

INTRODUCTION

SEEING WRITING PROCESSES

“I have felt,” Donald M. Murray writes in 1983, “writers should instead of public readings, give public workshops in which they write in public, allowing the search for meaning to be seen” (169). What Murray imagines here, it seems to me, is the virtues of writing in public, the value of freeing the writer from their cloisters. A writer’s composing process, in other words, is a stage-worthy performance worth seeing.

Seeing writing processes unfold—this idea provokes. But rather than some kind of workshop, as Murray might imagine it, rather than a stage, a seated audience, a famous professional writer dramatizing their process and commenting upon what they’re doing as they do it, I imagine something more candid. More than processes staged or dramatized, I want to see processes of all kinds, in the wild, *in situ*.

Maybe I could start with a big glass observation box, one that could enclose Murray and his writing space at home. We could peer through the glass to see him working, working the way Carol Berkenkotter remembers him in the summer of 1981 during the course of her 62-day study of his composing processes. “The clearest memory I have of Donald M. Murray,” Berkenkotter recalls,

is watching him writing at a long white wooden table in his study, which looks out on the New Hampshire woods. Beside his desk is a large framed poster of a small boy sitting on a bed staring at a huge dragon leaning over the railing glowering at him. The poster is captioned, “Donald imagined things.” And so he did, as he addressed the problems writers face each time they confront a new assignment. (156)

But if we really wanted to make Murray’s processes public in the way he muses about, if we aimed to make his search for meaning visible, my imagined glass looking box would have to be much bigger. It would have to fit much more than just Murray at his white wooden table. It would have to capture him, for one, in an unspecified room on Berkenkotter’s campus engaged in a one-hour protocol where he was to write to a specified purpose, audience, and subject. As we peered through the glass, we might have seen Murray shift in his chair, sigh, stand, stretch, complain out loud, search the walls or out a window for a distraction. We might have seen the materials and ephemera he had before him, or the tools—pencil, paper, pen, notes, typewriter?—he was using. Or not

using. Indeed, it is not clear if we would have seen Murray engaging in, as we conventionally picture it, a writing process in this room at all. As Murray reflects on his struggle to write on that day, during that hour, in that room, wherever it was and whatever it looked like: “The one-hour protocol was far worse than I had expected. . . . I have rarely felt so completely trapped and so inadequate. . . . That was nothing that the researcher did. It was a matter of the conditions” (Berkenkotter and Murray 169).

Under my giant imagined looking glass, I would want to see Murray everywhere he was—writing and not-writing and thinking and moving and capturing for Berkenkotter’s study over 120 hours of audio recordings of himself describing his processes as he engaged them. I would want to see especially those matters of his environmental and material “conditions” and how they may have shaped and participated in the narratives Murray told about his writing during all those hours.

Making writing processes public—visible, really—in the way I am imagining, through an utterly sprawling observation glass, is obviously and utterly impossible. It would be impossible with these imaginary methods even to observe all the crannies and nooks of the processes of just *one* writer, like Donald Murray or any one of us. It would be impossible, in part, because writing processes move: processes range freely across spaces and times; they unfold in relation to things and places immediate, imagined, and recalled as they situate and resituate and meld with living. And making things more complicated still, I don’t care to see just one single writer’s processes. I want to see them all. I want to see the processes of the writer next to me at the café or the texter passing me on campus (I assume he was texting—but he well could have been emailing, tweeting, posting to discussion board, making a grocery list, or penning an essay for his composition or history course). I want to see the immeasurable *wheres* and *with whats* and *hows* that wind together to produce texts of all kinds. I want most to bring this glass looking box into my classrooms, to help writers wonder about, observe, describe, and consider processes across their and others’ lives. And I don’t want us to do this looking in order to come up with one final set of practices typical of processes or any one “big-T” Theory about how writing processes work. I want the looking instead to show us the all the many differences. I want us to see the details that demonstrate how writing processes are *always* and *differently* physically emplaced and context-contingent.

ANIMATING PURPOSE

As is surely now evident, I have an abiding fascination with composing processes, especially as lived experience. The tiny details of how writing gets made—how texts of all kinds come to be through pauses and in fits and starts, in coffee

shops, on scrap paper, in email windows, through smart phones, by voice or through fingers, late at night, before or during a long shift at work, in one's car—for me is of unquenchable interest. But in the everyday, especially as writing teachers, we deal with writing almost exclusively in its noun form. While gestures to a “writing as noun/verb” binary is often associated with a research/teaching split or a postprocess/process one (e.g., Shipka; Trimbur, “Changing”; Williams), it can be understood too to split process. Though the process movement supposedly liberated us from the flattened boundaries of the formalist page, we still engage process in classrooms today largely in artifactual, noun form: outlines, webs, freewriting, draft pages, track changes, portfolios, and so on. And as writing (n.) covers its tracks, the located physical labor of crafting texts—writing (v.)—recedes almost entirely from our view.

That is, what seems especially hidden is how writing processes *look*: how writing emerges through the cracks of living; how it is bodied and physical, populated and positional; how it is a matter always of its *conditions*—its places, tools, technologies, movements; how it is inhabited by bodies, by others present and by others who aren't yet there (those future readers in future contexts often unknown). These living dimensions—in short, that processes are *never not* physically, temporally, and materially located—recede further underground in the discourse and histories of processes in composition studies, as our field's stories have most emphasized processes as problem-solving, thinking, social inoculation or discourse approximation.

This book, in short, looks to fore that bodied underground of process. Countering the ways historically that process theories have seemed to overlook bodies and writing objects, I work in these pages toward *situating* writing processes. By situating, I first emphasize a baseline, though underconsidered, observation that writing processes can never be nowhere—processes only unfold through particular bodies; in specific locations, rooms, spaces, or places; with varying tools, objects, and ambient artifacts; and with others near and distant. Processes, in other words, are always already and chiefly *physical* (engaged by specific writers' specific bodies in specific times and places) and *material* (both entwined and made with physical objects). Processes too are *located*—not just staged in a place (though that observation too has been mostly sidelined in our process thinking) but of particular and infinite places, positions, rooms. This located physical *experience* of processes, I contend, has lived on the edges of process theories and practice. This book moves to shift those edges to the center.

