

## CHAPTER 2

# LARGER FORCES OR INDIVIDUAL PROCESSES—SITUATEDNESS AND SCALE ACROSS POST/ PROCESS THEORIES

If the grooves of disciplinary thinking shape process into one thing—like (acontextual) thinking or (apolitical) self-expression—then postprocess is most often fashioned as a *break* from that thing. Many postprocess-oriented thinkers make their break clear—as Thomas Kent puts it, “Breaking with the still-dominant process tradition in composition studies, post-process theory . . . endorses the fundamental idea that no codifiable or *generalizable* writing process exists or could exist” (*Post-Process* 1). Kent’s break here is so complete so as to pronounce process always already impossible, even nonexistent. Joseph Petraglia echoes the urge to break up and move on, claiming, “we now have the theoretical and empirical sophistication to consider the mantra ‘writing is a process’ as the right answer to a really boring question” (“Is There” 53). Petraglia votes to end process in favor of more interesting questions, those focused on the “ecology in which writing takes place [rather] than in the mere fact that writing is the outcome of a variety of steps and stages” (63). In so doing, postprocess acts as a dismissal: “a rejection of the generally formulaic framework for understanding writing that process suggested” (53), a rejection of process as a “regime,” of the dogmatism of teachability, and of the illusion that there are any substantive “general writing skills” that can be isolated and taught.

John Trimbur, thought to be the first to advance the term “post-process” in a 1994 book review (Matsuda 65), does not necessarily construct postprocess as a break. He does suggest though that the books he reviews “result from a crisis” and “a growing disillusion” with writing as a process (“Taking” 109). Post-process is for Trimbur more a shift than a break: less focus on writers writing and more interest in “the cultural politics of literacy” (109). Sidney Dobrin has echoed Trimbur’s sense of a collective refocusing, defining postprocess in 1999 as “the shift in scholarly attention from the process by which the individual writer produces text to the larger forces that affect that writer and of which that writer is a part” (“Paralogic” 132). Subsequent invocations of postprocess have strengthened its dismantling energy, a force evidenced, for example, by Dobrin’s more recent “intent of violence” (*Postcomposition* 2) toward the tra-

ditional foci of composition studies—students, subjectivity, teaching, and administration. Postprocess as break is evidenced too, though in a subtler form, in related “postpedagogical” questioning of whether writing can be taught at all (e.g., Lynch). Whether a break strong, weak, or a shift, postprocess in different ways zooms out, leaving behind looking at writers writing to examine instead the macro-scales of writing’s expansive contexts and systems.

But often it’s not just a shift in focus—incantations of postprocess can also emphasize what we *can’t do* anymore. We can’t invoke process, Kent and others say, because it doesn’t exist. We can’t teach general skills because they don’t either. This sense of not-any-moreness, of the field being now *after process*, has perhaps had some chilling effect on process discourse. A sense of prohibition, for example, permeates Anson’s suggestion that process is now “in the discipline’s bones.” It likely urges Richard Fulkerson in 2005 to resolutely assert (even if too strongly) that, “we no longer do research into writing processes” (670). It seems to direct Jody Shipka, in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, to address the “discipline’s fading interest in composing process studies” (104) and to make a case for “rethinking the potential and the value of composing process research” (14). It may reflect in the inclusion of “process” in Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg’s 1996 volume, *Keywords in Composition Studies*, and its subsequent omission in their 2015 follow-up, *Keywords in Writing Studies*. It seems to motivate Pamela Takayoshi, in her 2015 study of social media composing, to argue overtly for “pay[ing] attention to writing as a process . . . through data-based, in situ studies of what writers are actually doing with contemporary writing technologies” (“Short-Form” 2), or again in 2018, to assert plainly that, “we need a return to research on composing processes” (“Writing” 550). That a compositionist would find need to make an overt “pitch” for process as a framework suggests the extent to which a clear if loose “after process” sensibility has taken hold. I note too that express calls for a return to or resurgence of process are concerned largely with process research—making me wonder again: what of our process *teaching* in this long postprocess era?

As we reckon with what postprocess means, it’s important to emphasize that the characteristics of process that postprocess aims to break from are not what I and others (e.g., Breuch; Shipka; Takayoshi) are interested in. As Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch has it, the shape of “process” often crafted “by postprocess scholars is the scapegoat in an argument to forward postmodern and anti-foundationalist perspectives” (120). Postprocess contributes a range of compelling claims relevant to writing theory, practice, and even to process—those related to the materialities, contingencies, unpredictability, distributedness, relationality, and publicness of writing acts. Indeed, these ideas might take more hold in the field—particularly from my view, in contemporary writing pedagogies—if post-

process was not so regularly conceptualized as *not-process*, if the transformative potential of postprocess claims did not directly appeal to or raise by association “process as the necessary caricature” (Matsuda 74).

Further, mostly unrealized in the long loose influence of postprocess thinking is its potential to see the operation of process (teaching) more clearly and critically. For Dobrin, “posts,” like postprocess,

mark a period in which conversations initiate about not only what we have been doing but what we are still very much currently doing. This conversation occurs in a reflexive, critical way that was not possible during the period prior to the post. This is what is hopeful about the post: the possibility of seeing and knowing the effects of what which is posted becomes greater. (*Postcomposition* 196)

Part of the potential of “post-ing,” as Dobrin articulates it here anyway, is that it can help us see the implicit assumptions, ideologies, and associations of that which we’ve post-ed. That is, postprocess comes loaded with capacity to lay bare the layers of what we have meant by “writing as a process” and what multiple effects those meanings have had. It could help us not only take stock of multiple effects of “the process movement,” but also proceed with a renewed commitment to critically interrogate process, to shake this conceptual frame awake, and expand it beyond its tacit associations, particularly in our teaching. (At the same time, I accept that often postprocess thinkers, Dobrin especially, want nothing to do with teaching or traditional field concerns).

My point is that postprocess need not be final abandonment or a full break from process. Postprocess thinking could spur productive disorientation and a constructive rebuilding of teaching with processes that is more nuanced, specific, and dimensional. As Bruce McComiskey writes, a “fruitful meaning for the ‘post’ in post-process is ‘extension,’ not ‘rejection’” (“Post-Process” 37). But embrace of extension is not to imply sameness or unity across post/process. In wanting to break with the postprocess rhetoric of breaking, I do not mean that all the many differences and conflicts in the scholarship and theory of process and postprocess can or should be smoothed over. Again, variation, or as Kristopher Lotier puts it, “inherent indeterminacy” (362), is a key trait of postprocess. Indeterminacy is also, I underline again, a characteristic of *process* theories and theorists. Accordingly, I am claiming only that any efforts to definitively separate process approaches or ideas from postprocess ones should be interrogated.

