with writing. There were also written directions for the game and an advertisement for the game, which doubled as the students' works cited page (those whose work upon which the student drew were, in this context, treated as the game's advocates, reviewers, and sponsors). As I began pointing to all the places where writing appeared in and around the text, it became clear to me that the woman was thinking about writing in a very specific, and I would suggest, overly narrow way. I would surmise that what she was expecting to see, indeed, what she was referring to as "writing" was double-spaced, alphabetic text composed with a twelve-point font, printed on white 8 ½ x 11" paper.

I in no way mean to make light of the viewer's oversight. I understand how all the text that I considered to be evidence that the student had produced a lot of writing (and really smart, purposeful, research-based writing at that) could be overlooked or rendered invisible if one was only open to seeing a specific type of writing, namely, writing that resembled what one has learned to identify as "academic writing." And this, as I understood it, was at the heart of the "where's the writing?" question. She was not asking about writing per se; rather, her concern had to do with when, if at all, students were required to stop being creative and begin doing *academic* work. Phrased as it was, her question also suggested to me a distrust of, if not anxiety over, the final form this student's work assumed. Her question suggests not only that one necessarily knows academic writing as soon as one sees it (and this, to her mind, was definitely not it), but also that smart, purposeful, critically engaged, research-based texts—texts that accomplished academic work—could not possibly look like this one. This text was, instead, simply "creative."

To ensure that I was better prepared to respond to the next "where's the (academic) writing?" question, I set about designing tasks that would more clearly and concretely underscore, for students and colleagues alike, how students were being asked to enact or engage with what I would refer to as "typical academic characteristics or moves," regardless of the final form their work ended up taking. The first of these tasks was called "Product Academe." The task required students to reflect on their identities as students and to design the packaging for a doll that shared aspects of their identities. Because I believed it would make for more interesting arguments and final products, the task strongly encouraged students to focus on two or three aspects of their studenthood that tended to compete with one another for dominance. Students were then asked to consider how these competing qualities impacted the choices they made. To encourage them to consider the impact one's environment has on one's identity and behavior, I also asked them to think about which aspects of their identities were foregrounded or backgrounded depending on the environment they were in, and to consider why and how that shifting occurred.

On the day the task was assigned, I would provide each student with a plain, white 9 x 12" box that they would be expected to use when creating the packaging for their student doll. I made certain that students knew that they would not be expected to create the doll itself (this was optional), and I underscored that they would not be graded on artistic ability. Instead, I would be looking for evidence that they spent enough time engaging with the questions above to come up with a compelling concept or argument of self-as-studenthood. I reminded them that the box provided a lot of "real estate" (that is, space and surfaces to work with), and that they should use that space wisely and purposefully. They would also, of course, be required to complete a statement of goals and choices for the task.

Part of the fun of assigning this task was that students were usually surprised by it. It got their attention, and they would insist that they had never been asked to do something like this before. I, however,

would insist that what I was asking them to do was, in fact, a variation on something they had been asked to do throughout most of their academic careers. I told them that on the day the final products were due, I would reveal to them how this task was, indeed, very similar to others they had received. Fast-forward to the day the doll boxes were due: After asking students if anything about the task struck them as familiar, I would list on the board seven characteristics or moves that I believe are typically associated with the production of academic texts. Specifically, I would suggest to students that an academic text:

- typically involves some type of research;
- is often tightly focused, whether on a single point, claim, or argument or a series of nested points, claims, arguments;
- offers support for the claims it makes and/or the work it attempts to do. (The idea here is that the text attempts to "sell" itself by convincing others of its importance and value, underscoring for the audience the contributions it is positioned to make);
- demonstrates an awareness of its own limits, whether by foregrounding the biases of the researcher/writer or by noting what the text does not focus on or address (that is, it anticipates counterarguments or the opponent's point of view);
- is written up in specific ways, geared to do certain work, usually in accordance with generic or disciplinary conventions. (I would also point out to students that certainly not always but oftentimes these conventions require from the writer a direct, to the point, unemotional, objective style or tone of writing);
- provides readers with an onward- and outward-looking conclusion. (In accordance with the third and fourth points above, the text, in its conclusion, may signal other ideas or projects that the writer is working on and/or may raise questions for others to consider or respond to);
- attempts to appeal to its readers, both by demonstrating an awareness of appropriateness (that is, in terms of generic or disciplinary conventions and audience expectations) and by offering something new, necessary, and in keeping with ongoing discussions in the field or discipline. (Ideally speaking, it gets and keeps the audience's attention.)

