INTRODUCTION
Multimodality and Communicative Practice

On December 17, 2001, I hosted a workshop entitled "Writing in Many Modes: Writing as a Way to Learn." This was the second in a series of four Writing across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID)–based presentations I conducted as part of my graduate research assistantship at a large midwestern research university. The workshop took place in a living-learning community on campus that catered to students who favored creative, hands-on approaches to instruction and were open to diverse kinds of learning experiences. The session's attendees were approximately a dozen instructors from various disciplines across campus scheduled to teach courses in the living-learning community.

Given the community's reputation, I devoted less time than usual to linear, print-based writing-to-learn approaches, focusing instead on tasks that invited students to experiment with alternative, hybrid, or diverse forms of discourse. Because workshop participants taught vastly different kinds of courses—in music, history, dance, economics—I shared with the group a broad range of different texts that my first-year composition students had created in response to various kinds of assign-

ments. The sampling included print-based texts, texts featuring words and images, as well as object-argument or 3-D texts. Since I did not have a clear sense of the workshop participants' histories with or attitudes toward multimodal composing, I selected samples that I felt best represented a kind of continuum of comfort, investment, and experience. For example, with a mind toward instructors who only had time to assign a multimodal task or two, I selected examples of texts produced in response to shorter, lower-stakes tasks where students were asked to experiment with different ways of summarizing and analyzing course readings. For those who already had asked students to experiment with alternative forms or were able to devote a greater portion of the semester to having students compose multimodal texts, I brought examples of texts created in response to higher-stakes, more time-intensive, research-based tasks.

I had encouraged the session's participants to ask questions while I was describing the tasks and student texts I had brought to the session, but it was not until I shared with the group a pair of pink ballet shoes (see fig. 1) on which a student had transcribed by hand a research-based essay that a member of the audience, a teaching assistant in the history department, interjected, "I have a question. So where did she put her footnotes? On a shirt?" Despite being phrased as a question, his tone, facial expression, and body language suggested this was not a genuine question or attempt at a clever pun so much as his way of signaling his discomfort with the kinds of texts I was proposing students might produce.

This was certainly not the first time the shoes received this kind of reaction, nor would it be the last. Whether implicitly, as was the case here, or explicitly stated, some of the questions lurking behind the reaction seem to be, "How is *that* college-level academic writing?," "How can *that* possibly be rigorous?," or "How can allowing students to do *that* possibly prepare them for the writing they will do in their other courses?" These are certainly important questions—and questions that the chapters of this book aim to address. But while the participant from the December workshop and I may have been looking at the same pair of shoes, what we were seeing, and so understanding, about this particular text and its communicative potentials differed considerably.

My understanding of his reaction is necessarily speculative based
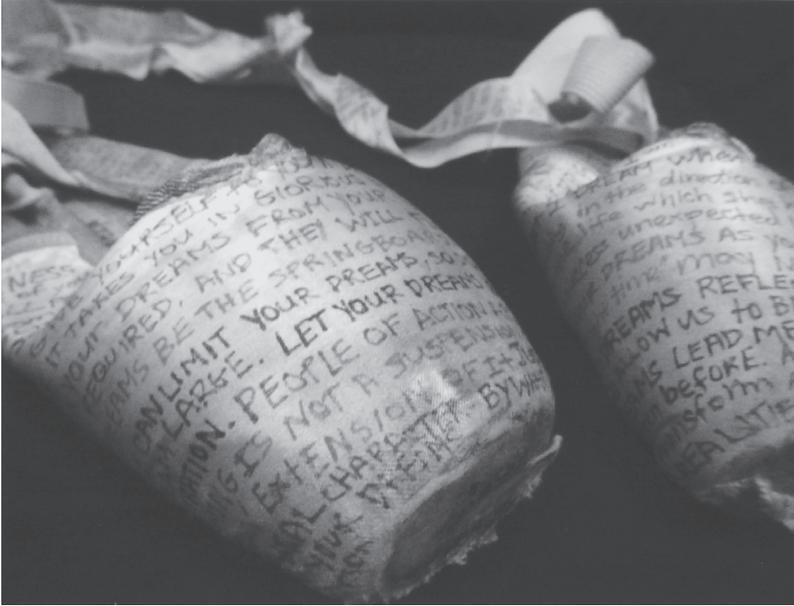
Fig. 1. The pink ballet shoes

on conversations I have had with people who have had similar reactions to the shoes and other of the multimodal texts I have shared with them. My sense is that his attention was focused primarily on the final product, while I was positioned—by having created the assignment, the course itself, and having worked closely with the student over the month she spent working on the shoes—in ways that allowed me to see, and so to understand, the final product *in relation to* the complex and highly rigorous decision-making processes the student employed while producing this text. Also impacting my way of seeing the shoes and valuing the complex decision-making processes informing their production was my increasing familiarity with, and participation in, a discipline where the potentials of alternative, hybrid, mixed, and experimental forms of discourse were explored in classrooms and discussed in publications.