Situatedness has been one such dividing line. The situated condition of writing and its practice—broadly, writing’s susceptibility to or entanglement with social, material, community, embodied, spatial, cultural, and historical

forces—remains an oft-repeated and expansive creed. Situatedness is a foundational assumption as the core of a range of contemporary writing theories including social constructivism, ecological, activity, networked, complex systems, and postprocess theories. Though it may lack the mantra-style apparentness of “writing as a process not a product,” writing’s situatedness has been everywhere in our thinking for more than thirty years. For one, situatedness is one of three key tenets of Kent’s postprocess theory, as he observes that “writers always write from some position or some place, writers are never no where” (*Post-Process* 3). And while Kent allows that situatedness may be of concern to both process and postprocess-oriented compositionists, he underscores that postprocess tends to “make more out of this claim” (3), meaning that, for one, writing is interactive and deeply relational (e.g., Couture; Kent, *Paralogic*).

At the same time though, a *lack* of concern for situatedness has been the means by which some divide “the process movement” from everything that is more or less “post-process” (Trimbur, “Delivering” 188). For instance, John Trimbur claims that writing process schemes portray writing as intangible and abstract, as “dominant representations of writing typically offered by the process movement all picture writing as an invisible process, an auditory or mental event” (188). Similarly, in his recent work on a longer timeline for postprocess invention, Kristopher Lotier divides process and post- in terms of internalism versus externalism: process-era internalism sees the mind as separate from the world and other minds while by contrast, postprocess externalism sees the impossibility of such “aloneness,” as “writing is always already overwritten by other people, and, crucially, other *stuff*” (366). From the vantage of postprocess, process schemes by definition and contrast are acontextual, abstract, isolated, inside-the-head—the transcendent, unsituated solitary mind at work, floating free and of no particular place.

While it will not surprise that I too agree with the clinginess of these associations with process and a need to deconstruct them, it’s also true that separating process from post- based on situatedness is not so neat and tidy. The early 1980s, often seen as the “heyday” of process, saw not the reign of unquestioned cognitivism and writing as purely “invisible” mental processes, but sustained dialectical critique undermining assumptions, for instance, about comprehensiveness, protocol methods, and context, (e.g., Cooper and Holzman; Mishler; Odell; Reither) as well as the expansion of process theories into social contexts. And to productively muddy the waters even further: the 1970s, an era associated with expressive, voice-oriented, and many might say, acontextual and apolitical, individualist process approaches, saw at the same time the publication of Students’ Right to their Own Language (SRTOL). Led by Black Power and Civil Rights movements (Gilyard 93) and the NCTE/CCCC Black Caucus starting

in the 1960s, this landmark resolution argued implicitly that language and writing processes are inseparable from an individual's intersectional contexts—their communities, ethnicities, dialects, and cultures. In working to make access to literacy learning more equitable and just especially for racial and ethnic minorities, SRTOL pivotally situated language processes culturally and socially, doing so much earlier than most disciplinary timelines of process and stories of the “social turn” suggest. STROL, in this way, can be seen as a precursor to the social and community writing process views articulated by Bizzell, Bruffee, Cooper, and others in the 1980s. But some stories about process, like Faigley's in 1986, miss making this connection explicit, instead seeing the “social view” of processes as a “more recent” phenomena (528). Moreover, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, landmark process researchers like Emig and Perl simultaneously presumed acontextuality and situatedness; both staged their studies of processes in laboratory-like conditions and brought attention to writing's immediate material conditions in terms of bodily movement, embodied meaning, and writing tools. Building upon these and other varied moments in our histories associated with situating processes in contexts (among them cultural, embodied, community, and so on), in this chapter, I argue that situatedness is not a stable, distinguishing assumption of postprocess, but one available as a significant part of the varied discourses within “the process paradigm.”

In making a unifying gesture though, I preserve an important overarching difference: the scope, or scale, on which writing's situatedness has been viewed and theorized. Again, postprocess perspectives refocus on the “larger forces” (Dobrin, “Paralogic”) in which writers find themselves; process perspectives focus on “in situ studies of what writers are actually doing” (Takayoshi, “Short Form” 2). This zoom out in focus beyond the individual writer is suggested in each of the postprocess compositionists I mention above: not just processes but “cultural politics” (Trimbur, “Taking”), no longer individual writers, but larger forces and contexts (Dobrin, “Paralogic”), no longer writers' stages and steps but a complex ecology in which writing finds itself (Petraglia, “Is There”). Such articulations imply a choice between seeing writing in terms of either micro-scaled, individual processes or macro-scaled “larger forces.” But I argue that situatedness is a continuum, not a choice. Haas's intervention serves as an example of process theory that doesn't choose but instead ranges across this continuum. She focuses upon discrete writers' interactions with material technologies to in order to situate writing at once within writers' immediate physical conditions and the larger interplay among social, cultural, and cognitive forces.

Writing theories influenced by the assumption of situatedness (and in many cases a generalized spirit of postmodernity and anti-foundationalism), though, have largely operated under a strong impulse to see writing from perpetually

zoomed out vantages alone. To exemplify how situatedness has been consistently realized on massive scales, I begin this chapter by close reading the work of Patricia Bizzell and Marilyn Cooper. Perceiving partiality in early cognitive process schemes, these theorists shift focus from contained individual actions to community-situated ones, stretching the scope of writing's activity expansively, even essentially infinitely. I then track this tendency to conceive of writing's (social) situatedness on massive scales in more recent sociomaterial approaches, illustrated by Margaret Syverson and Nedra Reynolds. Their perspectives, which also take keen interest in the material spaces and embodied action of writing practice, directly invite, but largely preclude, the study of writing's radically local physical-material situations. The expansive scales that have dominated the framing of situatedness in composition's theory imagination especially in the 1990s and 2000s—network, complexity, ecological and cultural-historical activity theories—have mostly prevented us from lingering to view writing's physical and environmental situatedness at the level of *in situ* practice. But such situated micro-views of writing creates a critical vantage for the practice of process pedagogies today. Ultimately, I argue and illustrate in this chapter that situatedness and scale is not, and was never, an either/or proposition.