To underscore for students the relationship between the doll project and these characteristics or moves, I would then offer connections between the moves or characteristics above and what the doll project was asking them to do.

First, students were required to engage in at least two kinds of research. In addition to reflecting on various aspects of their identities, they were also required to study product packaging so that they approximated some of the moves and conventions made by designers of those products. Second, the task required students to assume a relatively narrow focus and to come up with a specific argument (or thesis) about their identity as a student. Put otherwise, students understood that they were not to create an argument (and, with this, the product packaging) for every aspect or facet of their identities, but to focus on one, two, or three aspects of their identities, creating a "limited edition" of sorts. In terms of offering support for the claim(s) they were making about their identities, students were asked to describe, whether on the front, back, inside, and/or sides of the box, the various "features" associated with their product. Conversely, warnings, age appropriateness guides, and the mention of items not included with the doll functioned as a way of underscoring the limitations of their products (and arguments) or as a way of anticipating the opponent's point of view. So, for instance, a product that focused on a student's ability to maintain a 4.0 GPA despite his tendency to party a lot and to procrastinate on schoolwork claimed as a feature or main selling point of the product its ability to "make parents and grandparents proud" despite (and here's a limitation) "making you the envy of all your hardworking classmates."

In terms of creating onward- and outward-looking conclusions (as opposed to producing conclusions, as many students had been taught to do, that simply involved inverting and restating what they wrote in their opening paragraphs), students had been encouraged to attend to the cross-selling techniques that product producers used and to emulate those moves with their doll boxes. Students who included reference on their boxes to other items or dolls in the line were able not only to im-

plicitly point to the limitations of their product or argument, but also to underscore for their audience that they still had other arguments, ideas, and hence, products to offer interested consumers. Finally, in terms of appealing to potential readers/consumers, adhering to conventions, and demonstrating an awareness of appropriateness, students had to remain mindful of their intended audience as well as the purpose(s) they hoped their products would serve. For instance, a product that was geared toward young children and whose purpose was, in part, to warn them of the dangers of procrastination would likely assume a tone and employ images, fonts, and color schemes that were much different from another product whose purpose was, instead, to provide high school students with humorous tips or instructions on becoming "master procrastinators" in college.

Through this text, I have warned against research and pedagogical frameworks that overlook, or worse yet, render invisible the complex and highly distributed processes associated with the production of texts, lives, and people, thereby obscuring the fundamentally multimodal aspects of *all* communicative practice. I think we also run the risk of disserving students when we privilege the production of academic texts (those that must necessarily take the form of double-spaced alphabetic texts) as opposed to privileging a more nuanced awareness of typical academic characteristics or moves.

As I argued at the end of the previous chapter, I cannot say with any measure of certainty that the students whose work I have represented here, whose work I have represented in my other publications, or whose work is featured on my Website will end up producing the kinds of texts they produced in my courses. And in saying this, I refer to linear, print-based, thesis-driven essays as well as shoes, shirts, games, doll boxes, and live performances. I can say, however, that students have reported using the doll box project as a kind of heuristic, as a way of thinking through or mapping out arguments they have gone on to make in other contexts—such as writing papers in other classes, creating a resume, and preparing for job interviews. Students have frequently reported that having to create statements of goals and choices for their work has greatly impacted both the kind and quality of questions they continue to ask, not only with a mind to their own work but also in terms of the various texts

they encounter in the workplace, online, at home, while driving, shopping, and so on.

