

CHAPTER 1

“DEEP IN THE DISCIPLINE’S BONES”—LATENT HISTORIES OF SITUATED PROCESSES

Process is emblematic—a central figure, maybe *the* figure, of composition studies’ modern history. “Writing is a process and not a product” is the simple phrase said to have launched one thousand ships of inquiry into writing practice, theory, and teaching. With its familiarity and status, the “writing process movement” can be quickly caricatured—revolutionary, student-centered, invention, talk-aloud, cognitive, recursive, revision, expressive, around 1971, after current-traditional rhetoric and before postprocess. And this capacity for thumbnailing the “process movement” can have the effect of cementing into a “grand narrative[] of composition history” (McComiskey, “Introduction” 8), and an attendant assumption that once upon a time a burgeoning field at once embraced one radically new way of conceptualizing, studying, and teaching writing. But looking back, writing as a process defies such coherence. Instead, stories of process in composition studies appear more a knot of capacious and often colliding potentials—a classroom commonplace, a long historical moment, a set of competing assumptions about writing, an idea familiar to nearly every writer, a site of critique, an engine of both innovation and tradition, liberation and standardization.

More than a paradigm or movement, process is more aptly seen as stories plural, ones told through the details. After all, process has done and meant quite different things across its uptake by researchers, scholars, historians, and pedagogues over time. For Maxine Hairston, the writing process movement was that seismic wave of a paradigm shift. For Sondra Perl, it was never revolutionary but instead a legitimizing force (“Writing” xi). For James Marshall, process did have a revolutionary edge, fueled by rebellion against traditional formalist teaching (51). For Joseph Harris, process teaching failed to deliver the revolution it promised, unable to release writing instruction from its traditional past (55). For Lisa Delpit, process teaching only claimed to be liberatory, but in practice, instead perpetuated disadvantage for minoritized students who were held accountable to, but never taught, discourse codes of privilege (“The Silenced” 287). For Patricia Bizzell, process ignored socially-situated knowledge (93). For Lester Faigley, writing in 1986 at a time when “nearly everyone seems to agree that writing as a process is good” (527), saw processes differently depending on the theorist,

as expressive, cognitive, social, or “historically dynamic” (537). For Thomas Kent, writing was never and can never be a generalizable process (*Post-Process* 5). For Lad Tobin, writing in the 1990s amidst a call from some to separate from process, “many of the fundamental beliefs of the writing process movement . . . continue to hold power for most writing teachers and students” (7). Just these few compositionists’ voices complicate any easy hindsight narrative about a unified “process movement” and its supposed yields. Stories of writing process more than simplified master narratives reveal that, if anything, the longstanding centrality of process has cohered around productive *incoherence*, questioning, challenge, and disunity.

Process remains—perhaps equally in spite of and because of this unifying incoherence—still foundational in composition studies, especially in the teaching of writing. As Chris Anson writes in his 2014 retrospective, persisting through both critique and the expansion of the discipline, “the core of process pedagogy remains. . . . deep in the discipline’s bones” (226). Likely Anson means to suggest that process remains vital, to both the histories and current practices of composition. But his phrase—in *the bones*—echoes evocatively to me. In the bones implies hidden but ineluctably structural, yet unmoving or calcified. In the bones suggests centrality, literally deeply foundational, but so much so as to not arouse attention or pointed consideration. As Kyle Jensen recently put it, process may be to us now a “grounded concept,” one that continues to direct how we think, research, and teach. But significantly, such familiarity also means that process “does not generally receive sustained historical, theoretical, or material scrutiny” (17). In the bones reflects Jensen’s point back to me: process may be alive in our classrooms, but enjoys little critical tension or even much of a second thought. Process is a known known to us all. We have over forty years of work and thinking to guide and direct our process practice. Process is in our bones. What more could be needed?

But a base claim I aim to establish is that in today’s landscape, process could benefit from a reanimating of that tension and critical questioning that has marked its stories over time. For one, after years of saying that we’re now “postprocess” (e.g., Kent; Petraglia), our process teaching has neither ended nor undergone significant renovation (an outcome in part intentional as many who take up the postprocess mantle have resolutely non-pedagogical goals like expanding field concerns beyond student writers and teaching [i.e., Dobrin, *Post-composition*]). At the same time, as Anson, Tobin, and others have underlined, process teaching persists. And, as I discuss in Chapter 3, process persists not just a background concept, but as one in a small set of foundational assumptions advanced to guide the teaching of writing today. And so, for these and other reasons which unfold in this book, *in the bones* is not where this enduring, var-

ied, historically problematic, and currently underconsidered framework should comfortably retire. Said another way, one simple aim of this book is to move process into composition’s muscles again, so to speak—to exercise process and train it in relation to a range of contemporary writing theories, assumptions, and challenges in our field today. Toward this broad goal, in these first two chapters, I rouse some of this productive tension, this critical “scrutiny” (Jensen 17), by troubling broad narratives of process history.

In his story of process stories, Anson reminds us that process history is much more complicated and ranging than he or anyone could ever possibly sketch. “A complete account,” Anson observes, “would take at least a book-length journey, and even then it would have to bypass many interesting studies, debates, and other artifacts that more accurately show the complexities and nuances of the movement” (225). Indeed, nuance often, and even necessarily, lacks in our disciplinary narratives. Bruce McComiskey recently described this lack acutely as he tries to square “any of the best-known histories of the discipline” (“Introduction” 7) with an archive he discovers of his own first-year composition essays. This metaphorical dissonance leads McComiskey and his contributors to the practice of microhistory. A complement to revisionist and counterhistory efforts that work against “the discipline’s early drive toward abstract narrative histories” (34), microhistory is interested in overlooked sites, moments, and actors that have shaped local histories of composition but remain invisible in larger field narratives. As he wonders about all the unnamed contributors to composition, McComiskey is clear about who he does not see as figures suited for the focus of microhistory. “I do not mean people like Ann E. Berthoff or Edward P. J. Corbett or Janet Emig or Fred Newton Scott or Sondra Perl,” McComiskey clarifies. “Their names are produced (or, more likely reproduced) in every narrative” (8). But as McComiskey himself might agree, just because we know their names well does not mean their contributions aren’t too subject to glossing. There is always more to any compositionist’s contributions than any grand narrative will capture. Indeed, even in the work of the most oversaturated familiar figures can emerge smaller, quieter histories and potentials.

