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Readings: *Toward a Composition Made Whole* *(Ch. 1-3)*

English 998, Multimodality, Multimedia and Digital Rhetoric in Composition

Jody Shipka writes, “A composition made whole recognizes that whether or not a particular classroom or group of students are wired, students may still be afforded the opportunities to consider how they are continually positioned in ways that require them to read, respond to, align with–in short, to negotiate—a streaming interplay of words, images, sounds, scents, and movements” (p. 21). I’m a bit conflicted by this statement. My gut reaction is to resist this claim because it seems to encompass a belief that students, *all students*, come to the classroom with the *same* opportunity and affordances. But, it strategically doesn’t use the word – same. Therefore, maybe my problem with this is that it’s just too broad. I can agree that students are playing with multimodality outside the classroom – words, images, texts, etc. – because students are immersed in a culture that pushes them to these different mediums. Maybe I would just like to hear her thoughts fleshed out a bit more. Maybe I’d like to hear more about what she means by affordances. Maybe I’d like to know what she means by “recognizes.” Recognizes doesn’t necessarily equate to action or practical pedagogical application. Am I just trying to find something to be critical of here, or is there some substance to this critique? I don’t know.

When Shipka was referencing Yancey’s 2004 address, I never knew historically that the field itself used the words *composition* and *writing* interchangeably (or their tendency to do so). I can imagine the perception of composition being tied to writing for those outside the field because it’s housed in the English department, but I didn’t know Composition & Rhetoric scholars used those terms interchangeably. It makes sense (and I’m still relatively new to the field): I became immersed in Comp Studies circa 2012/2013 where *composition* seemed to already embrace and value all compositions, not just writing. That’s something that stood out to me personally.

Question 1: On page 23, Shipka brings up an argument that I feel like I hear quite a bit of in terms of new media and multimodality: composition is “losing relevance” because it isn’t adapting or changing. Is this true? Is English composition really “losing” relevancy? And what are we judging “relevancy” on?

Question 2: I feel like I’m still trying to define and understand what “new media” is and what it is not. The more I read, the definition, in my mind, keeps expanding and getting bigger to the extent of me wondering what ***isn’t*** new media. Is new media everything? Is there something that new media theorists completely resist, something they acknowledge as definitely not new media or multimodal? For example, I feel like new media theorist would say alphabetic text aren’t encompassed or considered to be “new media.” But, alphabetic text could be a part of something considered new media. Therefore, alphabetic text have the potential to be new media?