

Quilts of Authorship:
A Literature Review of Multimodal Assemblage in the Field of Literacy Education

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Abstract

This literature review and narrative vignette draw on Social Symbolic Mediation, Social Semiotics, and Discursive Positioning theories to explore a theoretical model I call *Authorship as Assemblage*. Specifically, this paper challenges linear pathways to meaning-making by comparing authorship to quilt-making. Quilts afford unique arrangements of assemblage, including the capacity to embed, layer, interweave, and hybridize material. Here, I argue educators need to re-evaluate linear notions of literacy paths in today's participatory culture.

Introduction

Texts are no longer straightforward....With these texts in mind, we need to re-evaluate our notion of [authorship]. (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005, p. 35)

Although authorship once denoted the autonomous skills of knowing how to encode meaning in linear ways through printed text, it has become recognized over the last half century by researchers and educators alike as being significantly more multimodal and complex. These more recent notions of authorship, such as those offered by Pahl and Rowsell (2005) in the opening quote, suggest that the fabric of authorship is rarely linear and no longer straightforward. Authorship in the 21st century, they argue, interweaves multiple communicative practices across contexts, the social worlds of its authors, and is shaped by multimodal meaning-making, including written, but also pictorial, photographed, spoken, embodied, filmed, and digital forms. Their work, along with that of others (e.g. Dyson, 1997; 2001; Jewitt & Kress, 2003, Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001; Kendrick, 2005; Rogers, Winters, Perry, & La Monde, in press, 2010; Stein, 2008), shows that authorship, regardless of mode of creation, is intricately interconnected to semiotic thought, to the work of others, and to the inherent discursive practices that each social context affords.

Keeping with the core idea, that authorship is a complex communicative practice, the purpose of this paper is to review current theories of authorship and to extend them by further challenging linear notions of authorship. In doing so, I propose an *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model alongside a narrative vignette that compares authorship to quilt-making. This theoretical model suggests that authorship is always imbued with semiotic, social, and critical meanings, many of which are dynamic, continually in-process, and always interrelated.

Designing An "Authorship as Assemblage" Theoretical Model

Multimodal Literacy, a term first coined by Cary Jewitt and Gunther Kress (2003), may be defined as the range of representational modes that authors use to learn about, communicate, and shape knowledge in their social worlds, including its purpose and effect when used in and across social contexts. These multimodal researchers, and others (e.g., Stein, 2008; Van Leeuwen, 2005), have expanded definitions of literacy to include broader realms of multimodal communication and meaning-making. Piecing together their scholarship with other multimodal literacy perspectives such as *social-symbolic mediation theories* and *semiotics and social semiotics theories*, and then layering a third more critical perspective, *discursive positioning theories*, I propose a model of authorship that elaborates on current theories of multimodality. This *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model not only supports

a current argument in the field of multimodal literacy—that authorship in today’s information economy is not linear or merely language-based, for meaning is always integrated and layered with multiple modalities—it also extends this notion, interweaving social and critical perspectives that better accommodate today’s participatory culture. More specifically, this theoretical model offers four principles that undergird multimodal authorship. First, authors are both external and internal meaning-makers; they include any person who contributes multimodal meanings to texts. In other words, these meanings might be “declared, hidden, or withdrawn” (Barthes, 1977, p. 110). A second principle is that within situational contexts authors use and orchestrate a multiplicity of modes (e.g., writing, reading, drawing, discussing) that are made up of semiotic resources in order to interpret and actualize their understandings. So, beyond the modes themselves—whether the authorship is drawn, cut, pieced together, sewn, written, spoken, embodied, sung, and so forth—authors also draw on, layer, and embed an array of semiotic resources such as words, fonts, gestures, colours, sounds in order to represent and communicate information. Third, authors continually shift among the social (inter)actions of design, negotiation, production, and dissemination as they interpret and communicate meaning. And fourth, inside discursive practices, authors create storylines and subject positions. These positions situate the authors themselves and the others within situated practices. These principles are put into practice and elaborated through the metaphor of authorship, a short vignette, and the literature review that follows.