## **WRITING AS SOCIALLY SITUATED PROCESSES: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST CRITIQUE ZOOMS OUT**

Writing in 1985, James A. Reither aims to modify what he sees as a “truncated view” (622) of writing processes. Reigning models of process started *in media res*, failing to account for the winding backstories of any given writer's knowledge. Reither believes we should chase those infinite backstories, observing,

If we are going to teach our students to need to write, we will have to know much more than we do about the kinds of contexts that conduce—sometimes even force, certainly enable—the impulse to write. The “micro-theory” of process now current in composition studies needs to be expanded into a “macro-theory” encompassing activities, processes, and kinds of knowing that come into play long before the impulse to write is even possible. (623)

In a sense, Reither urges us to adjust the scales on which processes are conceived. The reigning micro-view, he observes, which understands “writing as a self-contained process that evolves out of a relationship between writers and their emerging texts” (622) must be replaced by the macro, a broader and longer view of writing that accounts for previous scenes of learning and activity that

inevitably shape how a writer takes up any discrete writing task. In other words, the “substantive social knowing” (626) that initiates writing is, of course, not limited to that moment of penning or typing the first word; rather, it stretches backwards and forwards, across countless social scenes. Reither reflects a view shared by other social-oriented process theorists and that composition still holds centrally today—that which drives and shapes writing is not containable only in small relays between the writer’s mind and emerging text. Rather, writing is always *not-just-here*. Reither captures, in the language of micro and macro that I borrow and repurpose, the burgeoning recognition of writing’s vast social systematics and in so doing, complicates writing’s timelines. Writing becomes an infinite montage, never really lingering upon any single locatable scene.

Reither’s interest in the socio-historical situatedness of writing activity is not separate from process topoi; Reither’s is a theory about writing processes. What makes it distinct though—and why I think social theories are often collapsed under more contemporary notions of “postprocess”—is its unwieldy scale, a vantage that makes discrete processes essentially unlocatable. Social process theories reveal the vast scope of factors and contexts undergirding writing activity—those *beyond* any individual writer herself. They emphasize how only communities and systems can be understood to host and sustain writing, as I in this section demonstrate through close readings of Patricia Bizzell and Marilyn Cooper’s work. Social critique certainly does repudiate certain notions associated with early process research like, for example, that language could meaningfully operate autonomously from sociality. But in dismantling the presumed autonomy of writing as an individual practice, these pioneering social process theorists do not construct a choice between individual or larger community processes, nor do they argue that processes are *only* social. Rather than somehow *after process*, these landmark process critiques advance fluid relationships, a winding complex continuum amongst cognitive and social perspectives, an interest at once in what happens “inside the writer’s head” (Bizzell 185) and equally in “an infinitely extended group of people who interact through writing” (Cooper 372). Ultimately I read Bizzell and Cooper calling not for a *break from* process nor a separate paradigm, but rather for a modulation of focus between micro- and macro-scaled perspectives.

Patricia Bizzell’s 1992 collection *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness* is identified by Trimbur as principally reflective of “post-process” and the “social turn” in composition. As Trimbur puts it, Bizzell reframes the problems compositionists observed in students’ writing not as linguistic or cognitive deficiencies, but rather as “cultural unfamiliarity with the registers and practices of a particularly privileged discourse community, the academy” (117). Bizzell makes this case especially in “Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What we Need

to Know about Writing,” published originally in 1982. Here Bizzell works to disrupt consensus among compositionists at the time that writing problems are chiefly “thinking problems.” In so doing, Bizzell performs what I see, in short, as a *zoom out*—a refocusing of writing theory on macro-scaled, “larger forces” (Dobrin) more than single writers. This zoom is characteristic of social process and subsequent writing theory, like complex systems, ecological, and actor network theories. But, I emphasize, the zoom out need not be a break.

Bizzell begins her process critique by accounting for the common ground amongst inner- and outer-directed theories. Her question becomes not one of *choosing* one camp over the other, but one of emphasis—“what [compositionists] *most* need to know about writing” (77) or where the focus of writing theories ought to linger and as such, where writing pedagogies ought to intervene. The inner-directed camp, as Bizzell identifies it, focuses on language as a matter of “innate mental structures” (77); “language-learning and thinking processes in their earliest state, prior to social influence” (77); seeing writing processes as “universal”; and writers as “problem solvers” (84) with “individual capacities” (77). Outer-directed perspectives, by contrast, are “more interested in the social processes whereby language-learning and thinking capacities are shaped and used in particular communities” (77); the “community context” (89); and the “socially situated knowledge without which no writing project gets under way” (93). Said another way, outer-directed perspectives undermine the tacit assumption that thinking or language could take place outside of “a social context that conditions them” (79). Rather than presuming the immutability, if potential breakdown, of logical, mental writing processes that would carry on identically regardless of differing socio-rhetorical conditions, Bizzell’s outer-directed camp puts focus on particular, context-dependent “discourse conventions” (79). In this important distinction, Bizzell shifts assumptions about writing development and instructional intervention. From an inner-directed angle, struggling writers require intervention in their *thinking*. In familiar cognitive schemes, for example, knowledge is something a writer just kind of *has*—the nature of that knowledge taken for granted (93). But, for Bizzell, it is crucially important that that knowledge necessarily comes from *elsewhere*—that it is shaped, received, and accumulated over time and across many social contexts. As such, from the outer-directed vantage, writing problems are *exposure* problems—a lack of experience with the conventions of the varying discourse communities in which writing is always already a part. “[I]f we are going to see students as problem-solvers,” Bizzell concludes, “we must also see them as problem-solvers situated in discourse communities that guide problem definition and the range of alternative solutions” (84).

Rather than in the short contained timeline of writing in cognitive schemes, Bizzell suggests it is only a writer’s varied background stories, or infinite flash-



backs, that hold keys to helping writers improve, a shift which refocuses pedagogues' interventions on preparation, exposure, and practice. In sum, in order to know really "what goes on in the writer's head" (183), compositionists must "research into the social and cultural contexts from which the writer's knowledge comes" (Bizzell 183). And any sense that thinking processes float free or are universal across writers must be disrupted if interest in cognitive processes remains, Bizzell insists. Thinking (and language) is really only thinkable if seen as shaped by local and expansive situated forces and experiences.

