

CHAPTER 1.

AN INTRODUCTION (AFTER THE DATE OF EXPIRATION)

In his 2008 article, “What Should We Do with Postprocess Theory,” Matthew Heard credits postprocess with having offered a “fresh new look at the goals and strategies we use to teach students.” Even so, he cannot help but note (quite correctly) the disappearance of postprocess “from recent critical discussion in composition.” As an admirer of the underlying ideas, Heard considers this disappearance “surprising,” the silence of scholars “puzzling.” And so he asks, “Does the silence indicate that postprocess is dead, or have we simply been unable to figure out how to put the bold ideas of postprocess to use?” (285).

I appreciate Heard’s implication that a (possibly) dead postprocess would not need to stay dead; it could be revitalized, even resurrected, through use.

I agree.

Still, in what follows, I want to pursue a different angle.

As the title of this book, *Postprocess Postmortem*, indicates, I *do* think that postprocess as a movement/theory/attitude with a name and a relatively stable core of premises has died. In my estimation, though, that death is not an altogether bad thing. As Heard himself implies, the movement or idea or attitude may have been better served by being called something else (285-86). Indeed, I would argue, it *has been*—and presently *is being*.

Before the name *postprocess* existed, Thomas Kent called the underlying approach a *paralogic rhetoric*, and the eponymous book in which he did so won the 1995 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Outstanding Book Award. Marching under the banner of postprocess, the same concepts did not subsequently fair as well. Although the bombast of its name implied that postprocess had or would supersede Process, the movement/theory/attitude never acquired anything close to its predecessor’s disciplinary standing.

Meanwhile, from the mid-1980s onward, many discernibly postprocess tenets have surfaced and resurfaced, with some even flourishing.

But, they haven’t been *called postprocess*.

The name seems to be dead.

And yet, the ideas live.

I am therefore reminded of a passage from the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John, the twenty-fourth verse: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat

falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (*The Bible, New International Version*).

This book is not concerned with mourning over the plant.

Instead, in writing it, I wanted to study the seeds.

Before there was *postprocess*—a word, a name—there were some seeds: scattered ideas, tenets, and principles that hadn’t yet been bound together in a conceptual package. I set out to determine where those seeds came from and who planted them. I wanted to know how they were treated when they were presumed to be independent entities versus when their inter-relations were accepted, taken for granted. I was also curious how and why and to what extent scholars resisted the hegemony of Process before their efforts were deemed *postprocess*.

For a time, postprocess blossomed. Though somewhat loosely, the conceptual package was bound together. A “three-part mantra” with “poster-ready brevity” was proclaimed: “(1) Writing is public; (2) writing is interpretive; (3) writing is situated” (Lynch 32). Scholars began to self-identify with the appellation. A cumulative, collective intellectual project emerged.

Still, inevitably, dust returns to dust. As postprocess was dying, more seeds fell. I set off to find out where they landed, and who picked them up, and whether they were scattered again. I wanted to know if they had taken root—and, if so, when and where and how and why—to find out if they were growing again, even now.

SOME NOTES ON HISTORIOGRAPHIC METHOD: CONTEMPLATING REVISION, OSCILLATION, RESOLUTION, CIRCULATION, RECEPTION

Over the last thirty years, if one desired to write a history of composition and/or writing studies, the advice would have been straightforward: go local. Select a marginalized group that’s been overlooked in “standard” accounts of the field. Go to the physical archives: read syllabi, textbooks, teaching notes, student essays, peer review worksheets. Excavate ephemera—the more obscure, the less “authoritative,” the better. Do not, under any circumstances, write a Grand Narrative or a teleological account of the “progress” of the discipline toward *reason* or *truth*. Instead, write a *petit recit* or a series of *petits recits* that complicate or expand large-scale histories. Tell some stories, not The Story.

Don’t (just) write; *revise*.

This advice has been commonly and well heeded, so much so that revisionist historiography now holds the hegemonic high ground. Indeed, disciplinary historians have long taken for granted that “any claims to truth in rhetoric and composition are (yawn) partial, situated, and contingent” (Gallagher 843). And,

even in 2001 Chris Gallagher could contend, “We already have too much revisionist history in rhetoric and composition” (842). In a 2012 text, Byron Hawk likewise suggests that “traditional historiography is no longer viable.” However, he also concludes that “revisionary historiography has given way to bureaucratic mandates (retrieve the excluded)” —a tendency that Ryan Skinnell has called the “broadening imperative” (Hawk, “Stitching” 110; Skinnell 113). What was once a revolution is now the status quo.

These days, scholars offering innovative methods of history-writing position themselves in opposition to revisionist history—not against any sort of unified, teleological, Grand Narrative approach. The practice of disciplinary-history-writing has shifted so thoroughly that there’s no historiography that isn’t revisionist historiography, extended from it, or framed against it. Certainly, to the extent that revisionist methods produce better answers, this may all be for the best. At the same time, though, for someone to get to be a revisionist, someone or something else needs to be revised. There needs to be an antecedent, general account—or a set of them. I would affirm the value of localized, revisionist histories, and yet I believe they have limited utility on their own. They may add nuance and complexity to larger or broader narratives: diving in, drilling down, wading into the depths. In a fundamental way, though, they therefore rely upon and perhaps even require generalized, background contextualizations: they *dive into something*, *drill into something*, *wade into something*.

Scholars engaged in writing localized histories, it seems to me, have understood the need for generalized histories as well as anyone. David Gold, for instance, argues that “rhetoric and composition historiography must not simply recover neglected writers, teachers, locations, and institutions, but must also demonstrate connections between these subjects and larger scholarly conversations” (“Remapping” 17). Indeed, writing in 2012, he lamented “the paucity of good general histories” while noting that “we are ripe for a reassessment of germinal moments of the last quarter century”—the very era I survey here (19, 29). In so doing, Gold echoed an earlier historiographical critique leveled by Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen. Despite its myriad benefits, they argue, the move toward smaller, narrower, localized histories could end up producing “a collection of fragmented histories read by an equally fragmented, narrowing audience.” Though Eldred and Mortensen would acknowledge the “power in specialized histories,” they also conceded, “We know that the flip side of this power is parochialism” (“Coming to Know” 754). The challenge they seem to raise, then, is to produce complementary narratives.

In my efforts to accept and fulfill that challenge, I made a basic historiographic assumption: elements hidden at certain levels of scale become visible at other levels. In temporal terms, consider: if you’re only focused on today’s

weather, you might miss long-term changes in the climate. Or, in spatial terms, consider the merits of different perspectives: if you look in a microscope, you see otherwise unimaginable things, but you can't see the larger context. From thirty-thousand feet, you can survey the landscape, but you can't make out anyone's face. Each scale has its own advantages and disadvantages. You can never account for everything by focusing on any given level. You can, however, provide a more robust account by toggling back and forth, by oscillating, and by acknowledging what you can and cannot see each time. Importantly, I will not pretend that this oscillation enables a more "complete" account. Completeness is an illusion, or at least an asymptote.