Second, by situating, I mean to signal a shift in how we engage in process teaching with student writers. Rather than teaching process as drafts or *a priori* strategies, I argue for teaching process as a habit of locating the physical dynamics of students' own and others' specific writing acts. Writers benefit, I suggest, from

developing curious inquiry toward the unique *wheres* and *with whats* of processes, those forces like time, affect, movement, technology, others, interruptions, objects, digital tools, and other local intimacies. Such detailed looking lays bare the susceptibilities of writing and, as a result, how much more than just writers alone participate in and shape processes in the world. This looking shows too how radically *different*, rather than reliably the same, processes are. As such, I argue, physically situating processes serves as a dynamic inroad toward responding to writing's differences on bigger, more conceptual scales—differences in discourse, community, culture, kairos, genre, audience, exigence, and many other expansive and local situated forces that constrain writing activity. By situating processes then, I shift what processes signal in writing pedagogies. Broadly, I prod process teaching from loose prescriptivism to detailed descriptivism. If traditional teaching process has been about writing routine, sameness, or strategy, situating processes instead emphasizes difference, responsivity, and improvisation.

From another angle, perhaps one more artful and certainly more imagistic, this book is an attempt to realize those glass looking boxes. It is about seeing located writing processes unfold (and about the partialities of that looking). It is about the disciplinary histories and theoretical stories we have told about writing processes and how those stories' assumptions leave their imprints on our classrooms today. It is about enacting processes in our teaching less as serial drafts alone and more as embodied *doing* in specific fluctuating spaces. It is about how we—writers and teachers of writing—*picture* writing processes and about the value of differentiating, emplacing, and particularizing those images. This book aims to discover, theorize, and teach *with* writing processes as physically situated, and thus, improvisational.

ANIMATING EXIGENCIES

To write about composing processes today—in a precarious political and social moment; amidst ever-cresting tides of misinformation and information overload; when our disciplinary attentions have rightly expanded beyond college writing instruction alone—could well strike as conservative, out of fashion, or perhaps beside the point. But still, and to some extent because of the tremendous challenges in contemporary literacy instruction, it strikes me as a ripe moment for rethinking process. I see my project as driven by at least four related exigencies. First, I respond to the ways our research, pedagogical, and theoretical discourses can depict processes as disembodied and placeless, an anchorlessness I seek to shift. Second, I investigate the positioning of process in our pedagogical thinking today as somehow at once backgrounded, prominent, and dismissed. Third, I reckon with what it means for pedagogy and process to be now twenty or thirty years

“postprocess.” And lastly, I engage a broader pedagogical conundrum: the productively disruptive deconstruction of general writing skills instruction that resulted from acknowledgment that all writing acts are profoundly and differently situated. Overall, pedagogical questions of process, postprocess, and contemporary anxiety about what writing instruction can achieve come together to drive my work in this book. To establish the ground and contexts of these exigencies, I explore each in some detail below.

PROCESS AS DISEMBODIED AND PLACELESS

A central motivation for this book comes from the ways process has been constructed across composition's history and discourses. Processes have been many things in our disciplinary thinking—widely framed, reframed, and questioned. But rarely have they been considered in terms of corporeality and materiality. For some time and especially through discourses of disability studies, gender and sexuality studies, feminisms, embodied pedagogies, and affect theories, compositionists have in various ways made positionality, embodiment, and materiality a significant lens for understanding the work, impact, and experience of writing (e.g., Alexander; Aronson; Banks; Bleich; Butler; Ehret and Hollett; Fleckenstein; Kirsch and Ritchie; McLeod; Micciche, *Doing*, “Writing”; Royster; Van Ittersum and Owens; Wallace; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson). From these varied perspectives, writing is ineluctably located, inseparable from bodies and spaces at once lived, enfolded, and socio-culturally constructed. More recently as well, across work that can be loosely gathered under umbrella terms “sociomaterial” (Miller; Vieira) or the “material turn” (Barnett, “Toward”), compositionists have explored the environmental and object-oriented contingencies of writing. Drawing upon new materialist, actor-network theory, and object-oriented frameworks among others, this work constructs suasive and compositional acts as decentered and emergent events (e.g., Barnett, “Chiasms”; Barnett and Boyle; Rickert). Under the influence of these more recent and longstanding sociomaterialisms, writing is always already an ensemble production as it distributes across and through participatory objects and environments and others. But in spite of the many ways the field has grounded writing in lived experience, writing from the perspective of *process* remains still somehow stubbornly disembodied and placeless.

This gap provokes me to prioritize the *physicalities* of processes: composing processes as matters of situated physical action, bodily difference, environmental particularities, place, affective movement, material objects, writing technologies, and so on. I most often use the terms physical or physically situated (rather than embodied or embodiment) to signal first baseline recognition that (varied) bodies and (manifold) things and (infinite) places coproduce writing. It is not

that I don't engage with embodiment, but I do find physicality a more accessible term for the majority of the field—our student writers—who especially benefit from a situated processes perspective (I'll say more about why I favor this term, physicality, in Chapter 3). Constructing processes as situated, physical, and material disrupts writers' pictures of processes, which often still today propagate as a defined set of methods, steps, or plans to rationally approach developing a school text, the process "wheel," or the transcendent "fantasy of instant text production" (Bizzell 175). Our process discourses continue to shimmer with a modernist aura of writing as transcendent mind work that is (somehow) irrelative of particular bodies, actions, objects, and spaces.

Stretching process pedagogy beyond textual strategies learned and repeated, I argue for teaching processes through emphasizing the innumerable *differences* about them as they iterate across domains. Toward helping student writers perceive these particularities, I outline practices that see and conceptualize processes as *emplaced physical activity*, a view that accesses "the rich texture of everyday writing processes" (Prior and Shipka 230). In a manner more metaphorical: at the center of my work in this book are those imagined glass observation boxes through which we might perceive some of the particular material and embodied "conditions" of particular writing scenes. As such, I consider writing processes both as three-dimensional bodily experience unfolding in time and as a descriptive, capacious concept that can help our instruction better nurture context-sensitivity, on-the-spot learning, and practicing writing as relational, contingent and improvisational, a view which complements and sees differently the more familiar process terrain of cognition or sociality.