Quilting as a Metaphor for Authorship

Our authorship is a quilt of semiotic, social, and critical worlds cobbled together. We are all authors in this transformation—block by block, stitch by stitch, all of it and all of us pieced together. (Winters, 2009, p. 183)

The *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model can be compared to quilt-making, and quilts themselves make excellent analogies for authorship. Quilt-makers author meanings externally as they choose, cobble together, and stitch the fabrics, or as they engage with others and mediate social relations. They also author internally as they interpret their own work and compare it to or learn about the work of others. Additionally, within social contexts, quilt-makers contribute to larger discourses of meaning-making through multiple modes and semiotic resources, for example designing the overall look of the quilt, negotiating and producing the patterns, then sharing or using the finished piece. These actions take place within situated social contexts as authors interact with one another or with their own social worlds and prior experiences. In these ways quilting, like all authorship, is socially interactive and within this discourse quilt-makers psychologically and physically situate themselves and others within their contexts in both hidden and visible ways.

To represent the semiotic, social, and critical complexities of this model in practice, I explore a vignette from my own life. I suggest that authors not only layer, interweave, hybridize, and embed multiple semiotic resources as they render meanings, they also orchestrate an array of social interactions and discursive positions.

*In Terrace, BC, I sit in a gallery surrounded by stunning, intricate quilts created by Betty Doering and others (see Figure 1.1) and listen to Theresa Kishkan read a poetic personal essay about quilt-making from her book *Phantom Limb* (2007). She begins by inviting listeners to be present in the moment with her and to envision differing perspectives of culture, history, landscape and family life.*

“A quilt takes months,” she begins. She pauses, gesturing for us to look around the room. In silence we examine the colours of the chosen fabrics, the geometrical designs and patterns, and the intricate stitching.

Figure 1.1. Quilt



“First you choose a pattern,” she continues, “something formal or an idea to cobble together....”

Assembling Authorship

Listening, I begin to compare quilt-making to authorship. I interweave my own background, hobbies and experiences with Theresa’s essay, making connections to my own life (e.g., as a scholar, a storyteller, and children’s author), assuming an array of modes and social positions, and constructing my own distinct piece of authorship. Below is the narrative that I assembled.

A story takes months to build. You choose a pattern, a character, or perhaps a piece of action or a theme—designing ideas to cobble together.

You try to negotiate how much material you will need and how long your story will be. Your prior experiences, social contexts, and previous discursive positions will make your choices difficult; each idea is more lovely than the next. You will choose too much material, or too little.

Envision its colours and textures, move with it, design and discuss it, so that later, once the piece is written, it will still hold its shape. Form the material into the required blocks (e.g., scenes). Mental images, frames, rhythms, and dialogue might make things easier and more accurate. Mentally assemble your own experiences and possible storylines.

Fit the blocks of material together in an agreeable way, realizing that as you do so that your skills have not improved, despite the fact that you have been producing stories for years...more than a decade...nearly two. These blocks may not fit together, which simply means you will have to constantly adjust and negotiate as you go. Sew them together by hand, through gestures, sound or print, on the computer, or whichever mode best suits your story. Sandwich the themes inside your blocks. Baste your writing together with rough

transitions. Then you can draft and re-draft, using templates or freehand patterns which you've designed, never to be seen again. Bring the layers together and create the texture for your story. Be prepared for pleasure as you sit and switch, working from the centre out, forwards and backwards to prevent wrinkles.

Then be sure to share your creation with others. Hang up your writing, disseminate it, and share it with everyone who will listen. Even when finished, pick up that story whenever you can, and take solace in your work.

Even though the quilting vignette itself appears to be merely words on the page, this assembled authorship is multimodally composed. The words themselves, though primarily linguistic, also demonstrate the pictorial mode through page layout. Rhythm and pitch are also suggested through the reader's inflection and the punctuation (Nodelman, 1988). Here the "linguistic sign" is a cue complex which is multiple and assembled, both multimodally and socially (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

As I sat in the art gallery the evening of the quilting vignette, feeling inspired as an author, I was reminded of my own social, historical, and cultural experiences. The event evoked the time when I read a craft book about quilt-making with my aunt, seeing my step-mother's handiwork that was set on her bed as a blanket, or remembering the time in seventh-grade history class where we learned that American slaves read quilts to find their way to freedom: I assigned myself a reminiscent position. I also thought about Theresa Kishkan's words and the discursive positions being assigned. She was clearly positioned as the presenter of the knowledge or the knower, yet my own thoughts and feelings about quilting empowered me as well. I assumed an array of positions too (e.g., as a listener, a conjurer of stories, a writer). Furthermore, I wondered what Kishkan's reaction might be if I showed her the article that I would come to write (the article that you are currently reading) and demonstrated how she was inspiring me, and how I had positioned her as my mentor? Might others then read my work and then feel inspired also? Questions like these were being stitched together in my mind.