In optics, *resolution* is defined as the ability to separate or distinguish between closely spaced items. While consumers seem to desire higher and higher resolutions on their television screens, I would affirm that a historian doesn't always need a higher resolution, and sometimes it isn't even desirable. In an instructive example, Lance Massey has analyzed the reception history of Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* at different levels of resolution. As he points out, a "microscopic analysis" of "a relatively small set of texts published within a few years of [that text's] publication . . . enables [him] to reveal the complexities—the disorder—lurking within [its] reception" ("The [Dis]Order" 314). In other words, by zooming in, he can see that some early readers disagreed considerably over how to interpret and/or analyze North's work. But, quite importantly, Massey affirms that "this irregularity is a function of perspective, rather than essence" (314). Whether a difference of opinion is "large" and/or "obvious" and/or "important" depends entirely on *how* you look at it, on whether or not you wish to distinguish between adjacent or related phenomena. When Massey "decrease[s] the magnification of [his] analysis" by considering a wider array of scholarly texts, including those that don't cite *The Making of Knowledge* at all, "the wild tangle of discourses" among competing scholars "suddenly coalesces into a relatively smooth node. That is, the struggle among the various agents of *MKC*'s reception, themselves belonging to clusters of (very) broadly like-minded compositionists, emerges as one distinct part of a larger system of disciplinary activity" (315). At a lower resolution, fine-grained distinctions become invisible. But, sometimes, that invisibility is *useful*. In some cases, too much information produces conceptual static, unnecessary noise.

In writing this book, I have accepted and attempted to work from and through revisionist insights while still presenting a reasonably generalized historical account of a relatively under-documented past. Although a few chapters attend closely to coterie of scholars in specific locales, I have not written a local history here. Instead, I have attempted to account for the reasonably widespread

history of (un-hyphenated) postprocess, a movement/theory/attitude about which there has been considerable scholarly disagreement in terms of (A) whether or not it ever existed at all; (B) whether it is best defined as a movement or theory or idea or concept or paradigm; (C) whether its impacts were beneficial or counter-productive; and (D) whether or not its insights even *should* be applied or practiced in the classroom, and if so how. In other words, there's been significant and prolonged disagreement at every level of stasis. To write the history of such a . . . *thing* may seem like a fool's errand. My hope is that it will prove not to have been. I have not attempted to resolve disciplinary disagreements about postprocess but to account for them and then to move past them—to tell other stories that are not simply the story of disagreement(s).

I recognize that I have not yet explained how I intend to use my key term, *postprocess*. I will in due time, to be sure. But, that ongoing omission is intentional, not accidental. To explain why I am delaying, I would like to turn to a relatively “minor” text Thomas Kent wrote before postprocess entered the discipline's discourse.

In his 1991 response to a *Journal of Advanced Composition* interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Kent states, “Michel Foucault taught us to talk about history in terms of shifting discourses rather than in terms of transcendental master narratives. . . . Foucault asks us to think about history as changes in the way we employ vocabularies: once we talked like that; now we talk like this” (185). At first glance, this might seem like a conventional, postmodern rejection of historical teleology. Foucault suggests that what might commonly be called progress instead merely amounts to change—and a particular kind of change: one occurring at the level of vocabulary. People used to use one set of terms; now they use another; neither ought to be construed as inherently superior; they're just different. I will return to this argument in Chapter 2, inasmuch as it might help explain the transition from Process to postprocess. Here, though, I would focus on a less obvious conclusions that Kent draws from Foucault.

Working from this Foucaultian perspective, Kent reasons, “we can get rid of the notion that language mediates between us and the world,” and thus “stop talking about a split world—a world possessing an intrinsic nature set apart from an internal realm of mental states.” In short, he concludes, “We no longer need to worry about the Cartesian or what is now called the internalist problem of matching up our vocabularies to something that exists outside of our subjectivity” (185). One might, instead, recognize that language only attaches to “reality” in a provisional and contingent way; the bond between signifier and signified is conventional but arbitrary—and thus subject to revision. And, furthermore, language is not a neutral mediator; it does not enable one to describe the world as it really is. Rather, one's perception of the world is influenced by how one

might describe the world, as well as how others have previously done so. From what Kent would call an externalist perspective, words offer tools for thinking, which means that they also shape what can and cannot be thought; they both enable and constrain. The contents of one's thoughts (or one's "mental states") are thus determined by factors outside of (i.e., external to) one's own head.

Kent frames Spivak as an exemplary externalist, and so he dwells on her response to a reasonably straightforward request: to "conceptualize" or define rhetoric. First, she resists this request. She claims that she is not qualified to define rhetoric because she is not a rhetorician and thus does not know how rhetoricians operate. When pressed, she quotes from Paul de Man, allowing that an essentialist (or internalist) definition might acknowledge rhetoric as "that which is the limit—that which escapes, that which is the residue of efforts at 'catching' things with systems." From Kent's perspective, this response demonstrates the insufficiency of internalist, transcendental categories. If we demand that "names correspond to things as they really are 'out there,' names will forever escape the systems we employ in order to pin down the meanings of names." One would be better served by talking as an externalist, as Spivak prefers to do; in such a light, rhetoric would be nothing more or less than "what rhetoricians do" (186).

If one were to apply this logic to the topic at hand, postprocess, one would stop seeking for a timeless, ahistorical definition of what it is in its essence, acting as though the name for the phenomenon could (or should) apply directly and unproblematically to one and only one thing. As a result, one might stop worrying quite so much—or, more to the point, in quite the same way—about identifying a singular, precise definition and then cementing it once and for all. One might instead track the term in its use by those who use or have used it, recognizing the ways that it has been applied, appropriated, extended, retracted. But, equally importantly, one would see postprocess itself—the conceptual constellation, the signified, not the signifier—as subject to redescription, acknowledging that it could enter into an entirely alternate vocabulary. In short, one might concede that what had been called postprocess might not continue to be called postprocess. One would then examine the tactics of those who have used different terms, attempting to decipher the logic behind their choices.

In my investigation, then, I took polysemy as a given—and, indeed, as a feature of postprocess' underlying theory of language, not some sort of "bug" to be "fixed." However, doing so presented me with a certain historiographic dilemma. I could not simply rely on usages of *postprocess* to tell me which sources were relevant. I couldn't just go to the nearest relevant database, type in a straightforward query for my keyword, read the items that query returned, and report back on my findings.

I also faced an additional layer of complexity. As I will discuss at length in this Introduction's next section, the homophonic but visibly discernible terms (hyphenated) *post-process* and (unhyphenated) *postprocess* entered widespread usage in the years after 1994. But, in that inaugural year, three different scholars, working from three different sets of assumptions, all employed the terms. Two, John Trimbur and Anthony Paré, hyphenated *post-process*. The third, Irene Ward, did not hyphenate *postprocess*. In Chapter 4, I will suggest that Paré's hyphenated vision of a post-process pedagogy shares many principles with what I will call (unhyphenated) *postprocess*, the designation introduced by Ward. In contrast, Trimbur's hyphenated form seems importantly different (if viewed at my own chosen level of resolution, of course).