PROCESS TEACHING TODAY

That writing is a process is a bedrock assumption in composition studies. Students who have practiced writing in schools in the last forty years will likely have some clear ideas about processes. Many or most have likely internalized particular strategies for brainstorming, revision, drafting, inventing, and so on. Process seems to be among the things that we teach to our students that sticks, as "For several decades, we have been teaching process, and according to our students, they transfer process" (Yancey et al. 28). This familiarity reflects too in our disciplinary thinking: Victor Villanueva names process "the 'Given' in our Conversations" (1) about writing and its teaching. Geoffrey Sirc spiritedly calls process "that huge, brilliant, longest-running cocktail party ever in composition" (196). And Helen Foster sees process as a matter of our primary disciplinary identity, writing, "All of us undoubtedly believe ourselves well versed in process theory and practice. With only a little exaggeration, it might be said that process

constitutes the conceptual fabric of our disciplinary hegemony” (3). Given this wide-reaching familiarity, it might be said that process is so known it needs no intervention, let alone a book-length one.

But while writing as a process still to some extent defines or makes us, what it means to claim and to enact this commonplace today is, from my perspective, unstable. Especially now in this postprocess (or even post-postprocess) terrain or moment, what it means to say and to teach “writing as a process” is ever more unclear if still utterly familiar. Thus, one of my broad goals with this book is to awaken consideration of process practice and theory today, an effort that I understand as part of a tradition of periodically “taking stock” of process (Anson; DeJoy; Delpit; Faigley; Harris; Perl, *Landmark*; Tobin and Newkirk).

And when I look around to “take stock” of process in this moment, I see it in a contradictory position: one of vague disinterest *and* steady persistence. On one hand, process is a backseat pedagogical familiar. It is a part of our teaching we maybe take for granted, one that seems to march along in the background without much need for comment. Processes still sometimes show up to animate research studies (e.g., Ehret and Holland; Fraiberg; Pigg; Prior and Shipka; Shipka; Roozen; Van Ittersum and Ching), though sometimes accompanied by an argument or defense for doing so, as Pamela Takayoshi does in a 2018 issue of *CCC*. But there is little scholarly attention focused on process *teaching* today. On the other, teaching process knowledge prominently remains a central tenet of several recent documents that outline foundations for writing instruction (e.g., NCTE’s “Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing”). On another hand still, postprocess scholars claim that, far from central, writing processes are so unpredictable as to make appeal to or discussion of them plainly impossible or nonsensical. Writing acts are not and have never been codifiable (Dobrin, “Paralogic” 133; Dobrin et al. 17) and thus are not amenable to being taught as a process or as skills or knowledge. “If writing cannot be reduced to a process or system because of its open-ended and contingent nature,” Thomas Kent writes in 2002, then writing is not only not a process but “nothing exists to teach as a body-of-knowledge” (“Paralogic” 149). In short, process today is at once embedded, prominent, and undermined. Given this contradictory positioning—settled in the background of our thinking, pronounced in our pedagogical schemes, undermined on the basis of complexity and situatedness—what might our work with process signify (differently) today? And how might these conflicting assumptions work together?

Writing processes, on that first hand, still shape our teaching. In his 2014 assessment, Chris Anson observes how process makes up much of composition’s instructional landscape today even while we approach writing and literacy more principally in its political, civic, public, and cultural dimensions (225). Anson

sums up the position of process as such:

At base, process pedagogy is designed to help students engage in their writing, to develop self-efficacy, confidence, and strategies for meeting the challenges of multiple writing situations. These goals, like the methods that help to achieve them, are now deep in the discipline's bones, and are the lifeblood of its praxis. (226)

I agree with Anson's characterization of what process teaching continues to offer contemporary instruction. I wonder though the extent to which students experience efficacy and independence as they write across drafts that we, their writing instructors, closely monitor. I wonder if they experience or think about composing in everyday, mundane settings ever or at all in terms of processes. I wonder if they see how their writing processes in our classes might both relate to and differ greatly from writing situations outside of our classes. I am concerned that my students, our students, see processes narrowly—as only formal or specialized teacher-led steps to developing a school-based genre. And these worries for me are amplified by Anson's ringing phrase that process is “now deep in the discipline's bones” (226). This phrase reflects my sense that writing as a process feels so familiar to us today that it has frozen into under-interrogated assumptions or staid practices. Process may feel to us now like a given, an unthinking known, a commonplace that we don't have to expressly define or question because we already know what we mean by it.

Like Anson, Lad Tobin (with Thomas Newkirk) too assessed the state of process and its teaching, but in the mid-1990s. Tobin and Newkirk seized a moment to “take stock” of the process movement after years of critique and the stirrings of “postprocess” thinking. Tobin identified then a range of ongoing challenges to process approaches from both conservative stakeholders “who never liked the movement in the first place” and from critical compositionists who were eager to “move beyond it” (7). In his moment, Tobin sees as does Anson that process assumptions endure through criticism, as many process beliefs and practices continued then “to hold power” (7) for writers, students, and writing instructors. One difference though between Tobin's and Anson's reflective moment is that Tobin can identify active and “current criticisms [that] are fair, valid, and useful” (7). Those active criticisms worked in Tobin's moment to make process teaching more responsive and inclusive by attending to difference in terms of class, race, and gender; to technological change; and to the constructed, shaping roles of the writing instructor (10-11). I am not sure we enjoy the same range of “current criticisms” of process teaching today. Process just doesn't appear much as the central or interrogated term in recent scholarship, especially pedagogically-focused work.