I do not mean to suggest that similar conversations were not also occurring in the workshop participant's discipline. Nor do I mean to equate exploration or discussion with widespread disciplinary acceptance or consensus. That Schroeder et al. (2002) is dedicated to those

who have had *"the courage* to experiment with alternatives" (emphasis added, n.p.) is telling. That Geoffrey Sirc—in a 2002 text that posits that perhaps the only thing that would make composition worth teaching is the discovery of new processes, materials, and products—should be referred to as "the most dangerous man in writing instruction" (n.p.) is also telling. Equally telling is that the experimentations with form associated with the Happening movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s should have been critiqued then, and often remembered today, as being too much invested in relevance and too little in rigor. What I do mean to say is that within rhetoric and composition studies—a discipline that has long been interested in students' writing and ways of improving it—conversations about what students of discourse should know and do is, historically speaking, nothing new. As Robert Connors (1997) writes, "One of the continuing questions informing rhetorical theory and teaching has been: What are students of discourse supposed to know, to be able to speak and write about? This is a question that faced Quintilian, as it does every new teacher of composition. . . . Should we emphasize honest, personal writing? stress academic, argumentative, or practical subjects? or try somehow to create a balance between these discourse aims? These inescapable questions have had teachers arguing for the last two hundred years and more" (296).

Certainly, one could argue that providing students opportunities to create texts based on personal interests and experiences represented the most profound shift in this regard. As Connors contends, with the 1870 publication of John Hart's *Manual of Composition and Rhetoric,* students began encountering assignments that "privileged the personal pronoun in a new way" (310–11). Although the final form of students' writings remained largely fixed for the next one hundred years (that is, texts based on personal experiences and interests were often print-based and linear, and so, visually speaking, resembled the research-based, argumentative texts students were also expected to produce), in the mid-1960s there began to appear a number of publications that pointed to the potentials of providing students with increased representational options. Some of the options discussed, often even hotly debated, included allowing students to compose themes on nonuniform sizes of paper penned in "puce-colored ink" (Emig 1983, 53); to paint poems (Lutz 1971); to create

comic books (Leonard 1976), scrapbooks (Gorrell 1972), films (Williamson 1971), photo essays, collages, slide and tape multimedia presentations (Wiener 1974); and to produce nonrepresentational drawings and journal entries based on meditative exercises (Paull and Kligerman 1972). Scholarship published in the 1990s and early 2000s began exploring the benefits of allowing students to experiment with alternative, blended, diverse, mixed, or experimental discourses, with proponents maintaining that these discourse forms and mixed genres "enable kinds of rigorous academic work that simply cannot be done within the traditional discourse" (Schroeder et al. 2002, ix–x; see also Bishop 2002; Bishop and Ostrum 1997; Bridwell-Bowles 1992, 1995; Carroll 1997; Davis and Shadle 2000, 2007; Dunn 2001; and Romano 2000).

Relevancy Revisited in a Digital Age

While debates over whether students gain much of anything from exploring different discourse forms and genres is not, technically speaking, new, technological changes—that is, the rate at which the communicative landscape is changing—have fueled discussions about what twenty-first-century students of discourse should know and be able to do. Pointing to the ease with which computer technologies allow the production of complex texts featuring the integration of words, images, sounds, and movement and arguing that new digital technologies "offer an endless array of new and exciting possibilities for the improvement of education" (Anson 2008, 48), advocates for curricular change have been increasing efforts to "disturb 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).