In the spirit of microhistory of a different sort, in this chapter I turn first to two prominent figures in writing process narratives, Janet Emig and Sondra Perl, to argue that they construct writing processes as physically and materially situated. Emig and Perl’s work both asserts and counters many familiar assumptions, and often indictments, of early writing process discourse and methods. Emig—ground-breaking process researcher with her contrived writing prompts, talk-aloud protocols, and laboratory-like observation methods—also asked us to consider processes with “at least a small obeisance in the direction of the untidy, of the convoluted, of the not-wholly-known” (“Uses” 48) and with an interest

in writing tools, environments, and physical biology. Perl, cited most in process narratives for her pioneering scientific study of “unskilled” writers and her composing style sheet methods, shifts over time to a stance that theorizes processes as *movement*—bodily, inarticulable, affective, and nonsystematic. Both Emig and Perl come to see writing processes as emplaced, material, and embodied. They question the coherence and transparency of processes while emphasizing physical rhythms and material choreography. But these perspectives have largely failed to rise and adjust the reigning storylines of the process paradigm as cognitive and social action, a shift I aim to make.

I conclude this chapter with a third process figure, Christina Haas. Haas’ work is rarely, if ever, considered a part of process discourse as her book, *Writing Technology: Studies on the Materiality of Literacy*, makes its most obvious contributions to technology studies or computers and writing conversations. But in working to bridge the gap between social and cognitive paradigms with a focus on composing’s material tools, Haas contributes a claim less emphasized in her work but significant for my own: that writing (process) is *embodied practice*. In my read, embodied practice is the lynchpin of Haas’ intervention, containing and connecting broad cultural, community, and historical knowledge to the tiniest of individual embodied actions. In other words, embodied practice shows how writing can never be just an individual or social event but always both in dynamic interrelation.

With this focus on embodied practice, I conclude by situating Haas’ work in the recent “material turn” in composition and rhetoric. This “turn,” I argue, tends to view writing activity on expansive *macro-scales*, turning attention to giant contexts and systems involved in writing acts more than discrete writers alone. As such, process discourse and pedagogy has not much reflected the constitutive force of immediate and located physical-material interactions that Haas, Perl, Emig, and others point to and that materially-oriented composition scholarship points to, an adjustment I argue for and elaborate on in Chapter 2.

Constructing this latent history with these three process scholars is a selection, and thus a deflection. Toward recovering situatedness and physicality in process discourses, I could well have made other choices. I might have exposed the pulsing political contexts reflected and similarly glossed in Ken Macrorie’s examination of student voice. I might have highlighted Peter Elbow’s focus on the materiality of language in his discussion of conscientious objectors’ #150 forms. I might have focused on the political and social justice efforts of the many involved in the publication in 1974 of “Students’ Right to their Own Language,” those who exposed how writing is ineluctably located in and shaped by individuals’ racial, ethnic, cultural, and community contexts. I might have highlighted Barrett J. Mandel, who in 1978 undermined the association among

writing and thinking processes and claimed by contrast that writing operates beyond the mind’s conscious control. I might have too turned my attention to Susan McLeod or Alice G. Brand’s prominent work on affect and process. But I focus on Emig and Perl and Haas, for one and simply, because they are not conventionally positioned in process stories in the ways I uncover here. In the following sections, I close read some of their familiar works and reception in order to bring more of the physical and breathing, local and living dimensions to processes into our teaching imaginaries today.

JANET EMIG: WRITING PROCESSES AS MATERIAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL

Janet Emig gets a part, and even the lead, in most every composition origin story. Emig so centrally features in broad disciplinary histories that her dissertation-study-turned-monograph, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, is often marked as the beginning of modern composition studies. As Steven North is often quoted, Emig’s study is “the single most influential piece of Researcher inquiry—and maybe any kind of inquiry—in Composition’s short history” (197), making *Composing Processes* a work so well-known it may need no introduction at all. Nevertheless, in brief, Emig initiates her study by observing that writing teachers and students were working only with author accounts and handbooks as resources for writing knowledge, sources that lacked depth, evidence, and relevance. Emig also observes that existing “research on the adolescent writer focus upon the product(s) rather than upon the process(es) of their writing, and, consequently, do not provide an appropriate methodology for a process-centered inquiry” (*Composing* 19). With her landmark study, Emig enacts such a “process-centered” approach, conducting case studies of eight student writers using talk-aloud protocol and interview methods and thereby helping to establish a research and pedagogical trajectory for composition based upon the question, how is writing accomplished?

And while undoubtedly influential, Emig’s study in terms of its questions, methods, and implications for teaching also invites critique. In his 1983 evaluation, for example, Ralph F. Voss questions most of Emig’s moves, especially her strong condemnation of writing instruction. Voss also questions what he sees as methodological limitations: direct observation and conversation during composing sessions, which “would surely affect students’ behavior while they were composing aloud” (280). Yet another concern, echoed in Voss, focuses on the manufactured nature of the writing Emig observed. Rather than studying the emergent processes of “real-life” writing situations, Emig gives short, vague prompts to stimulate writing activity: for instance, participants were asked to write “a short piece in whatever mode and of whatever subject matter he wished”

(*Composing* 30). North and others have, moreover, commented on the interpretive license Emig seems to take in her discussion of student writer Lynn, particularly Lynn's choice to write about a Snoopy cutout instead of her grandmother. Steven Schreiner claims that to the behaviors she observed, Emig applied strong modernist notions of literary authorship (88), assuming rather than actually seeing the difficulty of writing and the "isolation of the writer at work" (87). In Schreiner's reading, Lynn fails to "grapple with her writing the way Emig believes the real writer should or does" (93).

In these ways, *Composing Processes* draws many of the general critiques of Process with a capital P: the pedagogical imperative, disregard for the shaping influences of writing contexts, overemphasizing writer's isolated actions and thinking, seeking generalizability, or manufacturing writing scenarios. *Composing Processes* has in these ways anchored general process narratives and drawn many of its familiar critiques. At the same time, the lines of potential inquiry Emig's study makes available have been interpreted in diverging ways: for one, *Composing Processes* has been said to typify either expressive or cognitive process theories. Schreiner reads Emig as an expressivist who casts schooling as a repressive force, reveres reflexive writing, and links "personal voice . . . with personal authority" (101-2). Martin Nystrand, on the other hand, suggests, "Emig was the first researcher to seriously study writing as a cognitive process" (123). Gerald Nelms echoes, naming Emig's "informing concern with cognitive development" (117) the theme with which she remains most identified. What's more, as Nelms' discussion of the social, personal, and institutional context around *Composing Processes* emphasizes, Emig delivered a range of perspectives on processes before and after the publication of this monograph (112). And this range of work demonstrates nuance, and often contradiction, in Emig's thinking about processes. As Nelms concludes, "[t]he complexity of Emig's thought and work belies any attempt at easy classification of her" (127-8). Surely this complexity is what helps cast Emig as at once as an expressivist and cognitivist, and I will highlight here, how we can see her also seeing and thinking about processes in physical and material terms. While she may in her most reified study equate composing processes to the talk-aloud record itself, Emig also prioritized the inchoate, messy, rhythmic, material, manual, motoric, and physiological aspects of composing, aspects of her process thinking that grand narratives tend to gloss.