I picture Bizzell's critique as though she takes the camera of our disciplinary interest and suddenly *zooms out* our vantage: where formerly compositionists were trying to peer "inside the writer's head" (185), now Bizzell pulls the camera back and up to a tall perch from which we can start to see the myriad social, cultural, political, academic and community contexts that source and shape any given writer's knowledge. In zooming out, problem-solvers multiply into communities in which problems are shaped (84); thinking practice spreads out to become community practice; any given writer is only comprehensible as at the same time a community of writers. The purview of writing processes gets bigger, longer. Rather than the writer *right now*, Bizzell focuses on the *elsewhere* and *before*: the innumerable social contexts in which any writing and knowing happens, in episodes that even precede and extend beyond any given writer's lifetime, places and times that could not possibly be mapped or known with any kind of finality. Bizzell's social processes, forged in dialectical relation to cognitive and expressive schemes, emphasizes how writing is never just *here* and *now*. But Bizzell's zoom out, I should emphasize, does not exclude focus on discrete writers or defined scenes of writing in time. But it also doesn't encourage us to linger in any given scene. Bizzell's social process camera is rather in continuous motion, as it races to keep up with the cascade of potentially infinite situated forces at work.

Marilyn Cooper similarly traverses and zooms, in her 1986 essay, "The Ecology of Writing." Cooper aims to knock the sheen off process theories' seeming revolutionary finality by exposing how quickly cognitive process models had been codified, reduced, and presumed comprehensive. Like Bizzell, Cooper extends, rather than *breaks* from, this cognitive emphasis by pointing out what those models still *cannot* see. Cooper writes, "theoretical models even as they stimulate new insights blind us to some aspects of the phenomena we are studying" (365). Making a generative, additive critique, Cooper diagnoses cognitive models as probably true but limited:

The problem with the cognitive process model of writing has nothing to do with its specifics: it describes something of

what writers do and goes some way toward explaining how writers, texts, and readers are related. But the belief on which it is based—that writing is thinking and, thus, essentially a cognitive process—obscures many aspects of writing we have come to see as not peripheral. (365)

Like Bizzell, Cooper argues on the grounds of where writing theories must look, as writing-as-thinking models fail to render many of writing's constraints. To illustrate, Cooper constructs her own notion of the inner-directed camp through the figure of the "solitary author" that "works alone, within the privacy of his own mind" (365). In this image, what surrounds the writer alone is unknown or irrelevant. Writing is not simply "individuals discover[ing] and communicat[ing] information" (366); writing is also social action. But also, writing is not social action alone. As Cooper articulates this reciprocal relationship, "Writers do think as well as act; [the social] position differs from cognitive theorists in that we emphasize the dialectical relationship between what writers think and do and their social context—the effects that society has on what writers know and the effects that writers have on society" (*Writing* 108). Cooper here defines the social-cognitive relationship: thinking can only be thinking-in-social-contexts, and contexts quickly enlarge in scope from writers to "society."

Cooper and Bizzell steer composition into the "social turn." Each draws our attention to what reigning models miss in hyper-focusing on writing as something in the mind alone. Cooper's zoom out, though, seems to extend the gaze even further and farther through her choice of conceptual figure. While Bizzell's unit of analysis focuses on discourse communities—a concept that provides at least some sense of being identifiable or locatable—Cooper casts the sociality of writing in terms of *ecologies*. Cooper's ecology compels the gaze of writing theory not to land even in one community discourse but to keep "the camera" *moving* to perceive relations among communities and contexts as massive systems. In Cooper's words:

an ecology of writing encompasses much more than the individual writer and her immediate context. An ecologist explores how writers interact to form systems: all the characteristics of any individual writer or piece of writing both determine and are determined by the characteristics of all the other writers and writings in the systems. (368)

Cooper's ecological model grants the sense that not much is gained by examining a writer's discrete actions or even by studying a writer situated in her immediate contexts. Individual actions, for Cooper, are not even just community actions,

but systemically determined ones; a writer's purpose is only ever a "system of purposes" (370). Cooper's social theory emphasizes complexity and interconnectedness as writing is constructed as a "web, in which anything that affects one strand of the web vibrates throughout the whole" (370). Her ecological figure prioritizes the complex interconnectedness of writing as complex systems, a view that seems to push the zoom out even farther, indeed in a manner "infinitely extended" (Cooper 372).

I want to emphasize a set of points I take away from revisiting of these two compositionists' seminal work, ones critical to the story of situated processes I'm trying to (re)create in this book. If Bizzell and Cooper help instantiate and reflect the "social turn" in composition (a timeline, again, which can stretch further backwards to at least the development of STROL), theirs is not a *break from* established process constructs. It is not that cognitive-expressive process theories had reigned unquestioned and then *suddenly* and fully the field turned to the social (just as too, as many have said, was the field not once fully current-traditional then suddenly and completely process). Cooper makes this clear, for example, as she explains that the sociality of writing was not her observation alone but had long been a part of the work of composition, a "growing awareness that language and texts . . . are essentially social activities" (366). The cognitive model wasn't wrong just too narrow. And left alone to stand in for a comprehensive view guiding process *teaching*, strictly cognitive or expressive models encouraged damaging essentialist assumptions, ones that could see writers who were struggling or seen as "unskilled" as somehow deficient thinkers or writers that simply didn't have "it." Social process methods would instead focus writing teachers and their students on "practice within interpretive communities—exactly how conventions work in the world and how they are transmitted" (Bizzell 101). Cooper and Bizzell contribute to conceptions of how writing comes to be and in so doing, shape expansive social writing process theories that traverse across innumerable contexts of learning, conventions, community discourses, institutions, systems, and history.