This simple moment of creation, along with a lifetime of others, are being assembled every time that I author. This vignette invites expanded and layered notions of authorship, including opportunities to think about authors as part of the fabric of their own semiotic, social and critical worlds. I discuss these expanded notions in the final section of this article. However, before I delve into this discussion I will introduce some of the theories that have been layered upon, sewn into, and interwoven with the *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model.

The Batting and Backings: Drawing on Three Theories

Assemblage, a significant term used in this paper, has its roots in a three-dimensional art process that was popularized in the 1950s and 1960s where artists combined, embedded, and layered everyday objects into a visual composition. The three-dimensional work of Joseph Cornell (1909–1972), Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), or Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) could be considered assemblage. Drawing on this idea as well as its etymological origins—from the Latin word *assimulare* meaning "to make like" and later "to gather together"¹—I bring together three theories: two theories of multimodality and one theory of critical discourse. I believe that this assemblage of theory, alongside the narrative vignettes, supports and extends current theories in the field of multimodal literacy. These theories, when meshed together, interanimate and mutually inspire one another, resulting in a totality of meaning that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Social-Symbolic Mediation Theories of Multimodality

Social-Symbolic Mediation Theories have introduced concepts like social-symbolic mediation, dialogism, symbol-weaving, and transmediation into the field of literacy, and also inform my assemblage model. These theories have roots in Vygotskian theory (1978), who posited that children use speech and play as "symbolic tools" for "organizing higher psychological functions" in their social worlds to fulfil needs, realize desires or thoughts, solve problems, and perceive their surroundings (p. 23). For example, when children use symbols in their play they are allowing the symbol to mediate their internal thoughts (e.g., a stick represents a galloping horse), and at the same time these symbols shape their external actions (e.g., the child holding the stick stamps on the ground and shouts "Giddy-up!"). Vygotsky (1978) postulated that a child first notices and begins to use symbols or "psychological tools," whether they be gestures, words, or the use of artifacts, from their external world before internalizing these

tools and mediating thoughts. These internalized thoughts are then negotiated and transformed into external actions (Vygotsky, 1986).

Aspects of Vygotsky's theory resonate with the work of Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin highlighted the social nature of symbols (e.g., words) in their theories. For Bakhtin, authorship, what he calls *utterances*, is based on human social activity—a dialogical consciousness. A pivotal argument in Bakhtin's dialogic theory (1981) is that each utterance (words and other symbols) “refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others,” conversing with utterances that have come before it, “such that it presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91). Bakhtin (1981) believed that utterances are more than simply a produced set of signs, but are always infused with dialogic negotiations—“[l]ife by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth” (p. 293). They are, as he argued, always embedded in historical and social events, orientated towards a listener, and always in relation to those utterances that came earlier. Moreover, all words “taste” of the contexts in which they lived socially and “all words and forms [symbols] are populated by intentions” (Bakhtin, 1981 p. 293). Therefore as Vygotsky (1978) also notes, our utterances and our thoughts are inhabited by the productions of others and our thinking is negotiated through culture.

Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) applied Vygotsky's (1978) social-symbolic mediation theory to their research, along with the process-writing pedagogies model (e.g., from scholars like Janet Emig, 1976; Linda Flower & John Hayes, 1980; and Donald Graves, 1983), Halliday's functions of language theories (1975, 1978), and semiotics theories (Eco, 1976; Peirce, 1958), in order to offer the field of education some ground-breaking insights on multimodal authorship. Their research (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984) challenged underlying assumptions about literacy instruction, while also demonstrating the sophistication of young literacy learners. Positioning children as “active informants” allowed these authors to challenge literacy pedagogies in multimodal and sociocultural ways, including the business of “scribbling,” systematic language usage, and invented spellings, as well as the relationships between literacy and gender, race, or socioeconomic conditions. Like Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981), these researchers posited that children did not function as isolated individuals, separate from the environments in which they live. Rather, they embedded symbols and move in and out of physical contexts and imagined contexts within their social worlds in order to construct interrelated sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and symbolic meanings. They suggested that gestures, embodiment, speaking, and drawing did not lie outside of the writing process, “but are an intimate and integral part of that process” (Harste, Woodward, & Burke p. 37).