To be clear, in suggesting that students be provided the option to accomplish academic work via the employment of representational forms, genres, or modes that are not typically associated with that work, my intent is not to demonize or downplay the value or import of linear, thesis-driven, double-spaced alphabetic texts, texts that largely resemble, well, this very book, in fact. With a mind toward a concern raised by Doug Hesse (2010) in his response to Cynthia Selfe's 2009 "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning," students with whom I work always have the option to explore "new ways of making meaning" that "include writing extended connective prose" (Hesse 2010, 605). What is most important is, first, that students come away from the experience of the courses more mindful of the various ways in which individuals work with, as well as against, the mediational means they employ. Of equal importance is that students can articulate for others the purposes and potentials of their work. My hope is that students will continue to choose wisely, critically, and purposefully long after they leave the course—that they will continue to consider the relationships, structures, and representational systems that are most fitting or appropriate given the purposes, potentials, and contexts of the work they mean (and in other cases, *need*) to do. I also think it is important that we challenge students and that we challenge ourselves—whether this involves taking risks and trying something new or considering the various ways in which meaning (both within and beyond the academy) might be accomplished.

On Relevancy and Renewed Interest in Process Research

In addition to rethinking key terms and concepts like *writing*, *reading*, and *composing*, increasing the visibility and status of texts that are comprised of linguistic as well as nonlinguistic sign systems, and being more proactive with students and colleagues who may be skeptical of multimodal approaches, our scholarship can, I believe, be greatly enriched by renewing our commitment to better understanding still other processes of composing and ways of knowing.

Following Brodkey (1987), we need to continue creating ways to "tell new stories about the old picture, and to add pictures that tell altogether

different stories about writers and writing" (58). And like Selfe (2009), I would underscore that "we cannot hope to fully understand literacy practices or the values associated with such practices unless, and until, we can also understand the complex cultural ecology that serves as their context" (636). We need, in other words,

> to pay attention to, and come to value, the *multiple* ways in which students compose and communicate meaning. . . . We need to better understand the importance that students attach to composing, exchanging, and interpreting new and different kinds of texts that help them make sense of their experiences and lives—songs and lyrics, videos, written essays illustrated with images, personal Web pages that include sound clips. We need to learn from their motivated efforts to communicate with each other, for themselves and for others, often in resistance to the world we have created for them. We need to respect the rhetorical sovereignty of people from different backgrounds, communities, colors, and cultures, to observe and understand the rhetorical choices they are making, and to offer them new ways of making meaning, new choices, new ways of accomplishing their goals. (642)

In chapter 2 I suggested that granting analytic primacy to mediated action provides us with one way of adding new pictures of literate activity to the mix by closely attending to a broad range of texts in relation to the complexly mediated processes through which those texts are produced, circulated, received, and responded to. By way of example, in chapter 3 I described and illustrated how the use of a visual-verbal interview protocol offered rich depictions of the various times at which, spaces in which, and tools with which composers described themselves working. In chapter 5 I turned my attention to the classroom and argued that asking students to create detailed statements of goals and choices about their work can also help to foreground aspects of composing processes that are (or would likely be) rendered invisible from a text-based or final-product perspective.

In thinking about still other potentials for examining and documenting process, I find myself increasingly drawn to the potential of video-based studies. One variation of such a study might involve the researcher shadowing the individual or group whose processes she is studying, recording the various times at which and places in which composing activities occur. I think now about how my understanding (not to mention my representation) of the case study offered in chapter 3 might have been impacted and altered if I had been able to shadow Muffie and to record footage of her choosing a song, creating the solo chart, or managing the rehearsal session held in her bedroom. Since researchers cannot always be with participants when and where composing may occur, a more practicable (and certainly less intrusive) variation on such a study involves providing individuals or groups with the means of recording themselves throughout the process of producing a text, artifact, or event.