At the same time though, process remains a declared center of various guides to contemporary pedagogical practice. Prominent position statements that set goals for secondary and postsecondary instruction—including the 2011 CWPA, NCTE, and NWP “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” or NCTE’s 2016 position statement “Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing”—each include “writing processes” in their small sets of recommended outcomes and assumptions. Process is prominently valued in all these documents right alongside rhetorical knowledge and critical thinking. Thus, far from being an expired concept or one we are “beyond,” process endures today as a philosophical basis of our pedagogies. In these documents (discussed in detail in Chapter 3), processes are defined familiarly as *strategies*—for example, the “multiple strategies, or *composing processes*” which are not linear, but are flexible and adaptable (“WPA Outcomes”). Process strategies: we know well how to teach those. This is a familiar idea about process teaching, one so familiar that it becomes a target for critique on grounds of oversimplification. Joseph Petraglia, for example, has undermined the oversaturated process notion that “writing is the outcome of a variety of steps and stages” (63). But I do not think that these documents’ focus on “strategies” is reductive in the ways Petraglia means exactly. More so, I see in the repetition of processes as “strategies” a focus on that which is *teachable*, repeatable, and knowable-in-advance. And we are practiced at teaching writing process “knowledge,” to borrow Anne Beaufort’s terms—as “the ways in which one proceeds through the writing task in its various phases” (20). We have countless classroom methods for doing so—outlining, drafting, peer review, webbing, freewriting, reflection, track changes, zero-drafts, says-does, portfolios, graphic organizers, and many more.

But I wonder what such steady focus on process strategy or procedure has made us miss. I wonder about the edges, the phenomenology, the *experience* of processes—what is more unstable, what is situational and essential to writing processes but not expressly codifiable or repeatable across writing situations. Writing processes as “strategies,” after all, are never really stable. Processes change based on innumerable factors, on how they are situated and “affected by the material, socially specific particulars of a given writing situation or ‘community of practice’” (Beaufort 20). But we have prioritized much less in our teaching the infinite ways in which processes differ across infinite contexts and contingencies. As Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon emphasize in their 2006 volume, “The most obvious commonality among scenes of writing may be, most significantly, difference” (5). The editors emphasize the stakes of failing to open process and writing pedagogies more broadly to difference and positionalities, writing, “As student populations are increasingly characterized by variety and difference, pedagogies that avoid attention to context become increasingly

less relevant” (7). Unless process teaching can open itself to particularities, we risk homogenization, generalization, and ultimately, irrelevance (Vandenberg et al. 6). So how can we teach processes in ways that are less focused on repeatable strategy and more sensitive to differences? How do we expand process teaching to account for contingent factors, including those alluded to in these pedagogical position statements—the shaping impact of changing technologies, different environments, varying purposes and audiences? How can we emphasize, again as these documents do, processes as not learned once and for all, processes as multiple, processes as adaptable and practiced to become rhetorically flexible and versatile? Developed across the chapters of this volume, my core answer to these questions is to work in our teaching to physically and materially situate writing processes.

It is important for me to underline at the outset too that my call to see writing processes in our teaching through those observation boxes, up-close and *in situ*, is not to ignore the ways that writing is simultaneously situated in more ephemeral and expansive contexts. Quite the opposite. When closely observed, processes become clearly differentiated in their immediate physical particulars like physical movement, duration, tools, interruptions, and so on. Drawing out those differences, I will argue, helps writers attune and respond to more distant social, rhetorical, genre, and many other constraints of writing situations across life domains. Writers can come to see theirs and others’ writing processes as movement in partnership with, for just a few examples, immediate material writing environments, social contexts, cultural conventions, positionalities, and privilege. In other words, approaching processes as physical and material is an available in-road toward helping writers see and enact writing as situated, differentiated, and responsive. And from this physically grounded view, teaching and learning with process shifts as well. Rather than strategies, process teaching is descriptive, constructivist, discovery-oriented, and writer-led. More than *learning* writing processes, physically situating processes is to *learn how to learn* to respond to the changing conditions in which writing finds itself. It is putting in the hands of writer’s themselves not the yields of our process inquiry, but its questions and observational methods.

THE QUESTION OF POSTPROCESS (OR, HOW THIS BOOK IS AND ISN’T POSTPROCESS)

Next, this project is motivated by need I see for reckoning with postprocess. As someone long interested in the tradition of process—its research, histories, theories, and especially its teaching—I’ve felt for some time uneasy about what we’re supposed to make of or make with postprocess thinking. What is this var-

ied work trying to push us toward? What happens to process teaching under its ranging influence? What threads or moments in postprocess discourse might be transformative for composition pedagogy specifically?

Certainly, a book like this—focused as it is on physicalizing and thus differentiating processes—cannot and should not avoid engagement with postprocess discussions. But what this engagement yields is complicated. Some of my claims about process teaching, including questioning the repeatability and stability of processes as strategies and emphasizing the context-contingent differences of all writing acts, are already familiar. These notions are hallmark gestures of postprocess theory. I will also rely on in these pages Thomas Kent's postprocess paralogics. So, to some extent, my inquiry could be called a postprocess one. At the same time, though, I recognize that postprocess intentionally declares itself a disunified discourse. Divergent and "ambiguous" (Whicker 498), postprocess represents not one coherent theory but a looser "mindset" (Kent, "Preface" xviii). As such, I want to establish how my concerns in this book both are and are not postprocess. The following may feel like a detour into an argument where otherwise I am previewing. But it is important for me to set a climate in which, across these pages, I can turn to specific postprocess claims and provocations that invigorate contemporary process praxis.