Another social symbolic researcher contemporaneously exploring emergent multimodal literacy practices in the 1980s was Anne Haas Dyson. Dyson was influenced by Vygotsky, but also by Werner and Kaplan (1964) and later by Bakhtin. Back then and more recently, Dyson (1997, 2001, 2004) continued to suggest that all texts (social and semiotic) are embedded in the author's social and cultural worlds. Sociocultural influences, popular culture, and ideological beliefs also affect students' language and writing development. Her argument is that teachers might consider providing students with opportunities to interact and even play during writing classes, for it is not only the writing itself but the children and their relationships with each other that, for many of them, can provide in-school writing growth. Her work demonstrates that play (whether dramatized, sketched, written) is its own assemblage of authorship as it is embedded in many worlds: social, imaginative, and experiential.

Marjorie Siegel's scholarly work (1984, 1995, 2006) showed the influence of scholars like Harste and Vygotsky, as well as the work of Eco (1976), Peirce (1958), and Suhor (1984). For example in her (Siegel's) 1995 work, she offered a theory of *transmediation* to demonstrate that students move between language and other modes (e.g., visual symbol to speech) when they read. She postulates that the process of taking understandings from one semiotic system and moving them into another in order to make meaning (transmediation) offers students more opportunities to engage with texts in generative and reflective ways. She suggests that readers use sign systems to mediate other systems and found that children learn more when they are encouraged to use additional modes of meaning-making. Siegel (2006) explained how this semiotic interaction achieves “generative power”:

When a learner moves from one sign system to another, semiosis becomes even more complex, in that an entire semiotic triad serves as the object of another triad and the interpretant for this new triad must be represented in the new sign system. And because no pre-existing code for representing the interpretant of another sign system exists a priori, the connection between the two sign systems must be invented. (p. 70)

Filling the gap between the content and the expressive plane requires generative thinking. Moreover, Siegel (2006) pointed out that although children have always engaged in what are now called multimodal literacy practices, it is changes in the ways people think about the literacy landscape that are taking on a new significance in our modernized world. More recently, bringing this idea to bear, Siegel and Panofsky (2009) suggested that models of authorship need to be complex enough to account for today's social and multimodal dimensions of literate practice. In summary, these researchers found that child authors blend multiple modes of meaning-making and their social worlds during literacy practices. In other words, authors not only use symbols as functional tools, they also use these symbols to shape their thinking, their internal and external actions, and the sociocultural relationships that they participate. This is what Bakhtin (1981) might call a “dialogical” undertaking.

Semiotic and Social Semiotic Theories of Multimodality

The field of Social Semiotics has its roots in two divergent Semiology/Semiotic theories: Saussure's dyadic model of signs (1983), which he called *Semiology*, and Peirce's triadic model, which he called *Semiotics*. Because these theories lay the groundwork for more recent multimodal literacy research including *Social Semiotics* and *New Literacy Studies*—theories that are integral to my own theoretical framework—I will briefly touch on Saussure's and Peirce's scholarship before proceeding.

Saussure (1983) offered a binary model in which a sign is composed of two parts, the “signified” and the “signifier.” Saussure argued that, to be complete, a sign needs both the *signified* (the mental concept being discussed), such as a hand pictured below



and the *signifier* (the semiotic resource used to represent the concept), such as the alphabetical pattern H-A-N-D, an image, a gesture. As Saussure puts it, the signifier and the signified are inseparable, “intimately linked” in the mind “by an associative link,” whereby “each triggers the other” (Saussure, 1983, p. 67).

Another semiotician, Charles Peirce (1958), thought differently. Rather than using a two-part model, Peirce focused on a triadic model which included an “object” (the concept being discussed), a “representamen” (the form the concept takes, such as the sound pattern, the sound vibration, the gesture, etc.), and an “interpretant” (the sense made of the sign) (Peirce, 1958). I will illustrate the Peircian model using our example of the hand:



The *object* is the concept of a hand. The *representamen* is the drawn representation of the image that is depicted above. The meaning imparted by the sign is what Peirce (1958) called the *interpretant*, and in different contexts the above image can have different *interpretants*. In one context the depiction can mean simply *hand*, as in ‘a part of a body’. In another context the depiction may emphasize the thumb-touching-index-finger gesture to mean ‘OK, everything is good’.

Saussure's and Peirce's semiology and semiotic theories influenced literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes. Barthes (1964) argued that non-linguistic sign systems such as objects, images, and patterns of behaviour can and do signify meaning within societies. He suggested that “semantization”—meaning making through participatory discourse—is inevitable (p. 41).