One might dissent still that these social theories are not process theories at all but "postprocess." Trimbur from his 1994 book review would likely be in this camp: he sees Bizzell as turning away from processes and walking toward the cultural politics of literacy. Indeed, Kristopher Lotier claims that Cooper initiates "postprocess" intentional models rather than process ones. But, in my view, Bizzell and Cooper do not turn away from processes as much as they make much, much *bigger*. Again, Cooper doesn't indict cognitive models for misrepresenting writing but for "obscur[ing]" (365) its "infinitely extended" (372) social systematicity. Bizzell imagines the relationships amongst cognitive, "personal-style," *and* social camps. Thus, this work is not a shift from "individuals" to "larger"

forces, as Dobrin and others subsequently frame it, but a continuum of varying foci, from the micro to the macro. In Bizzell's words:

Answers to what we need to know about writing will have to come from both the inner-directed and the outer-directed theoretical schools if we wish to have a complete picture of the composing process. We need to explain the cognitive and the social factors in writing development, and even more important, the relationship between them. Therefore, we should think of the current debate between the two schools as the kind of fruitful exchange that enlarges knowledge, not as a process that will lead to its own termination, to a theory that silences the debate. (81-2)

In short, a fruitful exchange is not a making a choice between writers or their contexts. Bizzell and Cooper themselves do not suggest a choice between individuals or larger contexts even as they unify in their call for our cameras to zoom out. And too, efforts to uncover the "relationship" between macro-social and micro-cognitive factors in writing development continue beyond Bizzell and Cooper's early calls (e.g., Flower; Haas; Purcell-Gates et al.).

The sense remains nevertheless—especially in invocations of postprocess—that there *is* a choice to be made, that it *is* individual processes *or* larger contexts. Compositionists interested in situatedness can express aversion to focusing in on discrete writers or writing practice (e.g., Dobrin, *Postcomposition*). Why this sense? There are many possible reasons. First, I do think the language of infinite extension in Bizzell and Cooper (and Reither and others) no doubt contributes. In recognizing writing's situatedness, we have come to agree that writing is never *just* here and *just* now; small-scale investigations of practice feel particularly partial and risk reductionism and oversimplification. Another postprocess factor is an embrace of anti-foundational and postmodern thinking: for example, as Kent writes, "The postprocess mindset takes as foundational the anti-foundationalist claim that writing cannot be produced or understood in isolation from the heteroglossia formed by other signifying elements" ("Preface" xix). Another related reason may be postmodern impulse to unravel the stability of and focus on writers as unified, autonomous subjects (e.g., Dobrin et al. 17; Faigley, *Fragments*). Taxonomic thinking may be another culprit. The stages or eras that tend to anchor historical sketching often present in either/ors—writing as invisible *or* as situated, process movement *or* postprocess. Even nuanced taxonomies can reinforce a sense of having to choose. For example, in 1986, Lester Faigley observed the field's general consensus that approaches associated with "process" were good, but that there was more disagreement than overlap on what was

meant by process. He outlines three major views—expressive, cognitive, and the emerging social view of writing processes—but identifies this variance as “[t]he problem” (“Competing” 527) and aims to “contrast the assumptions of each of these three views on composing with the goal of identifying a disciplinary basis for the study of writing” (528). Faigley’s approach emphasizes differences, constructs these camps as separate and contrastable more than on a continuum or in relation, and performs explicitly the task of deciding one way to best construct processes. He concludes that, “writing processes are historically dynamic—not psychic states, cognitive routines, or neutral social relationships” (537). Faigley’s language emphasizes choice: in order to see processes as historical, they appear to be somehow thus *not* cognitive, expressive, or neutrally social. His move to separate these competing theories suggests their separate reigns, not their overlaps (this is not to say though that there are not significant, even irreconcilable, dissonances among the details informing these three broad process views). But as Bizzell and Cooper demonstrate, camping in process theories may be more profitably understood as a matter of focus—literally of continuously modulating where we look, not making a choice of where to permanently install the camera. Indeed, my view of situated processes in these pages and my emphasis on the embodiments of process is not to say that writing is *only* a local phenomenon. Quite the contrary. As my work with Haas helps illustrate, the living, moving, breathing dimensions of processes is an underconsidered avenue toward helping writers perceive myriad scales on which their writing is situated and shaped.

Bizzell and Cooper’s landmark claim that writing is a socially-determined process positions situatedness right in the “heyday” of “the process movement,” not *after* process. Situatedness cannot really be a tidy dividing line between process and post-. As McComiskey puts it, the social turn “does not constitute, in practice or theory, a rejection of the process movement, but rather its extension into the social world of discourse” (“Post-Process” 41). This “extension,” in my read, is that modulation of focus, the “infinitely extended” zoom out. Bizzell and Cooper’s social theories are ultimately additive and extensive, not replacements to previous process thinking. Theories that observe writing on the macro-scale, like Cooper’s ecology, do not disclude focus on small-scale practices or all the smaller, tiny, or even incidental dimensions shaping how writing comes to be.

But the macro- may still tend to occlude such zoomed-in focus. Bizzell and Cooper refocus us on writing’s infinite systemic contexts; they reveal what initial cognitive models were missing. But their theories alone are not necessarily more comprehensive. In fact, presuming that they *reach* comprehensiveness through expansiveness could, in a sense, return us to the concerns that generated their apt critiques in the first place. Once internal-expressive-thinking processes are expressly “situated,” writing’s contexts and iterations become essentially infinite.

But imagining situatedness can become so macro-, so infinite and seemingly unmoored, as to *almost* feel acontextual or unlocated again. In other words, trying to see the everywhere-ness of writing begins in a way to feel like nowhere-ness again. Indeed, writing activity cannot be staged *only* here just as much as it can never be nowhere. Rather, writing is at once emplaced, local, embodied and locatable and—at *the same time*—cultural, historical, and elsewhere. This is why I see it as imperative to understand social, postprocess, systems, ecological, networked theories too as necessarily partial, and to ask how we might make space in our writing theory imaginaries to also *linger* on the smallest physical dimensions of practice *in situ*.

## THE MICRO IN THE MACRO: LINGERING *IN SITU*

Around a decade after Cooper and Bizzell's works are published, Trimbur signals the arrival of the social and a new era of teaching "post-process." As social constructionist orientations settle in, so too do new directions in composition. As Pamela Takayoshi frames it, "[a]fter the social turn, our object of study broadened considerably" and away from individual writers ("Short-Form" 4). Writing theories through to the present continue to build upon foundations of situated social constructions (broadly construed), including actor-network, cultural-historical activity, networked, ecological, and complexity theories. Each differently looks for writing on its macro-scales, stretched across contexts, participants, cultures, discourses, communities, institutions, economies, circulation channels, and so on.