One impetus for curricular change has to do with bridging the gap between the numerous and varied communicative practices in which students routinely engage outside of school versus the comparatively narrow repertoire of practices typically associated with the writing classroom (Johnson-Eilola 1997, 2004; Millard 2006; Selfe 2004, 2007, 2009; Yancey 2004b). Fearing that composition courses will become, provided they have not already become, anachronistic, Kathleen Yancey, in her 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) chair's address, wonders at the difference between what we teach

and test (that is, largely the production of linear, print-based, argumentative, academic texts) and the various screen-mediated practices many students currently engage in: sending and receiving e-mails, instant messages, text messages, and tweets; creating blogs, Websites, Facebook pages, and the like. "Don't you wish," Yancey asks in her address, "that the energy and motivation that students bring to some of these other genres they would bring to our assignments?" (298).

Also motivating the efforts to bridge the gap between students' curricular and extracurricular literacy practices is a concern that the continued privileging of a linear, academic essayist prose style (Gee 2007; Lillis 2001; Scollon and Scollon 1981) contributes to a limited conception of writing, one "that pre-dates the recent proliferation of electronic communication devices" (Samuels 2007, 105). As Johndan Johnson-Eilola (1997) writes,

> The growth of technologies requires us to rethink what we mean
> by composition. We cannot merely add these technologies to our
> classrooms and theories as tools with which our students arrive at
> their primary task (a common stance); we must take these forms of
> communication to be at least as important (and often more culturally
> relevant) than singly authored papers arguing a single, clear point
> forcefully over the course of five, neatly typed, double-spaced pages.
> This narrow focus was helpful historically for composition in defining
> itself against a range of other disciplines and academic departments;
> today, however, we must expand our definitions to gain broader
> influence and relevance. (7)

The general argument or concern voiced here is not new. In 1925 Harry Overstreet, suggesting that it would "behoove the traditional English department to split itself in two: into a Department of Written Expression and a Department of Literary Appreciation" (91), blamed a limited conception of writing for giving students the impression that writing was a "chore" (88), something to endure because teachers demanded it of them, and for inhibiting "the enthusiastic pursuit of the art of writing" (91). As Overstreet explains, "Students in school and colleges get the erroneous idea that writing is only a literary art, indulged in by literary people. . . . Thus one takes courses in writing if he intends to be a poet or

story-writer; if, on the contrary, he intends to be a scientist or engineer or man of business, writing is one of the literary frills inflicted upon him by a faculty of 'cultured' professors" (91). While Overstreet is specifically concerned with the conflation of writing with the production of literary or belletristic texts, Robert Samuels (2007) makes a similar point in calling for a richer, more expansive understanding of writing and the various goals it serves: "Even if [students] do not realize it, writing is at the center of many of their academic and leisure activities. Whether they are flirting on line, instant messaging each other in class, or playing computer games, these students are constantly interacting through writing and technology. Yet many of these same students still equate writing with composing essays or grammatical correctness" (3).

Like Yancey, Johnson-Eilola, and Samuels, Elaine Millard (2006) suggests that "the disjunction between the multimodal world of communication which is available in the wider community and the conventional print modes of the standard curriculum" is to blame for students reporting that they feel increasingly alienated from what schools have to offer (236). For those advocating curricular change, suggestions and justifications for changes often center, as was certainly the case during the late 1960s and early 1970s, on issues of relevancy as well as academic and institutional viability. The challenge becomes one of designing courses that speak to students' past, present, and projected interests, needs, and concerns, and that help prepare them to "work in and understand electronic literacy environments" (Selfe and Selfe 2002, 359; see also Faigley and Romano 1995; Gee 2007; Handa 2004; Hill 2004; Kress 1999; and Welch 1999). Stated more comprehensively, courses must foster "the habits of critical consciousness that are at the heart of a productive literacy responsive to changing times" (Millard 2006, 237).

While I value scholarship that provides students with options for working with a broad range of media and technologies, and that underscores how "knowledge can be embodied in different kinds of representations and [that] some kinds of knowledge lend themselves better to certain representations than to others" (McCorduck 1992, 245), I am concerned that emphasis placed on "new" (meaning digital) technologies has led to a tendency to equate terms like *multimodal*, *intertextual*, *multimedia*, or still more broadly speaking, *composition* with the production

and consumption of computer-based, digitized, screen-mediated texts. I am concerned as well that this conflation could limit (provided that it has not already limited) the kinds of texts students produce in our courses.