For now, let me simply note that a fair amount of confusion arose over what *post-/postprocess* meant and how, if at all, the hyphenated term(s) related to the unhyphenated one. Let me also add a corollary caveat: while the unhyphenated term *postprocess* eventually became the commonplace signifier for a particular understanding of what writing is and how writing works, that convention took some time to develop. Several scholars who initially hyphenated *post-process* to refer to what I will call *postprocess*, including Kent, Sarah J. Arroyo, and Paul Lynch, would later drop it. Others, most notably Gary A. Olson, never (so far as I know) let go of the hyphen. Still others employed and discarded hyphens, apparently haphazardly, within the bodies of single texts (e.g., Ewald, "Tangled Web" 128-30; Petraglia, "Is There Life?" 50-53). In other words, the conceptual bifurcation between competing notions of *post-/postprocess* existed before scholars reached absolute consensus on a visible, typographic convention for separating them (i.e., the presence or absence of the hyphen). In this book, I have not silently altered any quotations to remove hyphens. For the sake of clarity, though, I have applied the (un-hyphenated) term *postprocess* when authors clearly seemed to be referencing the conceptions of communication I identify with that term.

Fixating on usages of the term(s) *post-/postprocess* seemed that it would produce more problems than it would solve. So, instead, I determined to focus on a core set of principles that, when combined, came to define *postprocess*. As I'll demonstrate, those principles circulated throughout the disciplinary discourse of composition studies well before 1994. *Postprocess* wasn't created ex nihilo in that year. Rather, at that time it received what would become (one of) its name(s). So, I attempted to determine when, where, and how its core principles entered the disciplinary discourse of composition studies. To do so involved a relatively simple initial step: I read texts that seemed indisputably *postprocess*, and I looked in their works cited entries, and I found out what texts were informing the ones with which I had started. If, as Spivak argues, rhetoric is

what rhetoricians do, I assumed that postprocess is what postprocess scholars do, write, argue, teach. So, to give but one example, I turned to Kent's work. When Irene Ward introduced the unhyphenated term *postprocess*, she only applied it to Kent. He edited the first major collection on the topic, *Post-Process Theory* (1999), and he wrote the Preface to the second one, *Beyond Postprocess* (2011). So, analyzing his texts seemed a safe place to start.

I zoomed-in. In Kent's case, I couldn't find his CV online. So, I went to the databases at my disposal, and I queried them all, and I compiled an archive of his work. That archive included texts Kent published throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s while still a literary scholar, including his first book *Interpretation and Genre*, which I'll examine in Chapter 2. Although some texts might have seemed irrelevant at first glance, I read all of them, and some proved to be quite relevant indeed. In the process, I found out whose ideas had influenced his own. Thus, I arrived at a second step, in which I zoomed out from Kent's work and examined the texts he had been citing. In effect, I moved against the flow of textual circulation, from newer texts to older ones.

From there, a third step followed. When charting the history of ideas, historians have typically begun near the most recent end of their historical timelines and worked backwards, as I was doing in step two. Given the affordances of print-based documents, which don't (because they can't) indicate the flow of their future circulation, the most straightforward way to know where and how ideas have flowed has been to consult one works cited list, then another, then another. However, the information-technological matrix now includes other possibilities, including the Google Scholar citation tracker. In my third basic step, I used that tool to identify textual circulation in the opposition direction. That is, I learned who had been citing Kent. I also took some of the texts that Kent had been citing, and I tried to determine which other composition scholars cited them. I did not pre-emptively restrict my purview. Rather, I presumed that postprocess was not a single, stable thing, and I acknowledged that I didn't yet know what it had been in various places and at various points in time. When I learned who had cited the same texts as Kent and/or who had cited Kent himself, I zoomed in on those authors. I tried to discern overlaps and points of agreement, as well as disjunctions and points of disagreement.

In simplified terms, my method involved zooming in and zooming out, moving forward and backward, in oscillating stages.

Stage One: Zoom in on the scholarship of Author A. Read their texts. Learn from them. For the purposes of different chapters, of course, different scholars filled the role of Author A.

Stage Two: Zoom out. Identify works cited by Author A. Move backwards along the path of textual circulation (from newer to older texts). Zoom in. Read

those items that seem relevant. Learn from them. Compare and contrast the works of Author A with those now under consideration. Try to understand which concepts Author A adopted, which ones they dismissed, and which ones they transformed or revised.

Stage Three: Zoom out. Track citations of Author A's works and/or any relevant works identified in Stage Two. Move forward along the path of textual circulation (from older to newer texts). Zoom in. Read as much as possible. Learn things. Compare and contrast.

Then, I would repeat the process with Author B, Author C, and so on down the line, if necessary. Of course, there was no directly replicable formula here; each iteration followed its own path. And, certainly, my process was recursive and non-linear. But, as an approximation, this stage model will serve us well enough.

In analyzing textual circulation, I attempted to account for the formation of a postprocess *public* or a series of them. According to Michael Warner's stipulative definition, *a public* (rather than *the public*) is a "virtual" (or imagined) "relation among strangers," who have joined together inasmuch as they have extended their attention to a given text in the course of its circulation and have commented on it or responded to it, thereby producing a "concatenation of texts" addressing similar issues (50, 55, 61-62). Of course, to the extent that it can be said to exist, "the field" of composition and writing studies is, in Warner's terms, a public. As Kevin J. Porter argues, "the field" does not exist "apart from the fragile—and therefore necessarily continuous—efforts through literature reviews, taxonomies, citations, classroom instruction, doctoral programs, and so on, to manufacture and sustain links between researchers and texts and thereby to (re)constitute 'the field' as a normative ideal or myth" ("Literature Reviews" 365). Shrinking the scale, the same could be said of postprocess: it did not exist apart from the continuous efforts of scholars to "manufacture and sustain links" by discussing the texts and concepts they deemed relevant. And so, I understood the act of citation, or of inserting a given text in a literature review, "not as a way to acknowledge an antecedent community, but as a way to constitute or inaugurate, through a re-viewing of the past, an 'imagined community' [in Benedict Anderson's terms] or 'world' [in Heidegger's], however fleeting" (354).

As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, some of the publics I discovered contained relatively few members; they were akin to the groups studied in local histories in size but geographically dispersed. Even so, tracking citations (and scouring footnotes, and conducting all the other intricacies of scholarly research) allowed me to make sense of when they formed, roughly how long they lasted, and what (if anything) happened to the ideas they contemplated and debated

after the initial public dissolved. Two of my chapters focus on publics that were geographically concentrated at first: one at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada; the other at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, United States of America. Each eventually grew its membership and dispersed across the physical landscape. Another public—this one advocating a postprocess model of rhetorical invention—ended up quite large; I will even argue that it has attained disciplinary dominance.

To make this methodological explanation more concrete, let us return to the example of Kent as Author A. I began by reading his work and thus observed his obvious and heavy citational debt to the analytic philosopher Donald Davidson (Author B). I employed the citation tracker and the search engines embedded in discipline-specific databases to find other examples of composition scholarship citing Davidson, including works by Reed Way Dasenbrock, Kevin J. Porter, Stephen R. Yarbrough, and William Duffy (Authors C, D, E, and F, respectively). I read the texts citing Davidson, along with any other texts by those scholars that seemed even remotely relevant.

I learned things. For instance, I found that Dasenbrock had reviewed Kent's *Paralogic Rhetoric* in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* in 1994. From that text, I was able to learn how Kent's ideas were being interpreted and/or received at that time (before they were being called *postprocess*). Notably, Dasenbrock saw Kent's theories pointing in two primary directions: on one hand, toward a reintegration of theories of reading with theories of writing and, on the other, toward teaching writing in the disciplines ("Review" 103). Dasenbrock's claim struck me as a clear distillation of Kent's larger intellectual project. Having read Dasenbrock's other articles, I had come to admire his insights, especially regarding Davidson's work. And, via the citation tracker, I had already found and read two texts that made me even more inclined to trust him.