In stretching and sustaining focus on writing's sociality, politics, contexts, and cultures, in recent years and as I discussed at the end of the last chapter, interest in writing's materiality has developed (e.g., Alexander; Aronson; Schell; Selzer and Crowley). This interest—manifest in part in what has been called a "sociomaterial" orientation (Miller; Vieira)—locates, grounds, or moors social discourses, configurations, and worlds in particular material objects, structures, or conditions. That is, study of the local, particular, everyday stuff can reveal "how social values, expectations, and trends are imbricated" (Miller 35) in discrete literate practices. The sociomaterial begins to epitomize, as I've sketched in the previous chapter in relation to Haas' work, a modulation or continuum of focus on micro- and macro-situated forces. Writing processes are not just located out there in social communities or cultures; equally they are not just located inside a writer's head or pinned into a defined span of time from the first word to the last. As Bizzell and Cooper emphasize, we only start to grasp this thing called writing by virtue of many vantages—the more the better.

At the same time, situatedness is *not* a condition exclusively of the mac-

ro-scale. Situatedness is too significant—relevant and overlooked—in the tiniest micro-scales of discrete writing scenes, too. But to examine processes' micro-scales isn't automatically to turn away or isolate a given scene of writing from the imposition of the macro. This dynamic can be illustrated by writing researcher's interests in writing tools. Miller, for example, shows how the individuals with aphasia in her study partner with and modify various literate tools to create different pathways for access to texts and to writing. Close examination of such individual practice in turn exposes and hopefully works against normative expectations for tools, for literate practice, and for bodily and cognitive behavior. That is, writing tools don't shape local practice alone or in isolation; as things both made and used, tools expose practice as at once idiosyncratic, habituated, learned, communal and cultural. As Haas demonstrates in word processing, writers' thinking processes are shaped by a computer's material configurations that in turn reflect larger shaping forces of culture and history (which in turn change practices, and so on, reciprocally). Tools like computers, pens, software, and keyboards shape processes on the micro-scale in embodied movements, glitches, textures, rhythms, or interruptive updates and simultaneously on macro-scales of design, trends, schooling regimes, economies or political revolutions. Indeed, as Haas shows especially in her short appeal to embodied practice, writing tools are a rich interconnection of selves and stuff, as there is a "coupling between our own physical architecture and the materials and tools we take up for use constrain our activities (and our texts) in nontrivial ways" (Syverson 56). Writing tools contain multitudes (of scale)—the smallest individual moves to sweeping montages of situated social constraints. In this way, focusing on an individual's use of a tool isn't to navel-gaze or ignore the trajectories of that tool or the habituated or hacked use of it. This micro-focus is rather a *place*—a located, situated moment—from which to modulate focus on the range of scaled partnerships and constraints that it takes for writing to emerge.

If it is fair to picture social process theories zooming around to observe the expansive interconnectedness and systematicities of writing, sociomaterial theories like Miller's or Haas' feel like they *catch*. They land upon moments and things, pause and linger on scenes of discrete emplaced practice, *in situ*. The challenge of scale though still manifests, especially in material theories and studies focused on tools, spaces, and physicality. For example, Margaret Syverson's complex systems writing ecologies exposes, as one dimension, how writing acts are populated with a range of things and others at modulating levels of scale, including "pens, paper, computers, books, telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, printing presses, and other natural and human-constructed features, as well as . . . families, global economies, publishing systems, theoretical frames, academic disciplines, and language itself" (Syverson 5). Nedra Reynolds' cultural geogra-

phy sees writing as the “everyday negotiations of space” (6) and interacting with texts as an act of habitation—“a material act, tactile and physical, made up of movements, motions” (166). These compositionists’ ecologies and geographies evidence composing’s social and cultural constraints through scenes and spaces populated and emplaced and physical. Each express need for micro-scale focus on the emplacements and physicalities of processes. In other words, they each physically situate writing (processes). But each worry differently about the *scale* and implications of such up-close attention.

In her 1999 book, *The Wealth of Reality: An Ecology of Composition*, Margaret Syverson advances an ecological, complex systems theory of writing. She aims for a “richer, more comprehensive” (2) view, in part, by extending and grounding Cooper’s social ecology, as Syverson sees it as “limited to” (24) immaterial abstractions like “social interactions via ideas, purposes, interpersonal actions, cultural norms, and textual forms” (24). Building her framework from distributed cognition and complex systems, Syverson performs detailed case studies of three distinct writing scenes, cases of ambitious scope with analysis of “more factors and influences than any theory that has yet appeared among us” (Killingsworth 309). Syverson’s aim is to be exhaustive as she folds together focus of previous composing process theories—social with psychological and cognitive, for example—and draws out the significance of lesser emphasized dimensions, like “the material, physical processes and structures involved in text production” (74). The camera of her writing theory, in other words, is placed at as many vantages as she can imagine, seeing writing acts as “an ecological system of interrelated structures and processes that are at once physically or materially, socially, psychologically, temporally, and spatially emerging in codependent activities” (25).

Syverson’s ecology compels in its grasp of scope and scale; it helps her, for instance, uncover the material force of a given classroom (188) and at the same time see how writing done there at once extends well beyond those walls. In examining a poem of Charles Reznikoff, an objectivist poet often considered the epitome of the solitary writer (31), Syverson demonstrates how, on the contrary, the poem is far from a product of an individual writer “whose genius is immutable and largely independent of social, environmental, or physical influences” (35-36). Syverson shows how the many processes leading to this poem are instead meaningfully distributed across multiple authors (including Resnikoff’s parents) and across a huge unwieldy timeline of “forty years of reading and rereading, translating, typing, editing, selecting, and publishing material from his parents’ autobiographical writings” (43). Far from contained or separable, the scales of Reznikoff’s processes for just one single poem are wandering and enormous.