Kathleen Yancey (2004a) writes,

> That we live in a fragmented world is not news. That textuality has pluralized is, likewise, not news. What we make of these observations pedagogically is news—and still, as they say, under construction. *Computers and Composition* is prescient in this regard in that, even in its title, there is the claim that in writing, medium indeed matters. In the journal title is also the promise that the combination of computers and composition would signal a profound shift in the ways we write. The ways we write aren't quite shifting, however; we *aren't* abandoning one medium for another. Rather, the layered literacies Cynthia Selfe (1989) described have become textured in interesting ways: Print and digital overlap, intersect, become *intertextual.*
>
> And key to these new ways of writing, these new literacies, these new textures, I'll argue, is *composition*, a composition made whole by a new coherence. If we are to value this new composition—text that is created on the screen and that in finished form is also mediated by the screen—we will need to invent a language that allows us to speak to these new values. Without a new language, we will be held hostage to the values informing print, values worth preserving for that medium, to be sure, but values incongruent with those informing the digital. (89–90)

I cannot help wondering where the "new composition" Yancey describes leaves the composer of the ballet shoes. How might it position, whether rhetorically, materially, or technologically, texts that explore how print, speech, still images, video, sounds, scents, live performance, textures (for example, glass, cloth, paper affixed to plastic), and other three-dimensional objects come together, intersect, or overlap in innovative and compelling ways? Save for the fact that Yancey's article focuses on the assessment of digitally mediated communications such as e-mail, digital portfolios, PowerPoint, hypertext, MOOs, and MUDs, there is nothing in the definition of composition Yancey offers at the end of her piece to suggest that this "new composition" should necessarily be lim-

ited to a consideration of screen-mediated texts: "A composition is an expression of relationships—between parts and parts, between parts and whole, between the visual and the verbal, between text and context, between reader and composer, between what is intended and what is unpacked, between hope and realization. And, ultimately, between human beings" (100). And save for the fact that the next paragraph reimposes this digitized limitation as Yancey continues, "Digital compositions then bring us together in new ways" (100), such a definition is clearly robust enough to point to, if not explicitly include, expressions, relationships, texts, and contexts that are not wholly or even partially digital.

To offer yet other examples of the way the term *multimodal* has been equated with new media texts and digital technologies: At a session held at the 2006 Computers and Writing conference in Lubbock, Texas, Dan Anderson, Anthony Aktins, Cheryl Ball, Cynthia Selfe, and Richard Selfe presented the findings of a CCCC Research Initiative Grant to gather information on teachers who had students produce multimodal texts in writing classes. When asked to define or describe the term *multimodality*, Ball reported that the majority (85 percent) of the survey's 45 respondents described digital texts, such as digital audio, video, and Websites. While the sample is admittedly small, the results point to a trend suggested by another example: Sidler, Morris, and Smith (2008) describe the articles featured in the sixth section of their collection as texts that have "become part of a growing trend toward multimodal composition, *or what is often called new media writing*" (451; emphasis added).

I recognize how new media texts and computer technologies have the potential to "bring us together in new ways" (Yancey 2004a, 100), to "change the way students write, read and think," to "cultivate multiple literacies, to blur the writer/reader boundary and to broaden notions of 'composing'" (Zoetewey and Staggers 2003, 134, 147). Yet I am also aware of how writing on shirts, purses, and shoes, repurposing games, staging live performances, producing complex multipart rhetorical events, or asking students to account for the choices they make while designing linear, thesis-driven, print-based texts can also broaden notions of composing and greatly impact the way students write, read, and perhaps most importantly, respond to a much wider variety of communicative technologies—both new and not so new. (For a wider assortment

of texts than can be described here, please visit www.remediatethis.com/ student. This site was created, in part, to function as a place for cataloging some of the multimodal texts produced by the students with whom I have been fortunate to work.)

I find it curious, for instance, that when Samuels (2007) describes the various ways that students employ writing and technology in their academic and leisure activities, his list does not include taking or passing notes in class, composing to-do lists, doodling, writing on chalkboards or whiteboards or leaving phone messages. By equating technology with computer technologies Samuels renders invisible the other, not-so-new technologies students employ *while* or *before* flirting online, messaging one another, or playing a game online. In other words, what are overlooked here are the technologies that students use in order to create and sustain the conditions for engaging in these activities—turning on lights, arranging themselves at desks, on chairs, on beds, and so on. Also rendered invisible in these depictions are the various nonwriterly activities that students engage in before or while they are interacting online—activities perhaps intended to support or enrich the time one spends connecting with, or writing to another: asking a friend if they will be online later that evening, taking a break from game play to use the facilities, to grab a snack, to put on some music, to smoke, to answer the phone, or perhaps even to ask someone to leave the room. As Paul Prior and Julie Hengst (2010) remind us, "people are never just talking, just reading, just writing" (19). Rather, they are often doing many other things as well: drinking coffee, eating, smoking, listening to music, pacing and talking to themselves, doing laundry and so on.