Years later Barthes (1977) argued that readers actively engaged with texts, becoming “donors of meaning” (p.211). His broader notion of authorship suggested (as a principle in my *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model) that, in practice, there were no producers versus consumers of texts; rather, these roles were intrinsically connected and interwoven. Understanding authorship in these broader ways means that an author can be anyone who originates, re-constructs, or animates a text, including a child player, a children's book writer, an illustrator, an actor, a reader or audience member, and dozens of other roles.

Saussure (1983) and Barthes (1970) also informed a theory of language called *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), which stressed that language can not be separated from its social purposes. This lineage of research initiated by linguist Michael Halliday in the late 1970s and early 1980's, emphasized that language operates "through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other" (Halliday, 1985, p. 11). Halliday's academic scholarship (1978) argued against the traditional separation between language and society, and exemplified the start of a 'semiotic' approach as a way to understand communication practices.

Through critiques of the two divergent traditions of Semiology/Semiotics (listed above) and then by drawing on the work of Barthes (1970), Halliday (1978), and others (e.g., Bernstein, Eco, and Jakobson), leading language scholars and semioticians Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988) and, later, Theo Van Leeuwen (2005), proposed theories of *Social Semiotics*. Their theories rejected structuralist approaches to Semiology/Semiotics and posited that people used signs within social contexts and in specific and functional ways.

Social Semiotic theories, which have changed the landscape of education, particularly current literacy pedagogies and research, argue that signs are never devoid of the social systems in which they are practiced. These theories invite new pathways for multimodal communication. A plethora of innovative research followed this tradition, including the work of Multiliteracies theorists (New London Group, 2000), New Literacy Studies scholars (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Ranker, 2007), and Multimodal Literacies researchers. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) offered a multimodal theory of communication that, they argued, was applicable to all modes of semiotic meaning-making within and across an array of social contexts. Beyond the theory itself, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) also created a terminology of common semiotic principles that operate in and across different modes. These strata, like my *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model, focus not only on multiple forms and texts themselves, but also on the common semiotic principles that undergird all communicative practices.

Discursive Positioning

Discourse includes social and symbolic forms. It also involves relations between individuals and groups and the knowledge/power structures that their social (inter)actions bring forth (Gee, 1996). It is socially constructed knowledge, including the semiotic mediations themselves and the purposes for their production. Thinking about discourse in this way resonates with the work of discursive positioning theorists such as Davies and Harré (1990) and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998).

Davies and Harré (1990) expounded a view that discourse is a fluid social practice, constructed by acts of communication. Additionally each of their theories involves a social purpose whereby identities are (to some extent) discursively constructed, and that discourse itself is implicated in the construction of power relations through its authorization of social positions. Within discourse, individuals have the capacity to construct storylines, build subject positions, and exercise choice. Thus, Davies and Harré (1990) contended that:

A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire of a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of particular images, metaphors, storyline and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. (p.45)

Here, people take up positions and are positioned in relation to discourse. Compared to a person's fixed personal identities (class, race, gender), these fluid discursive positions have the potential to be constituted and reconstituted through social interaction; therefore the same person is variously positioned in discourse as he/she is involved in the "continuity of a multiplicity of selves" (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 48).

Individuals can position themselves by pursuing their own storylines and they can also be positioned in relation to others by adopting storylines. Moreover, storylines are formed not only in the immediate context but also in relation to the utterances that have come before (Bakhtin, 1981). Authors devise a plethora of perspectives that simultaneously shape their own understandings and fluidly lived identities (Holland et al., 1998).

Piecing Together the Principles of the Authorship as Assemblage Model

These theories, when layered together, provide the batting of the *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model—giving it its shape and fullness. Now I shall piece together some principles (fabric blocks) that construct this model. It should be noted that it was never my intention to create an autonomous or straightforward theory of authorship. Rather, my intention is to bring together an assemblage of four principles that can be recursively re-shaped, and re-framed in relationship with the researcher’s personal situational contexts, experiences, and data. Thus, these pieces have the potential to become re-arranged by other researchers, theorists, and educators in order to provide possible future assemblages of situated multimodal research.

