

Statement of Goals and Choices

I. Address the three sets of questions listed on page 114 of Toward a Composition Made Whole

1. What, specifically, is this piece trying to accomplish—above and beyond satisfying the basic requirements outlined in the task description? In other words, what work does, or might, this piece do? For whom? In what contexts?

Beyond trying to remediate the Yancey text as instructed by the class assignment, we are attempting two things: first, to remediate the text in a way that demonstrates some of Yancey's proposed methods, and second, to include in this demonstration an element of critique. The purpose of this critique is to explore some of the potential difficulties one might encounter while trying to enact Yancey's methods; as a result, the work we are doing primarily addresses teachers of first-year college writing or composition.

2. What specific rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological choices did you make in service of accomplishing the goal(s) articulated above? Catalog, as well, choices that you might not have consciously made, those that were made for you when you opted to work with certain genres, materials, and technologies.

We decided to demonstrate Yancey's methods by remediating a text common to most college curriculum: Plato's *The Republic*. We wanted to use an easily recognizable text, and one that most students and teachers would have had to "deal with" before. We wanted to run the text through several different mediums in order to convey the full range and variety of possibilities Yancey's methods open up for composition classrooms. We decided on four kinds of media: social media (GChat), 3D media (Play-Doh), live performance (skit), and video recording (commercial). Because we also wanted to convey some of the potentially negative effects of multimodalism, most of our remediations of *The Republic* are satirical.

For example: the GChat rendition of a dialogue from *The Republic* suggests that the remediation of serious, intellectual thought by means of a mode like social media can make the thought less worthwhile. Form, the mode, might affect the content, and it might do so in a negative way. More specifically, we wanted to respond to Yancey's claim that students bring an enormous amount of "energy and motivation" (298) to their nontraditional out-of-class writing, like texts and chats, and that therefore we need to reconsider our teaching methods. It seemed to us that she doesn't account for how vapid most of these communications are. Students have the energy and the motivation to endlessly text one another, mostly because it's so damned easy. It's mostly just mindless chatter.

So this GChat was supposed to address that by having these philosophers communicate in a mode that we normally associated with that chatter. Text messaging probably would have been a better mode for this, but GChat works better, because we can display it on the screen. We decided to use the allegory of the cave for this, because it's the most famous of the dialogs, and GChat really lends itself to that format.

There were plans for a complementary piece that would have done the opposite work—taken a piece of mindless chatter and remediated it into an academic essay, with footnotes and citations, etc. We were thinking of doing this with a particularly shallow Facebook post, probably something about how ugly so-and-so's shoes were. Unfortunately, this got ditched when we made the decision to work exclusively with material from *The Republic*.

Once we started writing it, we realized that we could address some of the pedagogical issues that our class covered this semester and that Yancey's text also touches on. We made Socrates, who has just seen the real world, communicate in Standard English, while the others, still unknowingly in the cave, communicate in text speak. This is supposed to resemble the traditional English teacher taking his new-media-immersed students to task. In this context, the shadows correspond with the students' text-speak, and the real world corresponds with the teacher's Standard English. The skit then shows the resistance that the two have to one another, with the students' resistance to math showing an opposition to the standard curriculum as a whole.

On the other hand, the skit (our live performance media) satirizes Plato, not Yancey, and in doing so suggests that the use of media other than writing might actually enable valuable thought and raise different sorts of questions. For example: What is the value of humor as a means to evaluating a text? What sort of helpful role can the juxtaposition of apparently different kinds of things play, or the surprising re-contextualization of a text? During the course of planning the skit for example, we made the somewhat surprising discovery that (the revered) Plato is perhaps not so very different in his thought from (not so revered) advertising agencies.

3. Why did you end up pursuing this plan as opposed to the others you came up with? How did the various choices listed above allow you to accomplish things that other sets of combinations of choices would not have?

We had initially thought about presenting the remediations of a text within a framing sketch; in this sketch, Yancey would be searching for a job, and the remediations would be part of her portfolio. The primary motive behind this plan was to satirize Yancey and her methods to an even greater extent; we moved away from it as an unnecessary layer, and because we realized that while we wanted to take issue with some of Yancey's ideas, we didn't want the constructive elements of that critique to be weakened by a hyperbolic satire of Yancey herself.

We are attaching the document (titled "PROCESS") we used to "jot" down ideas; all the highlighted options on the first page are the specific modes we decided to work with. We were initially going to use a "philosophy meme" as our "visual media," but when the

commercial idea developed out of the skit, we went with that instead. We chose GChat for our social media because it was the easiest to create accounts for, and because it was easiest to in which to simulate real time chatting. Since we were already doing a “dialogue” in the GChat, we decided on a skit involving more human actors instead of an “Abott and Costello” dialogue, which we were initially leaning towards. Finally, we chose Play-Doh as our 3D media because we wanted to play on the Plato/Play-Doh pun.

II. List all the actors, human, and nonhuman, that played a role in helping [you] accomplish a given task

Nonhuman

Beds
 Cellphones
 Coffee
 Computer in classroom
 Email
 GChat
 IMovie program
 Keith’s Office and the Hilarious Things Inside
 Laptops
 “Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland” (movie)
 "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key." (Yancey)
 Mad Men (AMC)
 Microsoft Word
 Play-Doh
 QuickTime
 Room 777, Memorial Library
The Republic (Plato; various editions)
 YouTube

Human

Rick
 Keith
 Lauryn
 Ruth
 Jim
 Mitch (Design Lab)
 Lots of baristas
 the Muse