The first of these was a chapter entitled "The Social Perspective and Professional Communication," published in 1993 by two of Kent's colleagues at Iowa State, Charlotte Thralls and Nancy Roundy Blyler. That text, written before the terms post-process and postprocess were popularized, identified three primary "social perspectives" on writing research and explored how each might address four key concepts: "community, knowledge and consensus, discourse conventions, and collaboration" (Thralls and Blyler 6). Quite importantly, it distinguished social constructionism from what would become post-process (in Trimbur's parlance) and what would come to be called postprocess (in Ward's), naming the former "the ideologic approach" and the latter the "paralogic hermeneutic approach" (14, 22). In explaining the paralogic hermeneutic approach, Thralls and Blyler were forced to concede that only "a small number of writing theorists" had actually endorsed the position. In practice, however, they only

referenced two: Kent and Dasenbrock. The second text inspiring confidence was Kent's highly congenial response to Dasenbrock's review of *Paralogic Rhetoric*, in which the book author assented to many of his critic's critiques and reformulated his assertions accordingly. If Kent was willing to defer to Dasenbrock, that seemed like a good sign for my budding research agenda.

So, I set off on two paths. In one direction, I examined texts from the 1980s and 1990s that aimed to reintegrate reading theories (especially reader-response theories, which Kent himself applied as a literary scholar) with writing theories. I queried the databases, employed the citation tracker, and so on. In sifting through that electronic archive, I focused especially on texts citing Kent or citing the texts he had also cited. That research eventually spawned two chapters. Chapter 3 examines a broad-based movement among scholars in the 1980s to reintegrate theories of reading with theories of writing. In effect, those scholars were formulating one of the three core premises of postprocess—writing is interpretive—before it was placed alongside the other two (writing is public and writing is situated) and their combination was named. One of them, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, even articulated a very strong argument for displacing Process as the single, central metaphor for composition theory. Chapter 4 focuses on three scholars from St. Thomas University: Russell Hunt and James Reither of the English department and Douglas Vipond of the psychology department. In a series of articles (often collaboratively written), those three theorized pedagogical methods that might account for the role of the reader in constructing textual meaning. As I will demonstrate, their work forms the foundation of the pedagogical methods Anthony Paré deemed *post-process* in his 1994 article.

Chapter 5, in contrast, follows Dasenbrock's other key insights: that postprocess points toward Writing in the Disciplines (WID). To explore that conceptual connection, I decided to return to some of Kent's texts from the 1980s, in which he was formulating his theories concerning writing instruction. If composition studies is defined narrowly by a preoccupation with first-year writing instruction, Kent published many of his proto-postprocess texts outside of its bounds, in journals focused on professional and/or technical communication. That is, before it was an approach to composition, (what came to be called) postprocess was an approach to other sorts of writing instruction. I suspected that this lineage mattered, and I set out to determine how postprocess tenets influenced that WID public. I found that several of Kent's colleagues at Iowa State University, including Thralls and Blyler, had advocated recognizably postprocess tenets in WID scholarship, as had several scholars they trained in graduate school. I traced the citations of their works, and interesting insights presented themselves. Foremost among them: the presently popular Writing about Writing approach, which amounts to teaching first-year writing

courses as though they were Writing in the Disciplines courses, represents a point of convergence for the Iowa State postprocess public and the Canadian post-process one examined by Paré.

In tracking the circulation histories of postprocess texts, I tried to account for the formation of publics, for their scale, and for the influence of individual texts within them. However, I also tried to account for the reception histories of the most prominent individual texts—how they were interpreted at various points in time. Most large-scale histories of the discipline have focused on authors and their publications—saying, in effect, *in Year X Author Y wrote Text Z*—as though authors simply put texts into the world and those texts conveyed their messages perfectly, thereby achieving their intended goals. Here, in contrast, I assumed that any given text can be—and necessarily *is*—interpreted in a variety of ways, only some of which the author would endorse. I rejected the assumption that textual meanings remain static. Instead, I considered textual reception by asking what certain texts were understood to mean and/or allowed to mean at different stages—that is, how the meanings attributed to them have changed over time.

In Chapter 6, I will examine Marilyn Cooper's "The Ecology of Writing" (1986) as a conceptual precursor of postprocess inventional thought. Although that text only addresses invention obliquely, discernibly postprocess texts that do address something like invention commonly cite it, alongside canonical texts on invention. That is, I discovered "The Ecology" (and the other core texts I'll examine by Karen Burke LeFevre, James E. Porter, and Reither, respectively) circulating within an invention-related public. Janice Lauer has famously argued that 1986 marks the year when scholarship on rhetorical invention began to appear in a "diaspora of composition areas rather than in discussions labeled 'invention'" (2). My own account supplements hers by suggesting why that migration, which I would frame instead as a shift in vocabulary, might have occurred. As Foucault (and Kent, following him) might point out, invention is a concept better suited to an internalist vocabulary, inasmuch as it derives from Latin words meaning *come* and *in*. The inside/outside dichotomy embedded in the term is not particularly well suited toward an externalist conception of cognition that denies the distinction between mind and world. Indeed, as Steven Jeffrey Jones suggests in an excellent 1988 article, theorizing an externalist form of the first canon would require scholars to "rethink our terminology, speaking of 'assembling' or 'building' a text rather than 'expressing' a message as if it were some 'inner' happening which the text represents." In other words, "Rethinking the scene of writing . . . involves questioning the adequacy of idioms" ("Logic" 15). Thus, one might explain the alleged disappearance of inventional thinking after 1986 to a shift in word-choice (and an associated shift in thinking), rather than a decline in interest in associated issues.

In studying the circulation history and reception histories of Cooper's article, I drew two key insights. First, it has become much more commonly cited in recent years than it was at the time of its publication—a trend that calls out for an explanation. Second, at different points in time, it was examined within two very different publics, and it was interpreted to mean different things in each.

At a low level of resolution, let us begin by considering its citation history in quantitative terms, ignoring the myriad distinction between the works citing Cooper's article. In its first five years in print (1987–1991), "The Ecology" was cited 47 times. In its next five (1992–1996): 49. From ages ten to fifteen years (1997–2001), it dipped to a new low: only 28 citations. From that point, though, its growth shot up: 53 times from 2002–2006, 94 times from 2007–2011, and 174 times from 2012–2016. Thus, between 2011 and 2016 "The Ecology of Writing" received only three fewer citations than it had in its first twenty years in print *combined*. In short, Cooper's work has grown substantially more popular over time.

Now, one might argue that this increase in citations is the fate of many "classic" articles: they attain the sort of prestige that demands that everyone writing on a topic must cite them. But, such an argument can't account for a simple fact: in years eleven through fifteen, Cooper's article received far fewer citations than it had in years six through ten (roughly sixty percent of the previous total). It may now be a "classic," but it wasn't an "instant classic." Moreover, at one point, the text was starting to disappear slowly from "the" scholarly conversation. Its arguments were losing their "relevance"—until they weren't anymore.