Composing Processes, in its overdetermined position in composition history, is perhaps an unlikely place to begin building a lineage for a physical-material, or situated, view of processes. There is no sense in the study, for example, of where Emig observes these writers or how those material locations and other contextual factors may be in play; there is no sense of the sessions' time frames nor the writing tools or other material ephemera that may have been involved. The writ-

ing *scene* is decidedly not where Emig imagined the activity of process to take place. Instead, for Emig in the purview of this study, the work of writing unfolds in the compose-aloud record itself. Emig makes this spoken record of the writer’s articulated thoughts and concerns essentially synonymous with process. As she claims, “a writer’s effort to externalize his process of composing, somehow reflects, if not parallels, his actual inner process” (40). Equating process to the talk-aloud record thoroughly contains process “inside” the writer’s mind, a matter of abstracted and procedural thinking. The tight association among process and disembodied thinking holds strong today in everyday conceptions of process, a perspective I am working to disrupt throughout this book. But it is also a perspective Emig *herself* readily undermines.

One important insight gained from Emig’s talk-aloud method, and one that recurs prominently in process research and thinking that followed, is the observation that writing is recursive. By listening to Lynn and the other writers speak their writing in fits and starts, Emig concludes,

composing does not occur as a left-to-right, solid, uninterrupted activity with an even pace. Rather, there are recursive, as well as anticipatory, features; and there are interstices, pauses involving hesitation phenomena of various lengths and sorts that give Lynn’s composing aloud a certain—perhaps characteristic—tempo. (57)

These blurt and pauses create, of course, a *vocal* tempo in Emig’s scheme—the writers generally don’t talk, or write, steadily or unceasingly. But, though Emig does not necessarily emphasize this, this tempo also takes on *bodily* and *material* dimensions as it is rendered in the study. This sense is amplified when Emig explores silences in her compose-aloud records.

Emig catalogues “hesitation behaviors,” points at which writers’ talk was not related directly to the content or focus of their writing. Among these behaviors she includes actions like: “making filler sounds; making critical comments; expressing feelings and attitudes, toward the self as writer, to the reader; engaging in digressions” (42). These hesitations, I note, seem to have to do with the affective dimensions of writing (an area of process inquiry developed by Alice Brand, Susan McLeod, and others, a point I expand upon in Chapter 3) and potentially attention and distraction (an area of much cultural concern, but one that seems to get little consideration in relation to process). Silence, for Emig, is its own brand of hesitation behavior. As she writes, “the silence can be filled with physical writing (sheer scribal activity); with reading; or the silence can be seemingly ‘unfilled’—‘seemingly’ because the writer may at these times be engaged in very important nonexternalized thinking and composing” (42). This

is a rare acknowledgment that participants are actually *doing* physical writing or inscription on a page, an obvious but largely unacknowledged reality given Emig's hyper-focus on participants' verbal behavior. She only one other time in the study mentions the physical act of writing when she suggests that the pace of physically writing impacts its "characteristic" tempo. She writes, "Scribal activity seems also to function as an intrusive form of 'noise' in the composing process . . . If oral anticipation thrusts the discourse forward, as Bruner suggests, the physical act of writing may be said, on the other hand to pull it back" (61). In addition, Emig leaves open the possibility that these hesitations may signal that much "very important" thinking activity is happening, but that that activity may fall outside of writers' conscious awareness.

Overall though, Emig sees hesitation behaviors—feelings, digressions, physically writing, thinking activity that is not yet articulable or is perhaps nonverbal—as strictly *outside* the purview of the composing process. She carefully separates "composing behaviors," which are "verbal behaviors that *directly* pertain to the selection and ordering of components for a piece of written discourse," from "those that are not" (41). Process activity does not—not in this study anyway—include wandering, the ineffable, the affective, tools, inscription, nor the movement of the hand on the page. One sees why Emig pledged allegiance to seeing process bound only in these records and only in utterances directly related to the writing; after all, all research must commit to and enact its perceptual frame. But as these small moments suggest, Emig at the same time recognizes that a writers' verbalized sense about what they are doing or thinking isn't the whole story of a writing process. As she qualifies clearly, her efforts provide only a "theoretical sketch of one of the most complex processes man engages in" (44), acknowledging in some measure forces in writing processes that lie beyond the reach of her talk-aloud methods.

I see in just the edges of *Composing Processes* the roles of embodied, material, and nonconscious or wandering action in processes. But in "Uses of the Unconscious," which appeared in *CCC* in 1964, Emig prioritizes the disorderliness and material conditions of writing. Emig here sounds here much like a process critic, arguing that writing processes are depicted in ways much too reductive and oversimplified. Meditating on the "conscious student theme" (46) and its lack of depth, Emig questions especially the way the writing process is constructed in textbooks:

If one were to believe this inaccuracy, the student-writer uncomplexly sits down, contemplates briefly what is left carefully unspecified, completely formulates this *what* in his head before writing a word, and then—observing a series of discrete

locksteps in the left-to-right progression from planning to writing to revising, with no backsliding—builds a competent theme like a house of dominoes. (47)

Emig’s sentiment here echoes later critiques of process pedagogy, especially what Anson calls the “process wheel” model, a “digestible scheme” (Anson, “Process” 224) that implies that writers proceed uniformly through stages of prewriting, writing, revising. This impulse toward procedural order unrealistically reduces the lived complexities of writing, rendering it instead as a “conscious and antiseptically efficient act” (Emig, “Uses” 48). While *Composing Processes* focused on writers’ conscious awareness of what they were doing as they did it, in “Uses,” Emig “suggests that not only are thought and language difficult to separate but much composing activity goes on subconsciously” (Nelms 118). As I develop throughout this book, a critical implication of seeing process as physical-material, as Emig emphasizes in this 1964 essay, is that processes are never fully in a writer’s own complete control. This insight will recur in various ways across my thinking and help to reshape how we imagine the work and purview of process instruction today.

Emig also emphasizes writing’s hyper-local material conditions. Lamenting the surface-level nature of much student writing, she asks how we could expect to receive otherwise, considering where students are asked to write. Classroom environments, with their short timelines and various “blatant assaults on his concentration” (“Uses” 46), including “scuffling, bookdropping, throatclearing, ball-point pen rolling” (46) could hardly be expected to yield more than surface “themes.” Emphasizing the susceptibility of processes to environmental factors contradicts Emig’s seeming lack of concern in *Composing Processes* about how factors like her direct observation might impact or influence those student writers. Further countering the parameters of her landmark study, Emig posits the importance of control over the material conditions of writing. She emphasizes both the incantations of ritual and the material practices of habit:

Habit is that part of the writing self that observes a regular schedule; that finds a room, desk, or even writing board of its own; that owns a filing cabinet; that sharpens all pencils before writing time; that does not eat lunch or take a drink before dinner; that cuts telephone wires; that faces a blank wall instead of a view of the Bay; even that orders cork lining. (50)

Here, Emig makes critical the physicalities of composing work: staging writing work in a specific space and with specific objects, tools and bodily routines. While

we have no idea with what, or where, or really how the writers in *Composing Processes* produced their text, here in this essay, the stuff of writing matters a great deal to Emig's conceptions of process, as does physicality. Documenting Kipling and Hemingway's preferences for ink and pencil respectively, Emig ponders the importance of the "manuality of the task—the physical necessity to feel a specific pen or pencil pressing against the fingers and palm in a wholly prescribed and compulsive way" (50). In "Uses," writing processes are matters of making space, assembling material tools, and embodied movement. Countering her chief association with the cognitive process paradigm, Emig's early essay shows processes equally to be inarticulable, critically motoric, and materially contingent.