As I will echo in Chapter 2, often postprocess claims are fashioned as a wholesale *break*—a "break-free-and-don't-look-back" shift away from the era or tenets of the "process movement" and a wholly new direction for the field. As Petraglia asserted the impulse of postprocess in 1999, "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. We have better questions now, and the notion of process no longer counts as much of an insight" ("Is There" 53). Most visibly, postprocess has broken free by plainly, staunchly, and repeatedly deconstructing process; or in Thomas Kent's prominent articulation, by asserting simply, "the fundamental idea that no codifiable or *generalizable* writing process exists or could exist" (*Post-Process* 1). And this gesture of undermining process can sometimes be attached to a wrecking ball for writing pedagogy's entire enterprise, because if "there are no codifiable processes by which we can characterize, identify, solidify, grasp discourse . . . there is no way to teach discourse, discourse interpretation, or discourse disruption" (Dobrin, "Paralogic" 133). Boring or radically impossible, process from this perspective would seem to be an unequivocal nonstarter. But at the same time, this blanket "break free" rhetoric is deployed toward varied aims, and it may actually not be a blanket at all. The accumulated postprocess sense that process is untenable, after all, has not erased our classroom traffic in this concept (and, actually, I do not think that is the intention of this claim, anyway). The repetition of this impossibility has

perhaps to some extent, though, chilled our disciplinary discourse around process, helping to leave processes in our teaching today largely *unsituated*—out of time and place and considered still as all-purpose skills or strategies. The situated writing processes I seek in this book are then “postprocess” to the extent that they are not codifiable, that they always already unfold in excess of any models we might hazard about them, and that they entail impossibilities and uncertainties of various kinds. This is to say, I too undermine process along these familiar postprocess lines.

At the same time, I diminish the postprocess call to “abandon” (Jensen 11) process, a message often implicit in postprocess “break-free” rhetoric. One way I work to muddy the narratives around the process/post- “break” is by highlighting the ways some postprocess thinking can be conceptualized more as a *shift* than a break—a shift in the focus and scope of composing theories. In Chapter 2, I show how the postprocess moniker is linked to theories that understand writing on sweepingly huge, *macro*-scales: networks, communities, ecologies, complex systems, and so on. Indeed, John Trimbur, credited with the first using the term “post-process” (Matsuda 65), meant for it to embody his observation that compositionists were to turning focus away from individuals’ processes and toward larger political and social contexts for literacies. I see *expansion*, or the scale and situatedness, of composition theories after the social turn as an alternative disciplinary storyline, a shift from process to *situated processes*, rather than an absolute break or rupture between process and post-. My focus on situatedness and scale does not aim to unify process and postprocess. But by focusing on situatedness at modulating scales, I expose how we’ve glossed over meaningful ways that writing is not just constrained by expansive, distant, ephemeral, or systemic forces, but equally by immediate physical dynamics.

Postprocess too often invokes expansion, and not just in terms of the scale of writing theory or the idea that writing cannot be contained in individuals alone. Postprocess expansion arguments are also forged in terms of the focus of the discipline. That is, appeals to postprocess often signal a drive to explore different questions, aims, and methods that exceed or avoid totally those of college writing instruction. I take no issue with this brand of postprocess break as disciplinary expansion. For many reasons that include, and well exceed, the influence of postprocess thinking, including for instance, ongoing focus on global Englishes, community writing, public writing, writing across the lifespan, workplace writing, nonwestern and cultural rhetorics, and many other burgeoning areas of scholarly focus—our field’s considerations of writing now undoubtedly exceed college instructional concerns alone. As Vandenberg et al. have it, the “dominant consensual belief” (7) in place twenty years ago that college writing is the “primary concern” in composition studies is now neither primary nor

consensus. However, some still dissent to what they perceive as unrelenting pedagogical demand. Postprocess discourse, in other words, is often entwined with resistance to the so-called “pedagogical imperative.” For example, Sidney I. Dobrin, J. A. Rice, and Michael Vastola claim in their 2011 collection an “unapologetic resistance to simple pedagogical application” (3) and declare interest instead in “questions and theories of writing not trapped by disciplinary expectations of the pedagogical” (14). This resistance, also invoked elsewhere (i.e., Dobrin, *Postcomposition*; Olson), claims that composition should let go of college writing instruction as its disciplinary center and with it, any concerns at all about “application.” Indeed, I agree. Writing theory or research should not be beholden automatically to classroom “application” (though, at the same time, I do think invocations of the “pedagogical imperative” tend to oversimplify the complexities of pedagogy and praxis).

Pedagogy is not, if it ever was, the gravitational center of the field. The pedagogical should not be understood as an implicit demand. But it may not surprise that I do take issue with what I see as a central side effect of this kind of postprocess resistance: the ways it has led to cautiousness—even a moratorium—on rethinking pedagogical and process assumptions through certain postprocess and other postmodern claims. “Moratorium” as a fitting term came to my mind before I knew that this is too the way Victor J. Vitanza in 1991 described a broader relation among theory and practice in the field. In short, Vitanza “declare[s] a moratorium on attempting to turn theory into praxis/pedagogy. The field of composition demonstrates a resistance to theory by rushing to apply theory to praxis without ever realizing the resistance of theory itself to be theorized and applied” (160). Though I raise Vitanza’s gesture to ultimately quibble with it, at the same time and as above, I agree with it. Not only should we not, we cannot just “turn” theory into classroom practice. Doing theoretical or “intellectual” work—to invoke Lynn Worsham’s conception—always exceeds the inherently conservative, “narrow and policed” (101) terrain of disciplines or institutions or classrooms. Intellectual work is instead “relentlessly critical, self-critical, and potentially revolutionary, for it aims to critique, change, and even destroy institutions, disciplines, and professions that rationalize exploitation, inequality, and injustice” (101). Attempting to totalize or encapsulate theory and “apply” it is not only misguided and undesirable, but also essentially impossible.

Yet, I still question the reach and direction of this moratorium. Compositionists, like me, working in the subfield of composition pedagogy and engaging with the preconceptions and ideologies underlying process teaching, seem to be equally shooed away from engaging with postprocess claims. Of course, postprocess theorists themselves need not account for pedagogy. Of course, no theory can be somehow “translated” to practice. I do think, though, that this

moratorium has had unfortunate consequences for contemporary (process) pedagogies. This interference can be illustrated in how Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola position “postprocess theories.” They make clear that postprocess—however they ultimately imagine its bounds or boundlessness—shall not mingle with writing pedagogy. They state, “The potential of postprocess theories lies not in their reconfiguration of how disciplines like composition studies might rethink the teaching of writing” (17). In their efforts to wield postprocess as a kind of revolutionary cudgel poised to dismantle the discipline and remake us somehow instead “postpedagogy, postcomposition, and postdiscipline” (16), pedagogical engagement of any kind, as familiar disciplinary ground, is always already suspect. The editors worry about and resist the “normalizing” or “disciplinary affirmation” (7) of postprocess, calling into question how compositionists like Helen Foster and Matthew Heard have used postprocess ideas in relation to process theories or service learning. From my point of view, however, the editors’ critiques seem leveled not at Foster’s or Heard’s specific methods or claims, but at the very notion that one can or should “do” anything praxis-oriented with postprocess at all.