To state the obvious: the text itself—conceived of as a set of stable markings on a page or screen—never changed. And yet, at one point in history, due to factors external to it, Cooper's article was considered to have less "value" than it is now credited with having. One might explain these developments in several ways. For instance, one might emphasize the role of *kairos* for academic scholarship—and not only at the moment of publication, but throughout the process of circulation. Or, per the economist Fritz Machlup's groundbreaking research in *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*, one might deny the distinction between information distribution (and/or re-circulation) and information production. Moving information into a place where it can be useful is fundamentally an act of authorship. The text is re-newed, even re-produced, as it enters into a different textual and/or interpretive network. From this perspective, one might consider which other texts had re-interpreted, re-circulated, and/or re-newed Cooper's text during the late 1990s and early 2000s, teaching other scholars how to read it differently and/or filtering it into publics where it proved to be more useful. For what it's worth, I would primarily credit Cooper's own subsequent scholarship; Margaret Syverson's *The Wealth*

of *Reality* (1999); two works edited and written, respectively, by Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin, *Ecocomposition* (2001) and *Natural Discourse* (2002); and Jenny Edbauer's "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies" (2005).

Or, as one final means of explaining the increasing "relevance" of "The Ecology," one might apply a transactional conception of textual meaning, drawing from the scholarship of Louise Rosenblatt (and some other scholars I'll discuss herein, including Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Russell Hunt, and Douglas Vipond). Rather than assuming that the meaning of the text exists independently of the readers who co-construct it and the contexts in which they do so, transactionality assumes that all of those elements are implicated in "a complex network or circuit of inter-relationships, with reciprocal interplay" (Rosenblatt, "Viewpoints" 101). One might then distinguish between the article-as-text, a set of static marks on a page, and what Rosenblatt might call the article-as-poem: "an occurrence, a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text," which "must be thought of as an event in time" ("Poem" 126).

Thus far, I've talked only about the quantitative elements of Cooper's citation history. But, knowing how many times "The Ecology" was cited is ultimately less important than understanding how it was interpreted, what those interpretations demonstrate about scholarly attitudes and assumptions, and what subsequent discourses were called into being via its circulation. Even if the same words appear on the same pages, textual meanings change over time, a point that transactional models help to explain. Cooper's text becomes notable in this regard because, in its earliest stages, it was very commonly understood as contributing to the dialogue on discourse communities and/or social-epistemic theories of rhetoric (c.f., Ewald "What We Could Tell"; Freed and Broadhead "Discourse Communities"; Killingsworth "Discourse Communities"; Reiff "Re-reading Invoked"; David Foster "What Are We Talking About"). This pattern of reception quite clearly bothered Cooper. She begins her 1989 chapter "Why Are We Talking about Discourse Communities?" by opposing the underlying, foundationalist ideology of "many discussions of the notion of discourse communities," and she later notes, "I am concerned that the concept is easily co-opted to serve purposes that are directly opposed to what I feel to be the most productive way of thinking about discourse (*Writing as Social Action* 202, 204). She also ruminates, wistfully,

Being cited is a pleasant experience. I suppose it's a sign that one has been accepted into a discourse community. It's also a learning experience of sorts: you learn all kinds of things about what you wrote. From a recent citation I learned that in

“The Ecology of Writing” I attempted “to describe a discourse community and the dialectic involved as discourses and community each act upon the other and change each other.” I didn’t know I had done that. (203)

However, in a felicitous turn of events, the text has more recently found itself serving as a core document in the new-materialist or object-oriented criticism of human-centered, internalist conceptions of communication. To put matters plainly, “The Ecology of Writing” is now cited *to oppose* the very ideas it was previously cited *to uphold*.

To reaffirm an earlier point: of course, the stable markings of the text did not change as the text circulated. Instead, what changed was a set of broadly dispersed but nonetheless common (i.e., both ordinary and shared) scholarly assumptions, which readers brought to the text, and which informed their interpretations of it. Observing this hermeneutic transformation, one might conclude that contemporary scholars have seen the proverbial light: they finally understand what the text “always,” “really” meant. In some sense, this may be true. But, I am less interested in construing some objective sense of interpretive correctness than I am with identifying widely dispersed interpretive conventions and considering what can be learned from them. At the time Cooper wrote, many readers did not—and perhaps *could not*—interpret the text as it is interpreted today. The contemporary impacts of the text—or what Kevin Porter would call its *consequences*—were not, at that time, being felt because its readers (i.e., its publics) so persistently connected up to the wrong concatenation(s) of texts and ideas. They interpreted by way of certain principles and premises, and those habits of mind blinded them to alternate interpretive possibilities, even ones suggested prominently and repeatedly by the marks on the page. Now, however, there’s a textual archive that *authorizes* readings of her article as a conceptual precursor of postprocess, one that enables readers to see how it works against the hegemony of Process and strives to articulate a complex model of writing not governed strictly or solely by human agency. There’s also a public of scholarly readers who have accepted and absorbed such principles and who are struggling to develop them further.

Obviously, I don’t want to lay too much weight on the fate of a single article. Still, I believe that reception histories can clearly indicate shifts in widespread conceptualizations or what, following Kent, I will later call *unformulated conventions*. In what follows, then, I’ll apply similar methods of reading to other texts: attempting to determine what the text’s author(s) may have intended at the time they wrote by reading as many of their other texts as possible, triangulating my interpretations against those of “early” respondents and critics, then

tracking how responses and interpretations have changed over time. From those changing responses, I attempt to discern tacit or underlying premises, to account for modes of thinking and structures of feeling—only some of which are ever expressed in overt or direct ways.

THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF POST-PROCESS AND POSTPROCESS

“A word may never be precisely defined, exhausted, and, finally, put away,” Kent argues in a postprocess ur-text, and thus it is often less productive to attempt to define terms than it is to “explain how we intend to employ them” (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 146). In this book, I have attempted to account for the history of what I will call (un-hyphenated) *postprocess*, not what I will call (hyphenated) *post-process*. I have tried to be rigorous in distinguishing between the two, so allow me to note my usage.

To make sense of how the hyphenated term *post-process* circulated in disciplinary conversations, it's useful to know its pre-history. Throughout the early-to-mid-1980s, several scholars, including James Berlin, Patricia Bizzell, Lester Faigley, Richard Fulkerson, and Steven Lynn, attempted to taxonomize the various sub-components of the Process movement. Demonstrating the difficulty of ever producing a “complete” or even “correct” classification scheme, three of those five (Berlin, Bizzell, and Fulkerson) would attempt the same task more than once. Without wading too deep into these waters, let us acknowledge that those taxonomies have proven quite durable, especially the tripartite division between expressivist, cognitivist, and social forms of composition posited by Bizzell and Faigley (and somewhat re-affirmed, though with different labels, by Fulkerson and Berlin). To be sure, each group evidenced internal disagreements. The term *social*, in particular, was employed to unify a number of tenuously connected theories (social constructionism, discourse communities, social-epistemic rhetoric, “academic writing,” cultural studies) and pedagogical approaches (e.g., collaborative writing, peer editing, ideology critique). And so, the same sort of political factionalism that arose in the more famous expressivist-versus-social “theory wars” also arose among scholars committed to different social approaches.