Along the way though, Syverson does linger to view processes on its smallest scales, especially in her focus on embodiment. Embodiment is one of the



four attributes (alongside distribution, emergence, and enaction) of writing's systems that she sees as "often overlooked" (7), largely "suppressed" because of tacit assumptions about language, individuals, and thinking (25). Embodiment is a force shaping "conceptual structures and cognitive activities" as well as the "physical activity" (Syverson 12) of literate practices, including "clasping a book, moving the eyes across a line of text" (12). For example, in the instance of "someone writing a book to explain a set of theories" (6), Syverson proposes that we'd do well to consider "the writer's interaction with the environment, including the technologies for writing, the memory aids, the tools and instruments that help shape and support the writing" (6). But the boundaries of this particular scene also (ceaselessly) stretch. The immediate physical situation of writing the book is significant but so too are the broadest channels of circulation and reception, as well as "a larger discourse that is historically situated, and involving historically situated technologies, social relations, cultural influences, and disciplinary practices" (6-7). In her analysis of embodiment in the Reznikoff poem, Syverson finds again these modulating levels of scale: the poem is constructed from descriptions of Reznikoff's (and others') bodily experiences ("physical conditions, actions, perceptions, and interactions" (48)); the poem is impelled by constraints of neighborhood and household "crowding" ("growing up in the crowded Jewish ghetto and an equally crowded household" (52) encouraged walking that would in turn provide Reznikoff "space and freedom" (52) to write poetry); the poem comes to be too by virtue of the "physical and social impact" of Eastern European immigration to New York in the 1880s (48). It is compelling just how capaciously Syverson sees the embodiment of writing—it is on the scene in typing or using a pencil, walking, living in a small space, encountering a text in an archive versus a classroom, or in the movements of large-scale migration. Embodiment is not only the purview of a self or an individual or a contained body. Just as thinking is distributed, for Syverson, so too are writing's embodiments.

At the same time, Syverson's embodiment, as a "physical-material dimension" (18) of complex systems, is provokingly small. A radically local, process-scaled (and, of course, partial) view of writing's physical situatedness, is available—even distinctly emphasized in her discussion. This focus reveals, for instance, that readers and writers are "sensitive to type that is too small, books that are too thick, margins that are too skimpy, screen fonts that are too hard to read, computer monitors that are too small, rooms that are too warm or too dim, and to many other physical features of the text or environment that shape their interactions with the 'content' of the text" (18-19). Syverson underscores how little attention has been paid to the physical-material (with the exception of Haas, she notes). But the force of this observation gets rather lost, almost literally buried,

under dimensions stretched across ecologies that are still more familiar to composition theory's imagined scope of relevant situatedness, like sociality, genre, circulation, and reader reception. This makes sense. The physical-material is important but "it is not enough" to get to Syverson's "comprehensive view" (13). After all, Syverson is after the wealth of reality—the seemingly ceaseless situated forces that compel writing at all levels of scale. Her gaze, almost by definition, cannot (and should not) stop with the writer's embodied interactions with local material environments.

Syverson puts unique focus on writing's physicalities. But she also does not set out to linger there. She worries some about the scales of prior process theories—how they tend to be "atomistic" (8)—separating focus "on individual writers, individual texts, isolated acts, processes, or artifacts" (8). She works against "privileging the individual writer composing in isolation" (9) which she sees as occluding the shaping roles of social and environmental structures as disparate as "weather" and "buildings" and "desks" (9). She is no doubt influenced by macro-scaled thinking of the social turn and the emerging postprocess moment in which she was writing. I agree with the richness of Syverson's scales. Writing acts are, of course, never *just here*. But she also makes the case that we have not much considered the physical situatedness of writing acts, that processes are also *always* somewhere (or better, *many* somewheres). Processes can never not be physically located. For me, Syverson makes a compelling call for examining the micro-scales of situated processes (matters of desks, lighting, fonts, rooms, movements, actions, tools, and more) but doesn't aim to linger on them.

Tension in scale and physical situatedness is further exemplified in Nedra Reynolds' 2007 book, *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*. Drawing on discourses of cultural geography, postmodernity, and spatiality, Reynolds proposes that writing be understood as a set of practices "more spatial than temporal" (5). "Geography," Reynolds claims, "gives us the metaphorical and methodological tools to change our ways of imagining writing through both movement and dwelling—to see writing as a set of spatial practices informed by everyday negotiations of space" (6). Reynold's intervention pictures writing as emplaced movement. Such a shift allows Reynolds to explore alienation, access, ideologies, and policing of social difference as constructed by and experienced through spaces material and discursive, and on a range of scales (6). Reynolds grounds writing's sociality, in other words, in its spatial-materiality and in its ineluctable connections to our experiences of space as constructed *place*.

Along the way, Reynolds muses about how we might grapple with writing's *immediate* material geographies—a matter, she points out, that compositionists

agree we don't know enough about (176). She wonders what insights those considerations may garner, writing:

Writing's materiality begins with where the work of writing gets done, the tools and conditions and surroundings—not to determine a cause and effect relationship between the writing's quality or success and the site of its production, but to trace the threads or remnants of literacy practices. Along with knowing more about where writers write, though, geography contributes to a richer understanding of the habits and memories and "moves" that characterize our own acts of writing, particularly those moves that become habitual but are not "taught." (167)

In this rich description, I hear echoes of Haas' embodied practice. I see not only material things, like tools and surroundings, but choreographies of movement, memories, habits, partnerships of things and bodies. Writing, seen through Reynold's micro-scale lens, unfolds *only* among and through things—the tools, conditions, and surroundings in Reynolds terms, as well as technologies, texts, writing chairs, posters, and arrangement of rooms. And attending to these spatial-material dimensions necessarily draws attention to the moving writing body—a look out a window, repetitive punch on the backspace bar, or the tapping of fingers on a plastic keyboard. Here Reynolds depicts writing processes as radically local and shifting geographies with embodied dimensions populated by material objects.

Maybe more than Syverson (who aims for an elusive "comprehensive theory of composing" (2) and thus spends more time in the expanse of writing's systems), Reynolds grapples overtly with the scales her spatial theory entails. She focuses on the "spatial practices of the everyday" explicitly "through different spatial scales: the body, the street, the city" (3). She makes a case for some "staying put" (9) to explore how material structures—built, metaphorical, political, and discursive—shape and are shaped by individuals. She also calls for "new maps of writing," ones that would capture dimensions of writing's materiality, maps that would not only detail "the places where writing occurs, but [also] the sense of place and space that readers and writers bring with them to intellectual work of writing, to navigating, arranging, remembering and composing" (176). Though she expresses interest in traversing a range of spatial scales, zooming-in on emplaced or situated practice remains an interest, but still on the edges, of her overall project. Reynolds herself worries about this omission in a note. She writes, "I haven't done much in these pages to unlock those physical movements that we call writing, uses of a mouse or keyboard, pencil, stylus, screen, or page"

(168). She follows this admission, explaining, “more studies are needed that depend upon empirical research to trace writers’ moves in composing” (188). I agree with Reynolds call—and for me, there is value especially in writers themselves doing this tracing, as I’ll explore more in Chapter 4.