And so, such a moratorium has cast the sense that any postprocess engagement with process, at least that which is not an outright cancellation or a refusal to “apply” it, is suspicious from the jump. Such suspicion is evident in Debra Jacobs’ argument for process as a frame for reimagining the dynamics of liberatory pedagogies (663). Dispensing with the notion that process must mean predetermined maps or outcomes, Jacobs uses process to represent “interventions over time that disrupt the quotidian stream of consciousness—processual interventions that include critical inquiry into ways of reading processes and products (and their means of production)” (670). Jacobs clearly does not associate with any of the thoroughly critiqued trappings of the process paradigm—generalizability, repetition, acontextuality, and so on. But Jacobs confesses that she has “sought other ways to respond,” beside process “since I am not entirely comfortable with the risk I take in advancing allegiance to what has been so thoroughly critiqued” (663). Jacobs’ cautiousness speaks to the strength of the moratorium as she anticipates rebuff for simply saying process, for attempting to recast it productively, contingently, and in more postprocess-oriented ways for specific critical and liberatory ends.

I understand the urge to preserve the revolutionary potentialities of thinking postprocess. But, as John Whicker’s work on the impossibilities of meaningfully defining postprocess demonstrates, invocations of this term are much too varied for anyone to once and for all declare dominion over what postprocess categorically might do or not do. In the context of my work in this book—an intervention in the subfield of composition pedagogy and the history and potentials of

process and its teaching specifically—I clearly read postprocess, and this moratorium rhetoric, in a particular way. I question any broad cancellation force associated with postprocess as it has at once failed to undo process in the discipline and in classrooms and, simultaneously, held it frozen in place. What’s more, much postprocess discourse has not kicked process out of the classroom *by design* through express and categorical *disinterest* in pedagogical questions. Dobrin et al.’s concerns are simply not about process teaching at all. Thus, I see their concerns as diverging from, rather than conflicting with, my own.

In sum, when I connect to postprocess claims across these pages, I do not enforce a pedagogical imperative; I do not mean that everything compositionists and theorists alike do must have some connection to pedagogy; I do not think that postprocess must be “applied”; and I do not unify postprocess “theory” as one thing nor do I wish to unify process and post-. And I don’t think what I’m talking about is best called “postprocess” exactly. I do claim, though, that there are many relatively untapped postprocess claims that can help those of us thinking critically about writing pedagogy today transform it. These claims, I think, are less realized because they can come prepackaged with moratoriums or get caught up in performative calls to break free. I work around and through some of these barriers in this book in order to inspire and enact continued, ongoing critique of “untenable assumptions” in our process theories and practices and to reconstruct processes as physically emplaced, contingent, conditional, unpredictable, public, relational, decentered, or in short, improvisational.

THERE ARE NO “GENERALIZABLE SKILLS”

A final provocation and context for my work in this book is a vexing, but not particularly recent, challenge to contemporary writing instruction. Situating processes is especially imperative in light of a broader pedagogical revelation, one sometimes swept under the postprocess umbrella: the deconstruction of “general writing skills instruction” (GWSI). Much of this discussion and its attendant acknowledgment that all writing acts are situated and context-contingent is captured in Petraglia’s 1995 volume, *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*. Emphasizing the collection’s “polemic” (xi) potential, Petraglia and his contributors undermine composition courses guided by GWSI assumptions, those that presume that there are “skills that transcend any particular content and context” (xii) and “that writing is a set of [those] rhetorical skills that can be mastered through formal instruction” (xi). Most all writing courses we teach smuggle in GWSI assumptions (excepting perhaps, Petraglia underlines, those like writing-intensive courses in the disciplines or creative writing) (xii), consenting expressly or implicitly to the promise of delivering blanket,

universally applicable skills. They roll on though, Petraglia observes, in spite of the many ways our research, theory, and “common sense” piles up to tell us that *so much depends* on where, with whom, and for what writing is (xii). If we *really* faced what we know about writing’s profound situatedness, our operating GWSI presumptions suddenly make little sense. David Russell notably dramatizes this curious absurdity by analogy, claiming that GWSI “is something like trying to teach people to improve their ping-pong, jacks, volleyball, basketball, field hockey, and so on by attending a course in general ball using” (58). Such an imagined course would have obvious challenges; for one, could “ball using” even be taught without the selection and practice of specific ball-using games? If so, which would be selected and why? There might be something to gain from a course featuring practice in select games. Maybe those who dedicated themselves to it might find that they gain some increased facility in certain ball-related activity. But “this does not mean that person’s ‘ball-using skill’ is autonomous and general in any meaningful sense. It is the accumulation of some specific ball-using skills (and not others) learned in some specific ball games that bear some similarities” (Russell 58). In other words, any appearance of a “general skill” in writing is one forged only through repetitive engagement in specific located contexts (contexts that may have some observable similarities but are distinct nonetheless). Russell and others who expose “GWSI’s inadequacy” (Petraglia xii) remind us, in short and in sum, that “there is no autonomous, generalizable skill or set of skills called ‘writing’ that can be learned and then applied to all genres or activities” (Russell 59).