This fact should not surprise us, of course. As the deconstructionists in English departments were demonstrating during those same years, an opposition between terms (say, *social* versus *expressivist*) often serves to mask the internal oppositions within each one. And, furthermore, ignoring those internal divisions is a necessary pre-condition for imagining each as a stable or unified “whole” in the first place. That which is presented as a natural and inevitable unit had to be *constructed* from an assemblage of unlike parts (Johnson, *Critical Difference* x-xi).

One might then de-construct each supposedly unified term, if one felt compelled to do so—showing, for instance, the disparate and competing elements of the social approach to composition during the Process period. Furthermore, and quite importantly, one can (almost) always shrink the scale and repeat the operation. Consider, for example, David Foster’s critique of a single subset of the “social” grouping: social constructionism as presented by Kenneth Bruffee. Foster employs a vivid metaphor to prove his point:

The difficulty is that Bruffee corrals the social constructionists in one well-marked pen, then rounds up what he variously calls “cognitive,” “Cartesian,” or “empirical” thinkers in a much larger pen on the other side of the ranch, hoping (one supposes) that their bawling and kicking won’t be heard as they threaten to knock down the conceptual fences Bruffee drives them into. What undermines Bruffee’s claims on behalf of social constructionism is his uncritical eagerness to herd together profoundly different thinkers on both sides. (“More Comments” 709)

In my estimation, Foster’s critique is both fair and correct. And yet, there are better and worse ways to apply this rationale to other phenomena.

In many instances, deconstructive logics were applied nihilistically, to “prove” that nothing purported to be “real” actually exists. But, I think that’s the wrong take-away. From my perspective, it’s more important to acknowledge the underlying complexity and dissonance within each supposedly singular thing, and to admit that most conceptual “units” are the products of prior acts of *uni-fication*, that is, unit-making. *E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one. Other units could have been made from the same plurality of “raw materials,” and others can and will be. To make sense of this last point, consider Robert Hass’ heavily anthologized poem “Meditation at Lagunitas” (1979). In its opening lines, Hass succinctly explains some central tenets of two conceptual units, Platonism and Post-Structuralism. The former sees objects in this world as corrupted versions of eternal Ideas; the latter demonstrates that there is no necessary correspondence between signifier and signified. Many commentators have framed Post-Structuralism as an attack on Platonism, and rightly so. Hass instead affirms their likeness: “All the new thinking is about loss. / In this it resembles all the old thinking.” In other words, he *unifies* them. However, to affirm their resemblance isn’t to suggest that the two discourses are identical; Hass himself shows how each focuses on a different sort of loss (and for different reasons). In suggesting their likeness, then, I think Hass aims at a larger point: the decision to unify or separate the two discourses always depends upon some arbitrarily

selected, external criterion. Nothing inherent to either discourse determines that they should or should not be unified.

I note all of this because one could always find some basis by which to unify postprocess and Process, or post-process and Process, or post-process and postprocess, or All of the Above, for that matter. This is not to say that each hypothetical act of unification is as valid or conceptually useful as any other. It is, rather, to suggest that one should be prepared to defend any decision to join a multitude or to disperse a unit. In principle, I agree with Hannah J. Rule: “any efforts to definitively separate process approaches or ideas from postprocess ones should be interrogated” (*Situating* 51). She and I disagree, however, on how to apply that rationale. Whereas she collapses the distinction between the two, seeing the new as an extension of the old, I think one can examine the distinction carefully and still find good reason to uphold it.

For what it’s worth, at the outset of this project, I chose to accept the story that postprocess scholars told about themselves—that their work should be distinguished from Process scholarship (and, yes, from post-process scholarship) on the basis of an underlying theory of mind and a belief in the uncodifiable and non-systematic nature of writing. I then asked what disciplinary narratives might emerge, if this distinction were considered to be meaningful. But, I will explain all of that in due time.

In his 1989 “Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning,” John Trimbur critiques Bruffee’s social constructionist, collaborative learning model of writing instruction. Trimbur gladly admits the progressive lineage of collaborative learning, which emerged during the Open Admissions program at the City University of New York. He also acknowledges that Bruffee pursued just ends—“democracy, shared decision-making, and non-authoritarian styles of leadership and group life”—and implemented conceptually consistent practices at the level of classroom management (605). Even so, Trimbur’s article’s examines two “left-wing” critiques of collaborative learning: first, that it represents “an inherently dangerous and potentially totalitarian practice that stifles individual voice and creativity, suppresses differences, and enforces conformity”; and second, that it “runs the risk of limiting its focus to the internal workings of discourse communities and of overlooking the wider social forces that structure the production of knowledge” (602-03). Then, Trimbur “extend[s] the left critique” by interrogating the metaphor of *conversation* and the end goal of *consensus* posited by other “social turn” collaborative-learning scholars (603, 606).

In a 1991 article, John Schilb offers a similar account. Within the “‘social turn’ of the eighties,” he argues, “a new form of consensus [formed] around the notion of ‘initiating’ students into ‘discourse communities.’” However, by Schilb’s account, the theoretical foundation of that movement was offered by

neopragmatist thinkers like Richard Rorty, Stanley Fish, and Kenneth Bruffee, who “scorned more radical critiques of the university and society at large.” In response, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, “oppositional criticism . . . swept through the field,” exemplified by “movements like feminism, Marxism, minority studies, post-colonial studies, and gay/lesbian studies. Separately and together they have brought up issues of difference, oppression, justice, power, and the academy’s social responsibility” (“What’s at Stake” 95).

With this preface aside, let us turn to “Taking the Social Turn: Teaching Writing Post-Process,” Trimbur’s 1994 review of three books, by C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, Kurt Spellmeyer, and Bizzell, respectively. The books in question, Trimbur suggests, “make their arguments not so much in terms of students’ reading and writing processes but rather in terms of the cultural politics of literacy.” Thus, he reasons, they

can be read as statements that both reflect . . . and enact what has come to be called the “social turn” of the 1980s, a post-process, post-cognitivist theory and pedagogy that represents literacy as an ideological arena and composing as a cultural activity by which writers position and reposition themselves in relation to their own and others’ subjectivities, discourses, practices, and institutions. (“Taking the Social Turn” 109)

The meaning of the *post* in post-/postprocess has been a considerable source of disagreement, with scholars debating whether it signals a rejection, or an extension, or an intensification of Process. To be direct: it has signaled each of those things, at one point or another, per the rhetorical needs of various scholars. This sentence, the only one in which Trimbur uses *post-process*, offers little clarity on what, exactly, he meant to indicate by the term at the time. Even so, I would draw attention to a few of his argument’s key elements.

When it appears in Trimbur’s text, the adjective *post-process* appears in an appositive position, syntactically equivalent to *post-cognitivist* but presumably not meaning the same thing, and modifying and/or explaining the social turn of the 1980s. That is, Trimbur initially indicates that the social turn itself was post-process. Given that social, expressivist, and cognitivist approaches tended to dominate the Process era, Trimbur appears to equate Process with expressivism and suggest that the social turn represented something separate both from it and from cognitivism. That is, I think, the simplest reading. Still, in the immediately following sentence, Trimbur suggests that the books under review “offer the opportunity . . . to take a look at . . . the leftwing trajectory of the social turn and its political commitments.” So, drawing from Trimbur’s review

alone, one struggles to discern whether the entire social turn is to be considered post-process or only the left-wing critiques of it. He does, in any case, suggest that the works of Knoblauch and Brannon, Spellmeyer, and Bizzell “result from a crisis within the process paradigm and a growing disillusion with its limits and pressures” (109). So, I think there’s at least some basis for seeing his “post” as signaling a rejection of Process, rather than intensification or even extension.