Principle #1: Authors Are Both External and Internal Meaning-Makers

The *Authorship as Assemblage* model applies equally to the interpretation (the intake) of and the actualization (output) of information, a notion that Barthes (1977) invited in his book *Image-Music-Text*:

To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in stories, to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative thread on to an implicitly vertical axis: to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next. (p. 87)

Looking back on the vignette, but still drawing on Barthes’ theory, I believe that I was not simply taking in Theresa Kishkan’s words as I sat listening to her that night at the library, nor was I automatically discovering the meaning; rather, I was simultaneously and actively re-constructing and negotiating the meanings of the given sign systems and semiotic resources.

The idea that authors are both readers and writers has been well explored. For example, Barthes (1977) and others (e.g., Jerome Harste, Kathy Short, Rob Tierney and Gordon Wells) posited that the nature of composition (be it internal or external) is always complex, active, and productive. Therefore, they argued that instead of separating reading and writing, the field of literacy could benefit by thinking about reading and writing as more synchronized and by interweaving these processes together with literacy pedagogies.

Principle #2: Authors Use and Orchestrate a Multiplicity of Resources

Marjorie Siegel (1984, 1995, 2006) examined reading as signification. She suggested that readers use sign systems to mediate other systems; they know more when they know something through an additional mode. Her work and the work of others mentioned earlier in this literature review offer new ways to theorize multimodality, ways that do not privilege language over other communicative modes.

Pippa Stein (2003) suggested similar ideas. While researching multimodal pedagogies, she explored relationships between social semiotics, multimodality, and the teachings of multimodal literacy in contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity. In one area of her work (2003, 2008) she proposed the idea of “chains of semiosis”, suggesting that when children use semiotic chains they are able to re-shape their knowledge (p. 123). Some of the transmediations that I made throughout the vignette include listening to the words, locating and visually analysing the quilts themselves, while watching Theresa Kishkan’s body positions, gestures, and facial expressions.

Multimodality suggests additional opportunities as well, for it gives authors favourable circumstances in which to think recursively in participatory, creative, and critical ways, including chances to embed, interweave, layer, and hybridize semiotic resources, social (inter)actions, and discursive positions. It was during this research that I began to notice how complex and messy—semiotically, socially, critically—authorship really is. Researchers like Holland et al. (1998), Siegel (2006), Stein (2008), Rogers and colleagues (in press, 2010) have begun to explore this idea that authorship is interconnected with the complexities of semiotic communication, social exchanges and actions, and imagined storylines.

Principle #3: Authors Shift among Social (Inter)Actions

Authorship includes assemblages of products and processes. Here, the focus of authorship goes beyond the products

of authorship (e.g., the finished book, the quilts). This idea resonates with Harste, Woodward, & Burke's findings (1984), who wrote:

With a focus on product, we not only fail to see growth, but also to make and take the opportunities for literacy which abound around us. (p. 22)

They argued that the product of authorship (e.g., the text) demonstrates a mere fraction of the author's decisions. This idea is also suggested by sociocultural researchers who view literacy as a social practice that is mediated through action (e.g., Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Lenters, (in press); Luke & Carrington, 2002). Here, I explore authorship as a set of products and social practices, including the social (inter)actions that people perform in order to mediate communication. These (inter)actions (punctuated in this way) acknowledge the "dialogic" and reciprocal social relationships (Bakhtin, 1981) in all authorship. Through actions like design, negotiation, production, and dissemination, individuals and groups author their own social discourses. These social (inter)actions resonate with Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2001) strata of multimodal discourse. This assemblage is rarely as linear or straightforward (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) as seen in the vignette. I moved between construction (or productions) of information (such as the story that I re-assembled), negotiations that were both social and semiotic, new designs, and eventually revised disseminations such as this article that you are reading. As I weave this fabric, placing the blocks of material into revised patterns, I invite readers such as yourselves to re-envision your own assemblages of authorship. This is because, as my *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model argues, authorship continually re-assembles itself as humans continually act in relation to others, deploying meanings and situating others within imagined storylines, and at the same time positioning themselves in various ways within the discourse. Like most social practices, assemblages are always in the making.

Principle #4: Authorship Offers Multimodal Potentials for Positioning

Michel Foucault (1977), philosopher and activist, demonstrated that people can be both empowered and constrained by discourse. In other words, Foucault believed that: 1) discourse is embedded in social practice and 2) communities share particular discourse practices, including shared phraseologies, bodies of thought and rules. Thus, while the discourse can empower people to communicate and take on certain subject positions, it, at the same time, governs language use and thought. Within discourses people have the ability to interpret and construct the environment around them while simultaneously controlling the behaviour of other people. Davies and Harré (1990) built on his ideas, showing how discourses give people the authorization to assume and assign discursive positions.