Emig's sense that processes are physical is also realized extensively in a less anthologized work, the 1978 essay "Hand Eye Brain: Some 'Basics' in the Writing Process." As the title makes clear, Emig here advocates for studying the physiology of processes, understanding these embodied realities as more essential to process than articulated thinking or material conditions alone. Considered by Christina Haas and Stephen Witte as one of the only works in composition studies that proposes study of the "embodied nature of writing" (414), Emig's work in "Hand Eye Brain," first published seven years after *Composing Processes*, indeed poses an entirely new set of process questions:

The process is what is basic in writing, the process and the organic structures that interact to produce it. What are these structures? And what are their contributions? Although we don't yet know, the hand, the eye, and the brain itself surely seem logical candidates as requisite structures. (110)

Emig advises that inquiry interested in these questions must account for the plurality of embodiments through the study of writers "with specific and generalized disabilities, such as the blind, the deaf, and the brain-damaged" (111). Emig then meditates on the potential "cruciality" (111) of the physiological to process. She considers the writing hand, which, she suggests, embodies the "literal act of writing, the motoric component" (111). Focusing on the hand emphasizes the aesthetic pleasure of writing, as well as the ineluctable dependency of bodily action and material engagement. Emig underlines this point by casting writing as an act not of abstraction, but of physical creation, likening it to other bodily arts. Emig notes that in the act of writing "our sense of physically creating an artifact is less than in other modes except perhaps composing music; thus, the literal act of writing may provide some sense of carving or sculpting our statement, as in wood or stone" (112). The extended interest in the motoric action of writing by hand harkens back to, but makes much more space for, Emig's tiny acknowledgment of scribal activity in *Composing Processes*.

Emig also sees roles for both the eye and brain in processes. She believes vision might be the sense most closely related to writing; she wonders about the relationship of the brain hemispheres to writing. While this kind of right brain/left brain scheme doesn’t hold up today, Emig anticipates not only the ways that cognitive perspectives will dominate contemporaneous models of process, but also the ways today that distributed and situated cognition perspectives have begun to impact rhetorical and literacy studies (e.g., Mangen and Velay; Rickert; Syverson; Walker). Focusing us on the writing hands, on physical movements and the bodily senses, Emig insists upon process as a fundamentally embodied and enplaced practice.

However, there remains no strong legacy of Emig’s emphasis on physicality. Her concluding sentiment in “Hand” is to forecast the need for writing teachers and researchers to learn about the writing body: “All of us, including senior faculty and advisers, must learn far more about biology and physiology than we have previously been asked to learn” (120). It is jarring to realize just how unrealized Emig’s forecast is. The long timeline of process thinking in composition, and even Emig’s own landmark study, has mostly ignored the specificities of embodiment and environment in processes. Indeed, the master narrative of process—both as its research grows and as critiques emerge—is shaped like a river rock, one that most often sediments into expressivist processes’ problematic individualism or cognitivist processes’ models and schemes. But what would happen to our stories of process if “Hand Eye Brain” was the essay of Emig’s that we primarily associated with the process movement? Or if this essay or “Uses” instead of Emig’s case studies were cast as the “single most influential piece” (North) in process histories?

Janet Emig helped remake writing and its teaching. She did so by seeing composing as webs of intricate human activities worthy of close attention. And such study should not just be focused on the activity of famous bards or great writers. Rather, the activity of the everyday student too evidenced rich complexities that defied the banality of handbooks. Emig did not just establish essential insights in the big history of the process paradigm, like recursivity. She emphasized the *physicalities* of writing experience; she believed a range of factors impacted the ways process manifests differently for individual writers’ distinct bodies in differing contexts. She emphasized writing’s materiality, if overlooking it methodologically. She perceived processes as the movement of the engaged hand, as the rhythms, pace, and interruptions of inscription, and that which could *and could not* be captured in a compose-aloud record. Indeed, silence has more than once lead a process-oriented compositionist to wonder about the roles of the physical body in processes.

SONDRA PERL: WRITING PROCESSES AS EMBODIED INEFFABLE MOVEMENT

In *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body*, Sondra Perl theorizes writing experience through the concept of felt sense, a bodily dynamic both tacit and eruptive in the processes of finding and articulating meaning. Applied by Perl to phenomena she had first observed over twenty-five years earlier and introduced to the field in her 1980 article “Understanding Composing,” felt sense is a term originally coined by philosopher and psychoanalyst Eugene Gendlin and described by him simply as a “body-sense of meaning” (Perl, *Felt* 2). Identifying and nurturing felt sense, Perl suggests, can help writers “create a visceral connection between what they were thinking and writing, a connection that was physical” (8) and dynamically linking mind, sense, and motoric action. Aiming to address teachers’ persistent questions about what they might “do” with felt sense in the writing classroom, Perl offers a set of practical guidelines in *Felt Sense*, instructions that ask writers to close their eyes, breathe, focus, continue a line of thinking, move away from another, and generally tune in to the rhythms and knowledge of their bodies.

Perl backs off making explicit an argument for writing’s embodiment, as she too seems to avoid casting felt sense expressly in writing process terms. And it is telling that she waits until the end of her 2004 book to do so. Supplying the theoretical framework at the book’s end performatively enacts her earlier introductory assurance that “One does not have to accept the mind-body connection for the Guidelines to work” (xvi). Given that Perl also declares plainly that, for example, “we are embodied beings; the body is central to knowing and speaking” (54), an assurance that her readers need not accept writing’s fundamental embodiment to make use of her guidelines strikes as especially peculiar. Perhaps it anticipates rebuff stemming from ideologies of process as disembodied thinking and social action. Perhaps it speaks more broadly to the influence of Western Cartesian dualism on our scholarly thinking. Indeed, as Jay Dolmage puts it in a manner astute and clear: “we in composition and rhetoric have not acknowledged that we have a body, bodies” (110).