Trimbur is often credited with introducing *post-process* into the disciplinary lexicon, but that is not, strictly speaking, true. The term had been used a full decade earlier—by Judith Langer in an editor’s introduction to the May 1984 issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*. However, so far as I can find, that fact has never been acknowledged within the discourse of so-called “high postprocess theory” (Sánchez, “First” 185). In addition, during the same winter of 1994 in which Trimbur’s review article was published, Canadian writing scholar Anthony Paré published his own text using the same term: “Toward a Post-Process Pedagogy; or, What’s Theory Got to Do with It?” I will address those texts extensively later, in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. Here, let me note that neither Langer’s nor Paré’s usage became particularly influential (judging by their articles’ citational histories). So, it’s fair to say that Trimbur *popularized* the term.

Although scholars would use the (hyphenated) term *post-process* in a variety of ways, I believe that Alison Fraiberg aptly and concisely explains how it was most commonly employed throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. She writes,

As a theoretical position, post-process argues that the theory of writing developed by the process movement over the past thirty years relied heavily on expressionism and, as such, did not attend to historical, social, and political circumstances of writers, readers, and texts Post-process thinkers rely heavily on critical theory’s and cultural studies’ critique of subjectivity to articulate a theory of writing based on discursive conditions. Writing, for the post-process composition scholar, is always social: subjectivity is multi-valenced and multi-voiced; writers and readers are always conditioned and interpolated by networks of social relations; and the goal of composition is in part about raising students’ awareness of their own discursive formations. (“Houses Divided” 172)

Now, to be sure, one could argue with this definition on historical grounds: not all Process approaches were expressivist, for instance, and many expressivist approaches were more politically sophisticated than they’re often credited with being. However, my purpose here is not to justify the term’s usage; instead, I want to describe it.

Throughout this book, then, I am using hyphenated term *post-process* to denote what Thralls and Blyer had called the “ideologic” social approach and what Trimbur called the “leftwing trajectory of the social turn”: an exploration of how societal power dynamics affect individual writers and/or inform classroom-level pedagogical methods. From my perspective, post-process represents a rejection of Process (narrowly conceived of as expressivist and/or cognitivist) on leftist or progressive political/ideological grounds. Post-process theories also tend(ed) to focus on a series of (broadly defined) “social” concerns, particularly the connections between language, knowledge, and power, and they employ cultural-studies frameworks and/or the so-called hermeneutics of suspicion. Post-process pedagogies often entail(ed) or resemble(d) Freirean forms of liberatory or critical pedagogy.

In contrast, I am restricting the un-hyphenated term *postprocess* to refer to an externalist conception of the writer’s mind and a paralogic conception of the writing act. I will explain my usage of those key terms—*externalist* and *paralogic* shortly—but, as with (hyphenated) *post-process*, to make sense of how the un-hyphenated term *postprocess* circulated in disciplinary conversations, it’s useful to investigate its earliest application. To my knowledge, Irene Ward was the first to use the unhyphenated term in her 1994 *Literacy, Ideology, and Dialogue*. However, for the sake of historical completeness, I would acknowledge that Raúl Sánchez seems to have used the hyphenated term *post-process* in his 1993 CCCC presentation to refer to what Ward would subsequently call un-hyphenated *postprocess* (Dobrin, *Constructing* 83-84).

At the outset of her book, Ward acknowledges a broad shift in composition scholars’ thinking, away from sender-receiver (encoding/decoding) models of written communication and toward “a much more complex” one in which writing is seen as “a communicative, rhetorical, and, above all, dialogic process.” This re-imagining, she notes, foregrounds collaboration and thus opposes the fiction of the solitary, autonomous author (2). Ward’s book accounts for the dialogism evident in expressivist, social constructionist, “radical” (post-process), and “postmodern” theories of writing and/or writing instruction. By Ward’s estimation, the first three “assume varying and sometimes contradictory notions of dialogism.” But, they still differ from the fourth in one key way: expressivist, social constructionist, and radical dialogism “are considered part of composition’s ‘process paradigm.’” In contrast, she notes, “Recently, several compositionists have challenged the process paradigm, attempting to institute a postprocess, postmodern pedagogy. These compositionists have been heavily influenced by deconstruction and other poststructuralist theories” (129). More specifically, Ward refers to Gregory L. Ulmer, William A. Covino, and Kent.

Ward describes Ulmer as someone who “posits a rationale for a postmodern pedagogy in general,” Covino as one who “has attempted to develop a postmodern composition pedagogy,” and Kent as one “who through a sustained effort has worked to devise a postprocess, postmodern theory for composition studies” (130). Thus, while she calls each a postmodern thinker, she only directly applies the term *postprocess* to Kent. Repeating a gesture she had made the previous year in her *JAC* review of Kent’s *Paralogic Rhetoric*, Ward identifies Kent’s efforts to “move composition scholarship beyond the process paradigm” three times, using a slightly different phrase each time (Ward, *Literacy* 150, 146, 158; “Review” 183, 186). A few years later, a similar phrase, *Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*, would appear as the subtitle to the 1999 collection *Post-Process Theory*, which Kent edited.

Ward demonstrates why Kent might reject (left-wing or “radical”) post-process approaches (based on their underlying internalism) and why post-process scholars might reject him (for failing to consider power relations).

Post-Process scholars critiqued social constructionism for failing to consider social power dynamics, but they generally still accepted its major premises: knowledge is socially constructed, discourse communities exist, and mastering the linguistic norms and/or knowledge-base of a discourse promotes success in subsequent acts of communication. Trimbur, for example, leads his students to question who is (and is not) empowered to construct knowledge and who benefits from stratified social relations. But, he leaves the basic logic of social construction otherwise intact. He writes, “One of the tasks of writing instruction, as I see it, is to help students learn how experts . . . make judgments and represent them in writing . . . [and] to examine . . . how professional monopolies of knowledge produce special interests, on the one hand, and deference to authority and public ignorance, on the other” (“Taking” 115).

Kent, in contrast, would level a “devastating critique” of those underlying social-constructionist premises (Ward, *Literacy* 150). He frames the “thick” version of social constructionism, which posits firm and fixed boundaries between discourse communities, as upholding untenable premises regarding the impossibility of communication across linguistic groups and/or the untranslatability of concepts across paradigms (Ward 150-51). From his perspective, a shared language is not a pre-requisite for communication because all communication invariably involves a form of on-the-spot interpretation or *hermeneutic guessing*. Nothing acquired prior to the act of communication can guarantee its success—certainly not knowledge of discourse conventions—but an examination of language-in-use shows that no such guarantees are necessary. Communicants (or, at least, those willing to do so) continually revise their expectations of each other’s communicative conduct until they negotiate a good (enough) level of under-

standing. They start with *prior theories* about how fellow conversants will use language but each party continuously revises their assumptions until their respective *passing theories* align. In Kent's words, then, assimilating into the norms of a discourse community is not a pre-requisite for effective communication. Rather, he argues, "A knowledge of conventions—linguistic or otherwise—only helps make us better guessers" (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 31). Furthermore, Kent sees the "thin" version of social constructionism, which acknowledges the polyphony of voices within communities, as equally problematic: if the "thick" understanding of discourse communities does not hold, and members of various groups *can* communicate with one another, then "we no longer need the concept of discourse community" at all (Kent, "Very Idea" 428; qtd. in Ward 152).