Again, my concern is that a narrow definition of technology coupled with the tendency to use terms like *multimodal, intertextual, multimedia,* or *media-rich* as synonyms for digitized products and processes will mean that the multimodal, yet-to-be-imagined hybrids that Russel Wiebe and Robert S. Dornsife (1995) reference below will be (*provided that they have not already been*) severely limited by the texts, tools, and processes associated with digitization. Here, the authors work to trouble "the comfortable writing pedagogies that form our disciplinary core" (Faigley and Romano 1995, 49), but in so doing, they are, I believe, imagining the inclusion of a much broader range of technologies and

media than others often have in mind: "Instead of seeing the computer as the only technology with which composition ought to be concerned, we wish to show that only when other contemporary media—television, video, photography, music, and so forth—are considered, and the notion of a 'text' broadened to include everything from conventional essays, to paintings, photographs, videos, *and hybrids that we have yet to imagine,* can 'computer composition' really become a living discipline in an academy that responds seriously to the lives its students live" (133).

When it is suggested time and again that "new media writing affords students new opportunities to reassemble the world outside the linear constraints of the print paradigm and make things fit in new ways" (Zoetewey and Staggers 2003, 135), I have to wonder whether, in attempting to resist the "pro-verbal bias" (Williams 2001, 23), we have allowed ourselves to trade in one bundle of texts and techniques for another: pro-verbal becomes pro-digital. Thus, in an attempt to free students from the limits of the page, we institute another, limiting them to texts that can be composed, received, and reviewed onscreen. In so doing, we risk missing or undervaluing the meaning-making and learning potentials associated with the uptake and transformation of still other representational systems and technologies. Beyond seeming to assume that students have already exhausted every affordance associated with linear print paradigms, the suggestion here is that students would not be able to or simply would not want to demonstrate how they have thought to "reassemble the world" and "make things fit in new ways" *without* necessarily taking that work online.

Multimodal Aspects of Communicative Practice

In her 2006 CCCC chair's address, Judith Wooten questions the newness of multimodality literacy. "What about literacy," Wooten asks, "hasn't been multimodal? Like forever?" (241). Like Wooten, Elizabeth Birr Moje (2009) argues that the multimodal nature of texts and of literate practice is not new. Rather, what is new is our attention to them. Put otherwise, prompted, in part, by increasing access to digital texts, what is new is that we have begun "calling into question the dominance of print as a communicative and/or expressive form" (352). What I value most about Wooten's question and Moje's argument is that they invite us

to consider the interests, investments, factors, or forces that have allowed us, as a discipline, to treat multimodality as a relatively new phenomenon—and one that, as this book argues, is too often and too narrowly associated with computer technologies and the production of digitized texts. For instance, *what if* composition and communication instructors had worked to forge tighter pedagogical and disciplinary connections in the late 1940s when CCCC first was formed? Might that have resulted, as John Heyda (1999) speculates it might have, in a first-year course grounded "in a network of literate practices" (680)? The arguments raised by proponents of a communications approach to the first-year course are covered in more detail in chapter 1, but for now I suggest that it stands to reason that *had* we worked together to create courses, a course content, and a research tradition that treated the communicative process as a dynamic whole, finding ways to describe and account for the complex relationship between writing and other modes of representation might not pose the kind of challenge it seems to pose today.

I am struck, however, by the example Wooten chooses to offer as evidence that literacy has always been multimodal. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," Wooten points to a letter written in 1613 that featured text and four hundred pages of drawings. This example seems to have less to do with the multimodal aspects of literacy (as a dynamic practice) than with the multimodal aspects of seemingly stable texts or literate artifacts. In this way, Wooten makes a point similar to those made by Gunther Kress, Anne Wysocki, and others who argue that there is, technically speaking, no such thing as a monomodal text as even print-linear alphabetic texts are provided meaning potentials based on the visual design of the page; the color, quality, and texture of paper the text is printed on; and so on.