In addition to backing off of the implications of embodiment, it is equally telling that Perl doesn’t cast felt sense in writing process terms. For Perl, felt sense is there waiting to become a guide in meaning-making processes; writers can be trained to better listen to and respond to this bodily experience as it manifests. Felt sense drives process through bodily sensation—it manifests as hesitations, sensations, attempts, and familiar phenomenological experiences in writing, like squirming and discomfort (*Felt* 3), unease, waiting, and charging forward. It is, perhaps, a force responsible for that characteristic tempo of composing that

Emig observed. Even so, Perl never outright casts it in process theory terms. This omission perhaps reflects the timing of the book—2004—several years after postprocess discourse has become our deep familiar and process shifted somewhere “deep in the discipline’s bones.” But it is critical for my purposes to emphasize that Perl discovered felt sense only in the course of her “groundbreaking empirical research” (Blau) on the writing processes of adult writers decades earlier. The ineluctable bodiedness of processes can be said to thus erupt right in the center of traditionally identified, pioneering process history in which Perl is a main character. But, like with Emig, the physicality of processes Perl exposes is not what tends to get retold or stick in our writing process imaginaries. Perl not only uncovered the complex logic and recursivity of the writing processes of “unskilled writers”; she also—and even more so—emphasized composing processes as ineffable embodied movement.

Like the modern field of composition studies itself, Perl’s groundbreaking process research was sparked by urgent need. As she describes in a 2014 retrospective, Perl was teaching writing at Hostos Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY) during open admissions. At that time, with an influx of underprepared students and with “no understanding of how our students wrote” (Perl, “Research”), writing instructors became unsure about their conventional teaching methods. And so while Mina Shaughnessy was collecting and analyzing writing samples at City College, Perl took her direction from the emerging belief in controlled research as influenced by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer’s 1963 *Research in Written Composition*. What results is her 1979 scientific dissertation-turned-article, “The Composing Processes of Unskilled Writers.” In light of more descriptive methodologies in practice at the time, Perl commences her study expressing need for a more systematic approach, a “replicable method for rendering the composing process as a sequence of observable and scorable behaviors” (“Composing” 318). Perl offers her composing style sheets method, in which she recorded the “movements” (318) of participants’ processes as captured through their talk-aloud protocols. By visually mapping their coded behaviors, Perl argues that her style sheets could provide enough detail “for the perception of underlying regularities and patterns” (317) in these writers’ processes.

Though, provokingly, Perl calls the writers’ process behaviors movements, she identifies patterns in familiar process terms, listing sixteen distinct actions including General Planning, Local Planning, Commenting, Talking Leading to Writing, Repeating, and so on. Across these actions, Perl finds consistency and pattern in her participants’ processes, or she puts it, “behavioral subsequences prewriting, writing, and editing appeared in sequential patterns that were recognizable across writing sessions and across students” (“Composing” 328).

That these writers enacted comprehensive and logical processes was a significant finding, given that at the time, some educators facing tangled prose wrongly presumed the students who produced it must be cognitively deficient or somehow unteachable. Perl's research demonstrates instead urgent need for an observant teacher who could "intervene in such a way that untangling [a writer's] composing process leads him to create better prose" (328). Perl's study hence established several familiar process claims: the orienting belief that writing can be taught to and learned by anyone, the recursivity rather than linearity of processes, and as she suggests, the fact that process could be captured in "a replicable and graphic mode of representation as a sequence of codable behaviors" (334). Available too is the conclusion that teacher control, guidance, or intervention in a writer's processes could lead to improved or more acceptable written products. All of these are among the most prominent claims of early process inquiry; all were questioned and critiqued; and some still influence our thinking today.

However, at the same time, "Composing Processes" does not simply resolve in seeing processes as fully observable, codifiable, logical, or intentional actions. In tension with Perl's orderly graphical schemes were the inscrutable "periods of silence" (321) she marked. Since she expected to hear the "movement" of composing only through what the participants said they were doing as they wrote, the recording of silence is noteworthy, and provoking. Under her methodological scheme, silence should indicate a lack of significant composing activity and thus not make it into her style sheets. Recall that Emig too noted silences but she carefully separated them from what she counted as composing activity. But Perl, by contrast, indicated the silences. Perl remained curious about "what my coding scheme could not elucidate" (*Felt* 7): the ways writers would fall into still silence followed by a "burst of composing energy" (7). What was going on in these silent moments interested Perl for more than twenty-five years, leading her to complicate her own suggestion that processes could be comprehensively coded and to investigate how composing is also meaningfully observed in subtle bodily activity and feeling. And it is in this line of thinking that her initial articulation of process as *movement* becomes much more literal.

Perl's 1980 follow-up article, "Understanding Composing," begins to make something of the silences she observed. Perl starts by taking stock of the insights emergent in process movement, among them, that writing is recursive. Recursivity, she reflects in the context of her own study, had been "easy to spot" (364), demonstrated by backwards behaviors marked in the talk-aloud protocols, including rereading bits of text and returning to the topic. But Perl remains vested more so in an elusive "backward movement in writing, one that is not so easy to document" (364). To help elucidate this phenomena, she describes the experience of one of her students, writer-teacher Anne, who in her analysis of her own talk-

aloud records reflects that process inquiries at once “reveal certain basic patterns” but also demonstrate that “process is more complex than I’m aware of” (363). Perl amplifies this idea of what process inquiries show and cannot show, stating that:

at any given moment the process is more complex than anything we are aware of; yet such insights, I believe are important. They show us the fallacy of reducing the composing process to a simple linear scheme and they leave us with the potential for creating more powerful ways of understanding composing. (369)

I see much richness in this sentiment—that process activities routinely exceed conscious awareness, that processes are nuanced and unpredictable, that the fleeting and tiny moments in process activity are just as, if not more, important than obvious and repetitious behaviors like recursive rereading, and that “writing is much more of a bodily experience” (Perl, “Watson” 133) than any given process scheme allows us to see. These are not necessarily observations associated with process in traditional or most oft-repeated field narratives.

But they are sentiments repeated by Perl in various ways across the years, both in her characterizations of process and in the modification of her methods for studying them. Reflecting in 1999, Perl laments the unfortunate ways that process became synonymous with cognition and articulates again her enduring interest in what gets left out of these schemes. She observes that, of course, it isn’t that a composing process is *not* cognitive,

but that this is not all it is. It is much richer and far more difficult to articulate because there are, in fact, unspoken pieces of it—the groping and grasping that we all go through . . . [T]he cognition that came out of information processing and problem solving, was too narrow to reflect the richness of composing. (“Watson” 133)

As her comment reflects, it is the elusive parts of process that compel. It’s what is different and changing rather than what is the same that is perhaps most significant: what exceeds any given process model or set of steps, what is ineffable without being unknowable, what is beyond conscious awareness. And, as I argue in this book, emphasizing the contingencies rather than the articulable steps—the differences more than the sameness—of processes is that which can help us transform process teaching.

