Jody Shipka’s *Toward a Composition Made Whole* Chapters 4, 5, and the Conclusion

Discussion Questions:

1. In the latter half of Shipka’s book, she discusses the rhetorical and critical limits of traditional, linear, print text, while still not outright refuting tradition print’s importance. She is defensive of her fellow scholars and students that think her writing projects are less academic and far more creative; thus, missing the key concepts of her process approach. However, I wish she provided a more succinct and explicit working definition that really delved into the concept of spherical writing. I say spherical as opposed to circular because I think there is a great deal of cognitive and intellectual depth and motion (upwards, downwards, side to side, and around) that is involved in our writing processes. So my question is, how can we define the conceptual understanding of the writing process shape? Do you agree that the writing process is spherical? Why or why not?
2. On page 132, Shipka is talking about,

Working toward a composition made whole requires us to resist the privileging of questions like ‘What makes writing good?’ or ‘ Is this written text written well?’ Instead we must *also* begin asking questions about the purposes and potentials that writing, when combined or juxtaposed with still other forms of representation might serve: “What work does (or can) this accomplish?” (emphasis in original)

I really buy into this idea, especially, in light of her explanation of her multimodal framework projects because their purpose is centered on it “functioning” as an effective text rather than a context-less thing to grade. Also, I buy into this pedagogical notion because it seems extremely tied to how genre pedagogy is meant to function in the FYC classroom. Which brings me to my question: Where and how to multimodal/new media pedagogies overlap with genre pedagogies? What are the affordances and constraints of those contact zones of overlap? Is there scholarship that further delves into this overlap?

Reading response:

I really want to investigate and tease out this notion of a spherical writing process a bit more only because Shipka emphasized in lots of places throughout her book that we as writers and instructors need to break away from this oversimplified and outdated perception of writing being linear. While, I’m nearly positive that current and budding rhetoric and composition scholars aren’t perceiving the writing process as a statically linear process, I am interested to investigate whether this metaphor can help conceptualize the writing process more succinctly and productively.

Shipka (as well as Trimbur and other scholars) says that the rhet/comp community of scholars needs to attend to the rhetorical complexity of production, circulation, and distribution, otherwise we are teaching our students only a fraction of the complexity of composing. While I agree, I think that circulation and distribution needs to be foregrounded in a similar way that the composition process has in order to create authentic writing situations for students to work within so as to grasp that there are “human” and “nonhuman” constraints that effect the success of a composition. So then this spherical metaphor can come into play because the circular motion can represent the writing process insofar as that it’s a process wherein there is movement that starts at a place but is truly never completely “finished.” A writer starts by brainstorming, then hypothesizing, researching, re-hypothesizing, drafting, back to researching etc…However, the process of circulation/ reception intersect that process and is also circular insofar as the circulation of the text is a constant unstoppable process because once you put your text into publics then the readership and other users can take the text and further disseminate it or then can lambast or laude the work, thus further effecting the circulation of the text. I’m a little confused as to how distribution is separate from circulation but the nuances that separate those two processes could (I’m assuming) serve as 2 intersecting circles as well that differently intersect with process.

While I’m trying to tease this metaphor out, I’m still curious as to whether this is even worth it because I’m not sure what the constraints of this metaphor are.

But what I am sure of, is that this seems like a pedagogically rich metaphor for our students’ understanding of a composition made whole.