A primary concern addressed in this book has to do with how a tendency to label as multimodal certain texts or artifacts, whether they are digitally based or comprised of a mix of analog components, works to facilitate a text-dependent or textually overdetermined conception of multimodality, thereby limiting potentials for considering the scope, complexity, and pervasiveness of multimodal practice. Following Paul Prior (2009), this book argues that multimodality is not some special feature of texts or certain kinds of utterances, but a "routine dimension

of language in use" (27; see also Prior et al. 2007). As Prior goes on to explain, "Multimodality has always and everywhere been present as representations are propagated across multiple media and as any situated event is indexically fed by all modes present whether they are focalized or backgrounded. . . . Through composition, different moments of history, different persons, different voices, different addresses may become embedded in the composed utterance" (27).

Part of the problem, as Prior and others note, is the discipline's fading interest in composing process studies coupled with its tendency to "freeze" writing, to treat it as a noun rather than a verb, and to privilege the analyses of static texts, what Prior refers to here as the "composed utterance." In her critique of "strong-text conceptions of literacy" (104), Deborah Brandt (1990) compares the analysis of static artifacts—searches for stable "patterns in language-on-its-own"—to "coming upon the scene of a party after it is over and everybody has gone home, being left to imagine from the remnants what the party must have been like" (76). Prior's point and the point I would echo here with Brandt's party metaphor in mind is that theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical frameworks that fail to trace the complex ways that texts come to be, and overlook how writing functions as but one "stream within the broader flows of semiotic activity" (Prior 1998, 11; see also Lemke 1998; Medway 1996; and Witte 1992) cannot help but fail to illumine the roles other texts, talk, people, perceptions, semiotic resources, technologies, motives, activities, and institutions play in the production, reception, circulation, and valuation of seemingly stable finished texts. I will argue in this book that when our scholarship fails to consider, and when our practices do not ask students to consider, the complex and highly distributed processes associated with the production of texts (and lives and people), we run the risk of overlooking the fundamentally multimodal aspects of *all* communicative practice.

If we acknowledge that literacy and learning practices have always been multimodal and that "communication has always been a hybrid blending of visual, written and aural forms" (Hill 2004, 109), the challenge becomes one of finding ways to address—in our scholarship, research, and teaching—the multimodal, technologically mediated aspects of all communicative practice. In chapter 1, I point to two areas that hold

such potential. The first involves expanding our disciplinary commitment to the theorizing, researching, and teaching of written discourse to include other technologies and forms of representation. The second involves rethinking the potential and value of composing process research. At a time when many in composition studies have begun questioning the field's "single, exclusive and intensive focus on written language" (Kress 1999, 85), and its exclusion of the wide variety of sign systems and technologies that people routinely employ, the chapter warns against facilitating changes that result in the substitution of one set of sign systems, technologies, and limitations for another or that privilege certain ways of knowing, learning, and composing while denigrating or downplaying the value of others. Given the field's tendency to "equate the activity of composing with writing itself," thereby missing "the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (Trimbur 2000, 190), the chapter underscores the importance of doing *more* than simply altering or expanding the media with which we, and our students, create texts. Increasing or altering the range of semiotic resources and technologies with which we work will not, *in and of itself*, lead to a greater awareness of the ways systems of delivery, reception, and circulation shape, and take shape from, the means and modes of production. To accomplish that, chapter 1 argues, we must attend as well to the dynamic, emergent, distributed, historical and technologically mediated dimensions of composing processes.

Chapter 2 examines how a sociocultural approach to communicative practice provides us with ways of attending to the social and individual aspects of composing processes without losing sight of the wide variety of genres, sign systems, and technologies that composers routinely employ while creating texts. To ensure that equal consideration is given to both the social and individual aspects of communicative practice the chapter explores the advantages of granting analytic primacy to *mediated action*. More specifically, this chapter looks to the work of James Wertsch (1991, 1998) and contends that by adopting as our primary unit of analysis the *individual(s)-interacting-with-mediational-means* we are able to attend to the wide range of representational systems and technologies with which composers work and to examine the role other texts, talk, people, perceptions, semiotic resources, technologies, motives, activities, and

institutions play in the production, reception, circulation, and valuation of that work.