Theresa Rogers, Andrew Schofield, and I (2006) found that multi-modal pedagogies grant some students more access to authority and agency because they privilege additional modes of communication other than the spoken and written word. In this way, multimodal discourses have the potential to empower those who struggle with written language; students can construe and express meaning in ways that work best for them (e.g. visually, kinesthetically, graphically). Stein (2008) found similar results. She contended that multimodal ways of communicating not only give access and agency to diverse groups of people, they also position these people in various ways within the situational and cultural contexts of their lives.

Kress (2003) also acknowledged that the production and reception of multimodal forms, in ways that go beyond alphabetic print, might constitute a new "restructuring of power in the field of representation and communication" (p. 17). He contended that a small percentage of the global population has been the gatekeepers or authorities for institutional authoring practices, controlling the production and dissemination of information throughout history, but that newer modes of communication are challenging these distributions of power. Today's more globalized multimodal communication lends agency to many more people, giving them access to a range of social domains and enabling them to widely and collectively distribute multimodal information through YouTube, print-on-demand, podcasts, blogs, "home-brew" video games, and so forth.

Sewing the Backing and Blocks Together: The Quilt/Quilting Metaphor

Just as texts are no longer straightforward (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005), as demonstrated by the vignette and theorizing above, I believe that a quilt doesn't have to be authored with a linear path either. The eye can read a multitude of unidirectional patterns, and even as the hand bastes its blocks, it

has opportunities to move around the chosen pieces of fabric, to puncture straight through its layers of batting and material, or simply skim the top. Quilts have both breadth and depth. Beyond the assembled patterns and colours that are visible, there is also a thin batting and fabric backing. I think of these hidden features as indispensable and intrinsically interconnected, in much the same way that I think discourse, fixed identities, and sociocultural environments are inextricably linked to authorship.

While the visual metaphor of the quilt closely represents the *Authorship as Assemblage* theoretical model, this metaphor is not perfect; it not only lacks a sense of fluidity once it has been sewn (i.e., it is difficult to re-assemble), it also lacks a visual representation of the recursive nature of authorship. Nonetheless, it adds to and challenges the conceptions we bring to the work of authoring.

Finishing the Quilt: Tidying Up

Quilting is messy...Fabric is scattered, every available surface is cluttered with possibilities, ideas, and tools. Fabric scraps litter the floor among the doggie toys and chews. (Cynthia Tomaszewski, 2008, p. 6.)

Most meaning-making processes are messy. By envisioning authorship in assembled and messy ways and by using metaphors such quilt-making to represent authorship, literacy researchers not only challenge neatly organized and linear views of authorship, they also acknowledge today's complex and layered semiotic, social, and critical meaning-making that occurs within and across social contexts, including those that happen in classrooms. Indeed, even in classrooms authorship cannot be thought about in a linear or straightforward manner. Yet, students are required to focus primarily on words, and to follow a predictable path for their authoring processes (e.g., brainstorm ideas, then write a draft, then edit, then publish).

I suggest in this paper that authentic authorship is layered and complex—perhaps even more than current multimodal theories are suggesting. It includes semiotic, social, and critical complexities that need to be recognized. These complexities, which are becoming more integrated in the field of multimodal literacy (e.g., Dyson, 2004; Kress, 2003; Siegel and Panofsky, 2009; Stein, 2008), are present within the fabric of our present participatory culture and have the potential to be quilted together into our modern theories and research, pedagogies, and practices of authorship.

Looking at authorship in these semiotic, social, and critical ways—what I am calling *Authorship as Assemblage*—provides another starting patchwork for today's theories, research, and classroom practice. From here, future theorists can piece and together their own assemblages of meaning-making, backing it, filling it, or bordering it with their own experiences: the fabric of their own lives.

Thinking about authorship in linear or straightforward ways, by only foregrounding the primary semiotic resources (e.g., writing) or the social actions (e.g., design or production) in multimodality discourses, not only underplays the author's capacity for sophisticated, capacious meaning-making, it also limits the ways that authors' processes and their texts can be analysed. It ignores the integrated dialogic, semiotic, and critical relationships that occur inside the texts themselves and within the layered tapestries of authors' social lives.

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Notes

ⁱ These etymological notes are drawn from the online resource www.etymonline.com. (e.g., <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=assemblage&searchmode=none>)