Felt Sense is yet another place where Perl articulates her process thinking. Again, in that book, Perl calls “attention to what is just on the edge of our thinking but not yet articulated in words” (xiii). Meaning is located in the body, prior

to and informing articulation in language and writing. Perl dramatizes felt sense at several points by appealing to our phenomenological experiences of writing, asking us to imagine, for example, that,

You are drafting a paper. After an initial struggle, trying this, trying that, jotting down a few sentences . . . Everything about the composition starts to feel right. Maybe your body tingles. You lean over your paper or closer to the computer screen. Maybe you jiggle your leg or tap on the table. (3)

Feeling, tingling, leaning, jiggling, tapping, Perl shows us a “bodily connection . . . related to words” (3) and how composing processes, if we pay attention, are always guided by bodily sensations, rhythms, and other forms of subtle movement. Perl closely links language and body, stating for instance “that language and meaning are connected to inchoate, bodily intuitions” (xvii). This link between language and the body aligns Perl’s with embodied meaning perspectives (e.g., Fleckenstein, *Embodied*; Johnson; Lakoff and Johnson), which suggest that everyday understanding of language is only made possible by virtue of our bodily experience. But Perl tends to cast felt sense as an extraordinary rather than everyday site, one where language can be imbued with fresh or original expression. For Perl, felt sense provides a way to break free from the postmodern trap of language—from the subtle space of felt sense, “human beings can make new sense” (50) or “new ideas, or fresh ways of speaking” (51). In these ways, felt sense acquires expressivist associations that might see the body as site of individuality, authenticity, or “true” language expression. In short, I see this association turning writing processes inward—a trapping of process thinking I also work across this book to undermine and thus a place where I diverge some from Perl. Nevertheless, Perl’s felt sense helps me to situate processes in immediate physical contexts by exposing the shaping roles and rhythms of sensation, bodily action, and unpredictability.

Perl’s case for felt sense comes with some hesitation. Again, she does not make express links to writing process discourse, even though much of her description casts it that way. For instance, she provides several illustrations about writers in the process of drafting; her heuristic guidelines are proffered as invention methods, a “‘protected space’ for writing; to help writers locate topics or research questions that are of interest to them or research questions that have been assigned to them” (xv). Associations with embodiment also makes Perl hesitate. As retold in the introduction to *Felt Sense*, colleagues over the years would approach Perl with interest in, but reservations about, felt sense. Some would tell her, “talking about felt sense makes me uncomfortable. It just seems too touchy-feely” (xiii). Its elusiveness, Perl consents, “can make academics uncomfortable” (xiii) and this is in part, it would seem,

why Perl gives readers permission to *not* accept the mind-body connection she constructs, the precise connection upon which the very concept and practice relies.

And Perl’s colleagues are not the only ones unsure of seeing writing processes as embodied. Sheridan Blau, in his NWP review of this book, seems to echo the same uncertain response. He begins by summarizing a central claim, that felt sense is “a bodily experience.” Blau is skeptical of this, at least initially, but in no-uncertain terms:

That concept struck me, at first, as not only a counterintuitive idea but one contradicted by my own experience and knowledge of the wellsprings for insightful writing and speaking. Aren’t our bodies designed more to degrade and misdirect our thinking rather than give us access to the most subtle and elusive thoughts?

Blau here constructs lived bodies as anathema to thinking, perhaps affirming our tacit assumptions about the transcendence of mind and Cartesian split of mind from body. Though Blau does eventually come around in his review to accept “the metabolic rhythm of composition—its movement from aridity to fertility,” he does not seem to accept embodiment as itself formative. In summing up Perl’s contributions, Blau recasts the physicality of felt sense as something more psychological than bodily. For example, Blau constructs one outcome of felt sense in strictly thinking terms, claiming that Perl’s work shows the importance of “metacognitive processing” in composing processes. He moreover dulls in felt sense its sensational aspects when he emphasizes intuition and knowledge as “most important,” identifying “preverbal intuitive knowledge” as the grounds for the “sophisticated and subtle verbal knowledge.” These terms, while not disallowing physicality, certainly do not emphasize it. I note also how Blau’s description implies an orderly procedural link between one kind of knowledge and another—intuition to verbal knowledge. Felt sense is a tidy process, Blau seems to imply, as its tension or discomfort reliably shifts into “sophisticated” articulation. But in describing felt sense, Perl by contrast most emphasizes the importance of *not yet* knowing or of not being certain—that sharp feeling in the gut of “no, not this word,” for example. There is, in other words, an important liminality in felt sense. It is inherently or characteristically uncertain; it is a vacillation between knowing just a little bit and not knowing for sure how to proceed. For me the bodily movement of felt sense thus serves as an important disruption in the logical telos that drives pedagogical constructions of process. The important role of not knowing, of guessing or groping in context, will become especially relevant in my Chapter 5 discussion of improvisation as a figure for teaching writing with situated processes.

In sum, I am certainly not saying that Blau misrepresents Perl’s book. Rather,

what he focuses on in a book about writing bodies, evident through his turns-of-phrase, is perhaps symptomatic of the field's larger challenge in meaningfully conceptualizing the embodiment of process. His read shows too, perhaps, the endurance of deeply ingrained links between process and cognition.

Ultimately Perl was more interested in the nuance and complexities of writing processes than observable activity like recursivity and rereading. She emphasizes the complexity, rather than the ordered legibility, of processes. She seeks to make the bodily and phenomenological experience of composing more mindfully experienced, rendering aspects that may otherwise go unnoticed or be deemed unimportant or idiosyncratic. She appeals to the data of experience—haven't we all had these sharp feelings erupt in writing? In her focus on what's beyond just the "activities taking place inside the writer's head" (Bizzell 185), Perl raises questions central to the pursuit of situated writing processes: how can we discover and consider dimensions of writing processes that exceed the writer's conscious awareness? What roles do physical bodies play in composing? Bodies, movement, and environmental ambience have indeed been left invisible or relegated to the background. One of Perl's central if overlooked contributions is the always-something-more-ness of composing—the complexities and non-repeatability of processes as embodied movement not amenable to schemas or stabilization.

CHRISTINA HAAS: WRITING PROCESSES AS EMBODIED PRACTICE

In their 2001 study of engineers and utilities staff writing a complicated standards document, Christina Haas and Stephen Witte explore processes of workplace technical writing. They're interested in studying this collaboration for its complexities, for example, in how the writers integrate text and images, standardize their draft versions over time, and "deploy[] multiple production and representation systems" (420). Significantly though, their study is not first motivated by gaps in research on collaborative workplace composing. Rather *embodiment* is their foremost enlivening exigence.

Haas and Witte address this need right at the open of their detailed study. There, they liken the production of music to that of writing, noting that "acts of situated writing clearly entail bodily performances of many kinds: the manipulation of fingers, hands, arms; the orientation or positioning of the body; the use of the visual, aural, tactile senses" (414). While technical writing research had to some extent accounted for context, material conditions, or embodied knowledge (i.e., Sauer), Haas and Witte argue that embodiment takes a formative role not only in the specific practices they observed in their study, but also more expansively as the "essential embodied nature of technical writing" (415) itself.