Russell’s language rings of Kent and others’ postprocess mantra: there is no generalizable or codifiable writing process. Viewed from a GWSI perch, if there are no generalizable writing *skills*, then obviously there are also no general writing processes. It makes little sense to talk about process skills or process knowledge or process strategies *in general*. Doing so—as we (self not discluded) routinely do—is to construct processes pre-fab, in advance, and outside of the myriad contexts of their performance. In postprocess articulations, the solution to trafficking in what we might call *GPWI*—general *process* writing instruction—is to simply stop pretending that there is anything out there we can call a writing process and perhaps to accept too in the end that “writing cannot be taught” (Kent, “Paralogic” 149) at all. But of course process teaching rolls on—it’s in our bones; it’s our familiar, it’s foundational to the maps that guide writing pedagogies today. And process remains enlightening and central in what we do—over our field’s history, some say, we’ve been “able to agree on process only; [though] agreement on approach and content continues to elude us” (Yancey et al. 148). But somehow still process has isolated itself from the broad situating instincts we’ve had as a field. Process remains strangely unsituated. My work in

this book as such proceeds from my instinct and observation that we haven't much problematized "general *process* writing instruction," an omission I try to amend. How can we legitimately "teach" writing processes when so much about their operation and art is shaped in and by differing contexts? What can we teach our students if we're not teaching process as enduring or repeatable strategies?

The revelation that generalizable writing skills do not exist is not new. It is not exigent in terms of recency. But, as Petraglia puts it, even if we have in some measure accepted writing's context-contingencies, "our field's usual long-term response . . . is to politely pretend we did not notice" (xii). This is especially the case with our assumptions about process. We are still wondering how to teach writing, and processes more specifically, in light of our theoretical awareness of writing's susceptibility and differences. Writing pedagogues have tried different ways to accommodate context: they've argued to push instruction out of first-year courses and into the disciplines or workplace contexts (e.g., Brent; Kent, *Paralogic*; Petraglia, *Reconceiving*; Smit); they've nudged our content away from writing skills and toward the study of our own discipline (e.g., Downs and Wardle); they've "postpedagogically" dispensed with the idea that writing can be taught at all (e.g., Dobrin et al.; Lynch). I will consider this challenge in the context of the latter alongside recent and prominent field interest in teaching for transfer. While postpedagogies undermine our ability to meaningfully teach such an unstable art as writing at all, transfer doubles-down on fashioning writing know-how that can *move*, that can traverse across and reemerge in unforeseen contexts. If postpedagogical transfer visions are to be realized, I will argue, we need a much more nimble, located, and improvisational approach to teaching (with) processes.

OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Because we are now postprocess or beyond, because process still finds our teaching, because we are still trying to disrupt and move beyond "general skills" mythologies, because processes in our discourses and imaginations remain rather disembodied and unsituated, it is a fitting time to reexamine process in our disciplinary thinking and our teaching. This book represents one effort to do so, as I join other recent calls to reanimate attention to process (Jensen; Shipka; Takayoshi, "Short-Form"; Takayoshi, "Writing") as well as efforts to take periodic stock of process and its teaching (e.g., Anson; Harris; Tobin and Newkirk).

I examine process in this book *because* of the teaching of writing. And while I will discuss some of my classroom practices, I also build a history and theory of situated processes. I draw upon ranging material to do so: postprocess discourses; process research, theories, and scholarship; historical critiques of process

pedagogies; recent scholarship under the banner of the “material turn” or the sociomaterial; contemporary writing theories that imagine processes on huge scales; as well as affect, feminist, and disability scholarship that locates writing across bodies and material environments. With these influences, I approach the animating questions of this book: What does it mean to physically situate writing processes? And how can doing so help us teach processes differently? By differently, I mean first in terms of *disruption*: modifying the ways writing pedagogies, students, and writing teachers picture writing processes as acontextual, transcendent, disembodied, placeless, or as matters of thinking. I also mean for *differently* to signal contingency—writing processes as they unfold *differently* through the participation of innumerable forces, positionalities, physical locations, and materials.

Ultimately, I aim to add a bodily, situated dimension to process history, theory, and classroom practice. I want to shift our methods toward those which invite in more of the unruliness and ranging *lived experience* of processes. And in so doing, I lead us toward bigger questions of writing pedagogy: How can we (or can we?) make our process instruction cross into new unknown contexts? What roles should the writing teacher take in process teaching? What roles for the student writer? How can and how should we teach knowing that writing processes can never be fully mastered or strategized, that they are inseparable from their shaping contexts, that writing is so context-contingent that teaching writing as we traditionally imagine it might be “impossible” (Dobrin, “Paralogic” 134; Kent, “Paralogic” 149; Lynch xv)?

This book reflects my belief that examining and situating processes can help transform postsecondary (and perhaps secondary) writing instruction. Renovations to this core concept can help writers see the complexities and constraints that shape their writing; it can help them see that their writing is as much the domain of others and communities as it is theirs; it can help them understand that the standards of good writing depends fully on where that writing is. But physically situating processes is far from the only thing we need in our classrooms to meet the needs of diverse student populations across varied institutional locations. I see my rethinking of process as a necessary but far from sufficient modification to writing pedagogy in today’s complex landscapes. I recognize too that taking up process again—especially as I focus on even less teacher control and more constructivist descriptivism—risks, as it has before, enabling some writers but disadvantaging others. As demonstrated by Lisa Delpit, Maria de la Luz Reyes, Nancy DeJoy and others, process approaches have long been assumed to be always already progressive, liberating, or agentive. But process approaches in practice have failed to embody these ideals. They have failed some language learners, minoritized, and non-middle-class students by, for example,

not making codes of power explicit (Delpit, “The Silenced” 287). They have failed also by operating on axes of “teacher-identified discourse” (DeJoy, “I Was” 163) or “enthymemic logic, identification, and mastery” (169). And too, they have failed by tending to chase an errant belief in one-size-for-all, assuming process strategies and models might be universally relevant to situations and writers alike. As I work to renovate process through bodily movement, constructivist discovery, observation and inquiry, and ultimately improvisation, I do so from an assumption of difference and descriptivism (not universality or prescriptivism). I recognize too that there is a host of writing-related knowledge and experience that needs other methods. But all of our instructional methods and concepts, process included, should *only ever* proceed from a context-contingent or situated perspective. And, my central point is that our classroom work with process *especially* needs now to be grounded and situated.