Process research could benefit from learning more about how individuals or groups determine or rationalize when they are "in process" and when they were not. Returning to the example offered in chapter 3 of the women who used Walmart as a site of invention: Would Amanda have recorded that trip to Walmart? Or would she have only taped the portions of her process when she was working on the task alone? Recall that the other woman was not a member of the class and this was not, technically speaking, a collaborative project. Or perhaps Amanda only would have recorded the segment of time during which she was assembling the final product, reasoning that everything that came before (such as receiving the assignment in class, talking about it with friends and with me, going to Walmart) was not really a part of the composing process. Of course, asking whether or not Amanda would have taped the Walmart session begs the question of whether they could have, legally speaking, recorded the session (my understanding is that they would not have been permitted to). My point here is, again, that process research could be enriched by learning more about how individuals or groups understand and so identify the times when they are or are not "in the process of" producing a text, object, or event.

Whether or not process researchers explore the potentials of video-based studies, I think it is crucial that we work to expand the range of texts and processes we attempt to learn more about and document for others. A potential limitation associated with the process studies described in chapter 3 is that while these studies were motivated by the desire to trace the relationship between writing and other modes of

representation, they tended to focus on academic writers (participants were either professors or students) in the process of producing texts that tended to include a good deal of writing. As I indicated at the start of that chapter, not every research participant focused on the production of a text wholly comprised of alphabetic text, but our questions did tend to foreground the role of writing as well as the participants' histories with and attitudes toward writing, and not, for example, their histories with and attitudes toward images, colors, scents, sounds, textures, or specific kinds of movement. Writing/written text, in other words, served as a kind of baseline for our study. A variation on this study would involve soliciting the participation of a broader, more diverse range of composers and research subjects (for example, dog trainers, hair stylists, party planners, photographers, bloggers, realtors, choreographers) and having them create videos or visual-verbal representations of the processes they engage in while doing their work (such as training dogs, cutting hair, composing parties, photographs, exhibits, or dances). My contention here is that process research could be greatly enriched by moving beyond the confines of the classroom, the academy, or individual, circumscribed workspaces, and to examine instead the processes involved with the composition, consumption, reception, and valuation of still other kinds of texts, activities, events, social spaces, and ways of knowing.

I would conclude here by stressing, again, that a composition made whole does not advocate that scholars, researchers, and teachers ignore or downplay the presence or import of the written word. Rather, a composition made whole encourages us to attend to *still more* possibilities and potentials for making meaning, and with this, to explore how an ever-changing communicative landscape continually provides us with opportunities to rethink and reexamine the highly distributed, multimodal aspects of all communicative practice.

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A Note on Form

It appears to be something of a commonplace for those composing rather traditional-looking texts about multimodality and/or new media to underscore something of the "irony" (Selfe 2009, 619), or put more forcefully, the "*uncomfortable* irony" (Ball 2004, 404; emphasis mine)

of producing linear and largely alphabetic texts that explore the benefits of encouraging students as well as rhetoric and composition scholars to explore a wider variety of modes and sign systems than have typically been employed in scholarship or classroom practice. I too am cognizant that some could find ironic or problematic the way I have decided to present the argument and illustrations offered in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. One may wonder why—especially in light of many of the texts that are described and illustrated throughout the pages of this text—I have produced a fairly traditional looking print-based, linear, argumentative text. In response, I would say, simply, that the approach to communicative practice outlined here does not advocate creating texts or facilitating change that simply results in the substitution of one set of sign systems, technologies, and limitations for another or that privileges certain ways of knowing, learning, and composing while denigrating or downplaying the value of others. Rather, a composition made whole is concerned with attending to the ways in which individuals work with, as well as against, the mediational means they employ in the hopes that this, in turn, will help empower individuals to choose wisely, critically, and purposefully the relationships, structures, and representational systems that are most fitting or appropriate given the purposes, potentials, and contexts of one's work. In choosing to re-present my work in the way I have, I have attempted to choose wisely, purposefully, and appropriately.