In a 2007 retrospective interview with Rebecca Burnett, Haas notes that the engineering standards study began while Witte was working with cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and she was finishing her 1996 book, *Writing Technology: Studies on the Materiality of Literacy*. “Of course, we were not using the term *embodiment* then” (29), Haas recalls of their separate projects. But what emerged in their data—“the use of space and tools, the interweaving of talk and gesture” (30)—led them to frame their study with embodiment. As Burnett points out though, they might have called upon more established concepts in technical writing research, like expertise or situated cognition. So why *embodiment*? Haas responds that critical theory at the time was taking interest in the body but that “literacy studies had not confronted the embodied nature of writing. And we wanted to do that” (31). Haas establishes this goal in some contrast to the ways she was framing her inquiry in *Writing Technology* “in terms of materiality.” She of course focuses on the materiality of word processing and other digital technologies in that book, but I observe that embodiment is too a critical, even baseline, concept there. Though less emphasized in her own research narratives and in reviews of her book, I see Haas’ embodied practice as a crux of her argument and critical to my thinking, as in *Writing Technology* she connects local, particular physical situations and movements of writing processes to wider cognitive, social, cultural, technological and historical contexts and constraints. In other words, Haas makes a case for physically situating composing processes as, for her, it is through this local, small-scale vantage that larger social, cognitive and historical dimensions of writing can be enacted, observed, and tracked.

Writing Technology is ambitious and capacious in its focus on technology and literacy, as Haas responds to the assumption “that computers’ transformation of communication means a transformation, or a revolutionizing, of culture” (ix). But such seismic cultural change is often only presumed, Haas warns, as “most theoretical accounts of writing treat technology in a cursory way, or ignore it altogether” (xii). Haas thus raises “The Technology Question,” or in her words, “[t]he challenge of accounting for the relationship between writing—as both a cognitive process and a cultural practice to the material technologies that support and constrain it” (ix). This question opens up investigations focused on how material tools “change writing, writers, written forms, and writing’s functions” as well as “whether, and how, changes in individual’s writing experiences with new technologies translate into large-scale, cultural ‘revolutions’” (ix). Haas sets out to determine, in other words, how digital revolutions unfold on a range of scales.

Not surprisingly, contemporaneous reviews of *Writing Technology* tend to emphasize focus on computer technology. In his 1996 *Kairos* review, Lee Honeycutt claims that Haas asks us to diminish our blind enthusiasms for computer culture and instead take up “a more balanced view that sees these technologies

as material embodiments of our culture.” Honeycutt finds Haas’ narrative case study about the redesign of a user interface for a campus file-sharing and email system “the most convincing,” as it demonstrates that computer systems are not transparent or self-determining but in Haas’ words, “an evolving and fluid but nonetheless powerful cultural system” (165). Similarly, in her 1997 *Technical Communication Quarterly* review, Kristine Blair highlights Haas’ claims that writing and technology cannot be treated transparently or without considering the specifics of material configuration, valuing the insight especially that “The” computer “does not exist” (225) only computers multiple, with varying configurations that cannot be generalized “from one electronic writing environment to another” (225). Both reviewers also obliquely mention implications for process. Blair suggests that Haas urges scholars to question “the role of technology in the writing process” (225), while Honeycutt wonders if Haas’ work might “complicate some of our reigning assumptions about the supposed benefits of computer technology on the writing process.” I see in Haas’ book, though, more expansive implications than only how discrete material tools differently shape processes (even as that too is an important point). Haas’ perspective is bigger—she resolves a rift among cognitive and socio-cultural paradigms in process theories through focus on material writing technologies and her concept of embodied practice. In short, it is only through examining tiny iterations of embodied practice that we may “recognize the symbiotic and systemic relationship between technology, culture, and individuals” (Haas 230).

Haas in part builds the need to examine writing technologies by outlining two established but competing theories of writing in terms of focus and scale: the cultural and the cognitive. She documents both the scholars who established “the cultural forms and social functions of writing and written texts” (x) and those who have focused on “the complexity of the writing process itself” (x), including cognitive researchers like Linda Flower and John Hayes. The reign of these theories, though, presents the vexing problem (one echoed in Patricia Bizzell and Marilyn Cooper’s social theories, explored in the next chapter): How can we conceptualize writing as both an individual and social act? Both these social and cognitive paradigms, moreover, tend to treat writing technology transparently (38). For example, Haas notes that in most cognitive models “there seems to be little cognizance that writers live and work in a material space, creating material artifacts, using material technologies. The notion that these material constraints might impinge in any way on the processes of composing, which these theorists seek to examine, is not acknowledged” (39) (certainly this absence is evident in Emig’s *Composing Processes*). Examining the materiality of writing, overlooked as it is, Haas asserts, can ease the culture/individual divide in writing (process) theories and research. And this impasse forms the heart of the technology question

too—how small-scale shifts in individual technology practice might be understood to precipitate a large-scale cultural (computer) revolution and vice versa.

Though the cultural and the cognitive camps clearly connect Haas’ thinking to process, she does not engage expressly in process terms. Nevertheless, she describes writing in ways fitting to the camps we associate with the process paradigm; she asserts that, “writing is at once individual, an act of mind; cultural, an historically based practice; and material, inherently dependent on physical, space-and-time artifacts” (26). By implication, writing processes cannot be just social or cognitive or historical. They are also and simultaneously material. Emphasizing the materiality of composing is not just additive, though—not just another dimension from which to investigate and understand the complex ways writing is accomplished. Rather, it is chiefly through the materialities of writing—the emplaced, socially conditioned, cognitively shaped, and mediated actions of an individual writer—that the full complexities of literacy may be rendered. As I explore in the next chapter, it has been a tacit assumption in composition theory after postprocess that the breadth and complexity of writing may be rendered only through constructing writing’s situatedness on massive scales—through ecologies, networks, complexity theories, for example. In short, after postprocess, writing is more so found in its contexts than in relation to individual writers (Trimbur, “Taking”). Haas provides an alternative to this storyline: she sees those massive systems and contexts only through discrete, material, located, and everyday practices.

It’s not only that Haas’ perspective can be fittingly connected to process history and discourse. Haas should also be viewed as an important connection to recent field interest in the material groundings of literate and rhetorical action. In what has been called a “material turn” (Barnett, “Toward”), of late, writing scholars have worked to complicate more abstracted and fixed social perspectives with insights from new materialism and distributed agency, object-oriented, actor-network, and cultural-historical activity theories. Materially-oriented compositionists question models of autonomous subjectivity and the primacy of human agency in writing and rhetoric while amplifying the roles of things, bodies, affects, environments, and others (e.g., Barnett; Boyle and Barnett; Brooke and Rickert; Gries; Hawk; Lynch and Rivers; Micciche, “Writing”; Rickert). Laura R. Micciche encapsulates this interest as a focus on “the big wide world that both includes and exceeds subjects, altering understandings of agency, identity, subjectivity, and power along the way” (489). Recognizing that “big wide world” in which writing is always already situated has cast net limits on the postmodern dance of discourse and free-floating signifiers in its collisions with flesh, institutions, power dynamics, political forces, objects, and bodies. Materially-oriented theories, in sum, tend to see writing and rhetorical action as practices of more

than just agents or communities alone, and rather as acts of “coexistence . . . an activity not solely dependent on one’s control but made possible by elements”—like objects, others, tools, environments, and sounds—“that codetermine writing’s possibility” (Micciche 498). This interest in materiality certainly amplifies the urgency of situating writing processes I seek in this book and makes a return to Haas’ work even more timely.