However needs manifest in specific classrooms with specific writers, I believe that writing students need one writing process “strategy” over any other: that of *situating*, learning to read particular writing situations and improvise processes in response. This goal is more important than only learning one set of rules or strategies that may only be helpful in a limited set of writing situations. Seeing writing processes as physical and material, in the ways I imagine in these pages, is one method for doing so, for helping student writers *feel* how writing is contingent, situated, relational, and fundamentally different across ranging contexts.

Toward these questions and goals, I first work to create a history, context, and theory of physically situated processes. In Chapter 1, I create a disciplinary heritage for the physicalities of processes through close readings of the work of Janet Emig, Sondra Perl, and Christina Haas. I demonstrate in Emig’s work—work conventionally positioned as a landmark study in cognitive process—interest in writing’s material tools, environmental conditions, and physical biology. In the evolution of Sondra Perl’s process thinking, from her early process study of “unskilled writers” to her 2004 book *Felt Sense*, I emphasize how Perl theorized processes as *movement*, with prominent roles for physical sensations, bodily action, gut feelings and affect. Finally, I uncover a less-prominent claim in Christina Haas’ study of writing tools and technologies: that writing is an *embodied practice*. This perspective, under-developed in Haas’s focus on the technology question, is critical to my project, especially as I situate it in the sociomaterial turn. Haas’ embodied practice is a means to see writing processes on broad scales of social and cultural knowledge in reciprocal and simultaneous relation to individual, located, physical writing acts.

This question of situatedness and scale continues in Chapter 2, as I attempt to account for why the embodiment and materialities of process have largely remained marginal in our theories and imaginaries. I advance two claims: first,

that writing's situatedness—a central premise claimed by contemporary theories including actor network, ecological, activity, and postprocess—can be understood as a *part of*, not in contradistinction to, the “process paradigm.” I develop this claim through readings of Patricia Bizzell and Marilyn Cooper's social theories, arguing that they situate individual processes in their innumerable social, community, and language contexts. Second, I argue that while situatedness can be seen as a longstanding assumption of process theories, the massive *scales* on which that situatedness is imagined in postprocess-oriented perspectives generates concern about the partiality of process-scaled views. I show how Nedra Reynolds and Margaret Syverson, in their expansive spatial and ecological theories of writing, struggle with the challenge of scale. Each theorist attempts to linger upon the immediate physical-material situatedness of processes and argues for its shaping, and underexamined, significance.

Taken together, these first chapters create precedence and need for seeing processes as physically emplaced and, second, establish how we can see discrete processes enmeshed in, rather than isolated from, larger forces and contexts. With this ground set, in Chapter 3, I aim to dismantle pictures of abstracted and disembodied processes in our teaching. I begin by exploring how recent pedagogical documents, like the 2016 NCTE position statement “Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing,” centrally define processes as strategies. Though the documents too account for context, flexibility, adaptation, multiplicity, there remains a pervasive sense that processes are divorced or immune from their shaping contexts. Aiming to interrogate these tacit images for writers and writing teachers, I advance a set of propositions that focus on dimensions of writing experience deemphasized in previous process theories and teaching. Drawing upon work in embodiment, affect, postprocess, new materialism, and disability studies, I divide this exploration into three tangled dimensions: writing processes as *activity*, as *physical*, and as *materially emplaced*.

I then enact this trope of picturing processes in process pedagogy. In Chapter 4, building on work that questions the knowledge we can claim as writing instructors and the roles that writing teachers and writers take (DeJoy; Dobrin), I argue for repositioning student writers in relation to process—no longer (if ever) as receivers or replicators of process strategies but instead as curious *situated process researchers*. Positioning student writers as *in-situ* descriptive researchers can help them perceive the environmental contingencies, detours, objects, tools, and embodied habits that constitute writing processes. These observations can lead students to readily adopt a situated view of writing: to learn to respond to writing's differences as they unfold across life domains. To illustrate, I present activities, repurposed from visual composing research methods, from my own first-year and intermediate writing classrooms.

In the final chapter, I continue focus on process pedagogy in the broader context of the deconstruction of general writing skills instruction. I focus on two opposing responses: transfer and postpedagogy. Postpedagogy undermines our ability to predict and control (future) writing situations; transfer aims to secure writing know-how that can travel and reemerge in future contexts. I mingle these visions to emphasize the value of writing instruction focused on situation and uncertainty—focusing writers on the immediacies and instabilities of where they are writing now, in the moment, on-the-spot. Such recognition, though, of susceptibility and contextual guessing challenges our sense of what teaching might look like. How do we “teach” something like processes when so much of their operation and art is shaped in and by contexts that we don’t know? For my answer, I turn to theatrical improvisation—its theory, practice and especially its pedagogy as imagined by Viola Spolin, pioneer of the American improv tradition—as a final visual figure to imagine teaching with situated processes. Process as improv casts writing as a situational, vulnerable art, one of figuring out how best to respond on-the-spot to unique rhetorical situations, conditions, and discoverable and unknown constraints.

Teaching writing processes has been productively questioned. As Kent lays it out: “If writing cannot be reduced to a process or system because of its open-ended and contingent nature, then nothing exists to teach as a body-of-knowledge” (“Paralogic” 149). Certainly, process teaching is ill-advised if it means we are just setting expectations for process behaviors and then measuring how writers perform them during writing tasks we fully control. But that doesn’t mean process teaching is over. We can instead, I will argue, teach *with* the emplaced *experiences* of processes. We can embrace process descriptivism and loosen the control of process prescriptivism, skills, or strategies. In so doing, we might help budge students’ constructs of writing and writing processes to better prepare them for the versatility, changeability, and inherent uncertainties of doing writing in the world. *Situating Writing Processes* is a robust tour through process histories, writing theories, postprocess claims, and contemporary assumptions guiding our ranging writing pedagogies today that provides writing teachers means to address one of the discipline’s most essential questions—how to engage some of the vast complexities of writing in order to help writers become more effective. The departure here though is that effectiveness is not secured in advance by receiving enduring process knowledge or reliably applicable skills, but rather by sharpening student writers’ abilities to keenly discern the dynamics of—and improvise in—any given differentiated and physically-located writing scene.