To illustrate how a mediated action framework might be applied to process research, chapter 3 draws on data collected during two composing process studies and traces the complex and highly distributed processes participants reported employing while working on a specific task or assignment. While the chapter features moments when the interviewees depicted themselves arranging words on a page (that is, composing written texts, whether alone or in the company of others), these moments are clearly but one dimension of their overall composing processes. The accounts featured here underscore how writing functions as one stream within the broader flow of activity by highlighting the role other texts, people, activities, semiotic resources, institutions, memories, and motives play in the composers' overall production processes. By detailing composing processes that extend well beyond the space of the classroom or campus, the chapter highlights the varied and various places *in which*, times *at which*, and resources *with which* literate activity is typically accomplished.

Chapter 4 describes and illustrates a framework for composing that I have been developing since 1998. Grounded in the sociocultural theories presented in chapter 2, the framework provides an alternative to pedagogical approaches that facilitates rhetorical and material awareness *without* predetermining for students the specific genres, media, and modes with which they will work. The framework highlights the interconnectedness of systems of production, distribution, reception, and circulation by providing students with complex tasks and activities that require them to consider how the contexts in which texts participate shape the way those texts are received and responded to. Importantly, in contrast to frameworks that focus primarily on the production of screen-mediated or visual-verbal texts, or conversely, on the production of linear print-based texts, an activity-based multimodal framework requires that students spend the semester attending to how language, *combined with still other representational systems*, mediates communicative practice. To illustrate how the framework achieves these ends, I present two accounts of first-year composition students negotiating a task they were given in class. In presenting these accounts, I attempt to let the students speak

to the purpose and potentials of their work with the intent of amplifying another sound that has been largely absent in our scholarship, that of students accounting for rhetorical objectives and the choices they made in service of those objectives.

That we need to begin articulating and sharing with others strategies for responding to the "differently shaped products" (Takayoshi 1996, 136) students are increasingly invited to produce is evidenced by the dearth of scholarship devoted to the assessment of multimodal and new media texts. While recently there have been efforts made to address this lack, the focus has been on the assessment of new media texts in a context where students are expected to produce texts of a similar type, and where instructors are solely responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of those texts. Chapter 5 describes and illustrates a framework for evaluating multimodal designs that does not focus exclusively on the production and evaluation of digital (new media) texts, but attends to a much broader range of texts, communicative technologies, and rhetorical activities—those informing the production and reception of print-based, linear essays, objects-as-texts, live performances, as well as digital texts. The chapter updates and extends, in ways keeping with the demands of multimodal production, the metacommunicative potentials of the reflective texts (or meta-writings) that students are often asked to compose and turn in with their final papers or portfolios. The chapter stresses the importance of requiring that students assume responsibility for describing, evaluating, and sharing with others the purposes and potentials of their work. More specifically, it argues that students who are required to produce "precisely defined goal statements" for their work become increasingly cognizant of how texts are comprised of a series of rhetorical, material, and methodological "moves" that, taken together, simultaneously afford and constrain potentials for engaging with those texts (Beach 1989, 137–38). Chapters 4 and 5 highlight what students accomplish when they are provided with opportunities: (1) to set their own goals for the work they produce in the course; (2) to draw upon a wider range of communicative resources than courses have typically allowed; (3) to speak to the ways the various choices they have made serve, alter, or complicate those goals; and (4) to attend to the various ways in which

communicative texts and events shape, and take shape from, the contexts and media in which they are produced and received.

I have borrowed as the title and epigraph of this book lines from Kathleen Yancey's 2004 article, "Looking for Sources of Coherence in a Fragmented World." What I find most useful about the definition of composition that Yancey offers is that it reminds us that a composition is, at once, a thing with parts—with visual-verbal or multimodal aspects—the expression of relationships and, perhaps most importantly, the result of complex, ongoing processes that are shaped by, and provide shape for, living. As I argue above, there is nothing in the definition Yancey provides that necessarily limits this new composition, this composition made whole, to a consideration of screen-mediated texts. Given the degree to which and rate at which new technologies are impacting the communicative landscape, it seems unwise to ignore those changes or to continue focusing on written discourse and literacy practices as traditionally defined simply "because that's what we do in composition" (Williams 2001, 23). Yet as we begin considering other technologies and forms of representation, how do we choose what to include? What to leave out? Who does the choosing? And based on what grounds?