But with visibility in composition and rhetoric feeling somewhat recent and pronounced, new materialisms can feel a bit like the “Theory du jour.” As I think through “new materialisms” with regard to processes and writing instruction, it’s important to put checks on its seeming novelty. Indigenous rhetorics (e.g., Haas, A.M.; Grant; Powell) is a decolonialized lineage for relational ontologies and materialisms outside of and before such discourses in Western-European philosophy. Affect theories too hold similar assumptions about the relations among individuals and environments as do many new materialist theories (see, for example, Kathleen Stewart’s discussion of environmental “atmospheres”). And Kristie S. Fleckenstein’s work on embodied composition delivers similar relational ideas. Building from the work of cultural anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, Fleckenstein describes how place, objects, bodies, and time coalesce to continuously (re)produce the relational and “illusory ‘I’” (“Writing Bodies” 288) that writes. This is all to say, and to say all too briefly, what could be quickly glossed as a “new” material turn is better seen as a more longstanding and complex network of relations among myriad influences.

One such extension of or node in this “material turn” that I see as a valuable connection for my interest in situating processes is an emerging “sociomaterial” framework for writing and literacy. In her 2016 qualitative study of individuals with aphasia and their relationships to adaptive technologies, Elisabeth L. Miller advances this orienting term to frame her interests and lists other scholars identifiable with this framework as well (including Dennis Baron’s work on the pencil, Paul Prior and Jody Shipka’s CHAT study of four academic writers, Suresh Canagarajah’s discussion of material access and geopolitical economics for international scholars, and Haas’ study of computer technologies, among others). For Miller, sociomaterialism represents “a recent move in writing studies” (35) to unite the material and social dynamics of literate action. Material things of and around writing are actively a part of processes not inert tools transparently deployed by a writer-agent. Writing environments are not passive background staging, but participatory and shaping. Materiality related to writing processes—both immediate and distant like objects, bodies, light, noise, tools, chairs, electricity, pets, and so on—is productively understood as “active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable” (Coole and Frost 9). This is to say: far from a passing interest, materiality has been and continues to be a fertile, if underexplored

and ranging, perspective from which to examine writing processes on a range of scales. Haas’ work can be said to embody a lineage for current socio- or new materialisms of composition, and, as I’m arguing, for situating processes.

But even with repositioning Haas in the material turn and in process history, what remains even still less emphasized is her concomitant assertion that writing as an embodied practice. This notion earns only a small amount of space in *Writing Technology*; it is mentioned only a few times and in broad strokes. But from any angle, the concept is foundational, more so than material technologies alone, in uncovering the interplay of individual practice and larger social contexts. Here is an extended moment when Haas gives this concept some life:

[E]mbodied practice is a culturally sanctioned, culturally learned activity that is accomplished by individual human beings moving through time and space. Certainly writing can be understood as an embodied practice. Writers use their bodies and the materials available to their bodies via the material world, to both create and to interact with textual artifacts. Writers’ bodily movements and interactions are evident in the conduct of everyday literate activities: Writers pick up and chew on pencils, they rest their hands on keyboards, they move closer to their texts in some circumstances, push back from them in others; readers hunch over manuscripts with pens, stretch out with books under trees, move through on-line texts by pushing keys or clicking buttons. (225-6)

Haas emphasizes first writing as repetitive learned habits, the acquired cultural moves that make the making of writing possible. Her opening sentence makes me picture the ways I learned QWERTY keyboarding starting in elementary school, beginning with repetitive punches of the right index finger on the j-j-j-j key then the u-u-u-u key (trying to compose this example only further speaks to Haas’ point—only my fingers know now, not at all my conscious mind, which digit is in charge of punching which keys). At the same time, Haas here lingers on the smallest physicalities and movements that make and accompany writing—that which is perhaps idiosyncratic, “everyday,” changing, or improvisational in relation to time and place. Embodied practice is where Haas can “contemplate what she feels are two questions crucial to our understanding” (Honeycutt): “How is it that material tools can shape mental processes? And what is the relationship of material tools to the culture in which they are embedded?” (Haas 224). Embodied practice connects these questions, revealing how micro-focus on something like hands to keyboards can be gateways not to solip-sistic but situated views of writing, enabling access to massive scales of histories,

consumer economies, or technological innovations.

Haas no doubt emphasizes word processing and the configurations of material writing technologies. She does say, after all, that writing should be seen as an individual, historical and cultural “act of mind” (26) that is material, or “inherently dependent on physical, space-and-time artifacts” (26). But as she also asserts, “overcoming the culture-cognition impasse in writing scholarship will require refiguring writing, in all its complexity, as of the body and of the mind” (4). In other words, physicality is always already implicated in her argument for the materialities of literacies. Or, as Haas has it, “embodied practice becomes useful in more clearly articulating the connection between the material world of technologies and artifacts and the mental world of thought” (225). It is bodily action that is the critical nexus among minds and objects, and in turn, between individuals and cultures. Haas’ contribution for me then is not so much how examining materiality alone resolves the cultural and cognitive impasse but how a physical-material perspective might do so.

It is also the case, however, that Haas doesn’t spend time at all, aside from a few gestures to theoretical citations, building embodied practice as a concept. I see my own theory of situated writing processes as informed by the spirit of Haas’ embodied practice though; I build upon it in Chapter 3 where I bring together affect, new materialist, ontological, and composition theory perspectives to enliven interaction not only with writing technologies but the ambient, populated environment in which writing takes place. For the ways that Haas focuses on material environments and bodily practice and assuages the seeming choice between social and cognitive process perspectives, I see her work as an integral chapter in writing process stories—and in the not-yet-articulated chapter of situating writing processes that I’ve begun to sketch here.

Stories of writing processes have not been regularly told from the vantage of bodies, objects, sensations, or inchoateness. The history of process has been one largely focused on cognition or expression and the individual writer. But the physical situatedness of process has certainly been available all along—from Emig’s focus on the biologies, material conditions, and physical rituals of writing; to Perl’s focus on the body, silence, movement, and meaning; to Haas’s less noted emphasis on embodied practice. However, my little story of processes as physically and materially situated is further complicated by other established impulses that have moved us away from the study of writing as individual practice. As Haas shows, we have seemed to enforce or at least allow for an impasse between examining writing on small micro-scales of everyday practice or on larger macro-scales of social and material systems. Indeed, situatedness and scale—a question embodied in postprocess discourses—presents another set of challenges, and exigencies, in pursuit of situating process.