The scales of Reynolds’ new geography and Syverson’s complex ecologies invite us to situate processes. But, by some necessity too, they push the micro-scales of situated practice to the periphery. Similarly, current composition theories acknowledge that writing is materially situated and distributed at the macro-level of ecologies, hyper-circulatory networks, and social geographies, but as Reynolds indicates, much less so at the micro-level of the practitioner immersed in her immediate embodied environment. Situating process represents a way to bring and sustain this focus. And as these four compositionists—Bizzell, Cooper, Syverson, and Reynolds—make clear, such a zoomed-in or hyper-focus on the physicalities of composing is not to seal off processes from their larger forces. Such micro-looking is not a choice nor a turn away from writing’s larger and myriad contexts: it’s a moment, to linger.

## **CONCLUSION: SITUATING PROCESS “TOPOS” OR EXAMINING THE “COMPOSING MOMENT”**

In thinking again about John Trimbur’s essay “Delivering the Message: Typography and the Materiality of Writing” that I reference at the open of this chapter, I notice how rather ritually separated his concerns about “materiality” are from those of the “process movement.” Trimbur draws this dividing line, it seems, because he assents to the notion that composition studies has found itself *after* process. His intervention is postprocess in that he frames and names it that way. I suspect this move in part is owed to a need to emphasize one’s separation from the acontextual and oversimplified associations that often stick to process. But, at the same time, Trimbur sees process—“the figure of the composer we inherit from the process movement” (189)—as a valuable conceptual “topos,” so long as we emplace, rather than hermetically seal off, that figure in their contexts and conditions. In his case, such a view of situated writing processes asks us to consider writing’s materiality from the vantage of typography and labor. The process topos, or view, is valuable and revealing, but as Trimbur underlines, it “requires a thoroughgoing reconceptualization . . . one that locates the composer in the labor process, in relation to the available means of production” (189). In this sense, Trimbur too grapples with scale. He finds it hard to appeal to process at a time when we were supposed to have been done with it, when the macro-scales of social, material, postprocess theories shooed away focus not just on individual practice but also on extremely small but significant material dimensions, like typography.

Seeing processes on their micro-scales is not necessarily to see them as isolated, overgeneralized, or acontextual. In other words, Trimbur too demonstrates the importance of profoundly—and at *modulating* scales—*situating* the individual composer, in his view, in the flows and complexities of expansive material systems of circulation. Similarly, in a recent article in which she makes a full-voiced argument for a “return” to composing process research, Pamela Takayoshi argues that writing acts are always already *reciprocally* shaped in a constant shuttling between broad and immediate forces—social, rhetorical, cultural and other big contexts that both shape and are shaped by any discrete “act of composing” (“Writing” 570). She suggests a fertile and artful concept that might become a guiding focus of situated processes: the “composing moment” (570). In my read, Takayoshi’s “moment” recasts and situates writing processes through a productive paradox of anchoring and flux, of intimate and distant contexts. As she writes:

by capturing the composing moment, we can see that just as literacy is itself in constant motion, so too are the contextual elements that give rise to literacy in any given social interaction. The composing moment allows us to explain and anchor the differences that appear across contexts in terms of how people write, use, and think about composing. (“Writing” 570)

The moment takes as its center literacy as a swirling, changing, giant set of situated forces. Simultaneously, the moment is just that: one *snapshot*, not an enduring or frozen model, of some dimension of a writing act. Exploring, or “anchoring,” our look at process in the moment opens gateways to perceiving at least some of how “larger forces” manifest (differently) in living and breathing literate acts. Moments (not models) expose the flux—the enormities, smallest details, differences, and habits—of writing. Processes as moments reveals that situated forces large and small are not eternal nor unchanging but enacted *right now*, in one place or one rich “moment” in time. To me, the composing moment embodies the idea that writing processes are always elsewhere just as much and at the same time as they are always *somewhere*. However its dimensions are construed, stretched, or sliced—processes are located.

There is no doubt that discourse communities, complex ecologies, networks, or expansive cultural geographies remain fitting and illustrative figures for conceptualizing what, where, and how writing is. But we can profitably dispense with monitoring a choice between seeing writing as discrete scenes or as sweeping systems, as the rhetoric of a process/post-process divide can suggest. As Syverson and Reynolds and Takayoshi make clear, there is rich potential in zooming in up-close upon situated processes—for a moment. And like Syverson

and Reynolds (and Haas, Emig, and Perl), I see underarticulated value especially in examining composing moments as physical scenes. By lingering and looking closely in this way—or by “trac[ing] writers’ moves in composing” (Reynolds 188)—writers and teachers of writing uncover the small, embodied, material actions that give shape differently to all writing acts. With these views, writers can come to see writing processes as located, differentiated, and contingent; they can see the inconsistencies, failures, and material partnerships and disruptions in their everyday writing attempts. But this hyper-zoomed focus is not some kind of navel-gazing or a reflective end in itself. Situating writing processes rather is an *in-road* toward perceiving the larger situated forces at work as processes become seen *at once* as the material and cognitive, cultural and embodied, historical and particularized, the individual *and* larger forces that propel and disrupt “composing moments” as we experience and observe them.

Writing theory has without a doubt situated writing. But especially in our teaching, we still need that “thoroughgoing reconceptualization of the writer at work” (Trimbur, “Delivering” 189). We need to dismantle the lingering tyranny of common Western assumptions: that thinking belongs to individuals and that writing is thinking (Syverson 25); that texts are “bounded object[s]” (36), produced strictly by individuals “largely independent of social, environmental, or physical influences” (Syverson 36); that processes are “invisible” or “mental” (Trimbur, “Delivering” 188); and that “text composing can somehow be isolated from physical and material conditions of production and use” (Syverson 25). We especially need to dismantle how these assumptions control and limit how teachers of writing and writing students imagine and work with the notion that “writing is a process.” Process is a most familiar, central, and foundational idea. Student writers know it; it influences how they understand what writing is and perhaps how they sometimes experience it. Thus, targeting *how we picture* and *how we work with processes* is a productive site from which to show writers the many ways that writing is profoundly situated and susceptible. Ways of imagining such adjustments constitute my work in the next chapter.