At the same time, Ward demonstrates how one might critique Kent's social-interactionist approach by way of post-process principles. In her estimation, it does not consider power relations, especially gender-based ones, to an adequate degree (165-66).

Ward, an alumna of the University of South Florida, introduced the unhyphenated term *postprocess* into disciplinary circulation, and, so far as I can tell, her grad school peers were the next scholars to employ it. Julie Drew would do so in her 1995 review of Ward's book (161), and Sidney Dobrin likewise discussed postprocess theories and pedagogies in his 1997 *Constructing Knowledges*. As Ward had done, though to a lesser degree, Dobrin heavily restricts his usage of the term *postprocess*. He applies it to Kent's scholarship, to the theories Ward derived from it, and to the pedagogical theorizing of Sánchez, another USF alum. Notably, Dobrin alternately refers to Sánchez's theorizing as *postprocess* and *Kentian* (83-84). Subsequently, in his 1999 "Paralogic Hermeneutic Theories, Power, and the Possibility for Liberating Pedagogies," Dobrin would uphold the distinction I am making between post-process pedagogies and those derived from Kent's work. He begins that chapter by noting,

In its most succinctly rudimentary definition, *post-process* in composition studies refers to the shift in scholarly attention from the process by which the individual writer produces text to the larger forces that affect that writer and of which that writer is a part. . . . The identification of larger influential structures afforded writing teachers the opportunities to teach definable, codifiable systems as conceptual schemes (Donald Davidson's phrase) that dominate discourse production. More recently, a few composition theorists have moved beyond this post-process inquiry and have begun to investigate ways in which the moment of communicative interaction supersedes

and possibly refutes the constructions of “systems.” Thomas Kent, for instance, has turned to the work of language philosophers Richard Rorty and Donald Davidson to propose that every moment of communicative interaction is singularly unique. (132)

In that text, Dobrin does broaden his collective of postprocess scholars—this time adding to the mix Kent’s Iowa State colleague David R. Russell and Anis Bawarshi, who was a graduate student at the University of Kansas while Dobrin worked there from 1995–1997 and who climbed the ranks at *JAC*—from editorial assistant to assistant editor to senior editor—during a period in which Kent edited the journal and/or co-edited with Dobrin. But, this time around, Dobrin exclusively refers to models derived from Kent as *paralogic hermeneutic* theories and pedagogies, not as *postprocess* ones. Even so, when he theorizes a paralogic hermeneutic approach to writing instruction (i.e., a postprocess one) that might also attend to social power relations and employ methods of Freirean critical pedagogy, he stacks one *post* on top of another, calling it *post-post-process* (133).

POSTPROCESS AS EXTERNALIST, PARALOGIC MINDSET TOWARD WRITING

As I will use the term, postprocess *sans hyphen* implies an externalist and paralogic conception of writing. In simplified terms, *externalism* is a philosophy of mind (or, a conception of what the mind *is*) that sees all thought as flowing from and through the contributions of numerous factors outside one’s own head: both human and non-human others; material objects; languages and symbols and virtual things. That is, it rejects the Cartesian (internalist) idea that one could retreat into the solitude of one’s own mind (and one’s own mind alone) and still produce thought. In place of *cogito ergo sum* it says something more like *Alii sunt ergo cogito*: others exist; therefore, I think. For externalists, solitary thinking is impossible. Thus, whenever one communicates, one does not do so “alone.”

Philosophers of mind commonly distinguish between two forms of externalism: *semantic externalism* (also called “content” or “what” externalism) and *vehicle externalism* (also called “how externalism” and referred to as a component of the “extended mind thesis”). As its name indicates, semantic externalism examines the interplay between the meanings of the words and the environments in which those words have been used. It also presumes that *what* people think—i.e., the *contents* of their thoughts—is a function of the meanings of the words they know. That is, unlike internalists who generally assume that thought precedes communication (or the translation of thought into language), semantic-externalists suppose that languages both allow for and structure thought and

that languages are functions of their environs and their histories of use; thus, they reason, environmental or external factors intrude into the thought process.

In its most basic sense, vehicle externalism assumes that (indefinitely many) objects outside the head drive cognitive processes. Words, which might be construed as cognitive tools, are counted among these things, but they are not alone. The list of cognition-extending objects includes high-tech gadgets like GPS systems, calculators, and search engines, but also relatively rudimentary devices like pencils and paper. Defining a “parity principle,” cognitive philosophers Andy Clark and David Chalmers write, “If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a process which *were it done in the head*, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the cognitive process, then that part of the world *is* (so we claim) part of the cognitive process” (27). Or, to state matters differently, if those objects commonly employed to assist in thinking were removed, the cognitive process would deteriorate, just as if part of one’s physiological brain were excised. Thus, vehicle externalists argue, it is reasonable to treat regularly accessible items with known functions as though they were a part of the (“extended”) mind.

The human mind has always necessarily functioned via externalism, whether it was recognized as doing so or not. Even so, as high-speed internet connections, search engines, smart phones, and the like increasingly become sine qua nons of both contemporary labor and leisure, the externalist nature of human minds becomes more and more apparent. Clark suggests that the “ancient seepage” of mind into world, and vice versa, is “gathering momentum,” such that the mind is located “less and less in the head” (4). For what it’s worth, posthumanist theorists, who tend to be how-externalists, commonly voice similar claims. For instance, N. Katherine Hayles concludes *How We Became Posthuman* by asserting, “We have always been posthuman,” by which she means that the Western notion of liberal, individualist humanism has never been philosophically tenable—and one did not necessarily need information technology to experience and respond to one’s ecology (291, 288). Byron Hawk likewise argues: “Technology makes the fact that the body is immersed in networks of complexity much more immediate and harder to ignore” (*Counter-History* 234).

For what it’s worth, early postprocess scholarship, especially in the work of Kent, presupposed semantic externalism but only gestured very tentatively toward vehicle externalism. Later critiques of his work, especially by Byron Hawk, Thomas Rickert and Collin Gifford Brooke, and Jennifer Rae Talbot, have faulted it for being insufficiently vehicle-externalist.

By presupposing externalism, I will argue, postprocess also necessarily presupposes paralogy. In one of his first texts on the subject, Kent defines a *paralogic* rhetoric as one “that treats the production and the analysis of discourse as

open-ended dialogic activities and not as codifiable systems” (“Paralogic Hermeneutics” 25). To simplify heavily: Kent and postprocess theorists following him see writers as being at least as engaged in hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation) as readers. In their eyes, “successful” communication (that arrives at something like “shared” meaning or agreement) flows from a non-systematic and non-systematizable set of guesses that communicants make about each other’s interpretations of language and the world. In foregrounding the necessity of guessing, postprocess scholars suggest that nothing that is known or done in advance of communication can guarantee the success of that communication. Instead, to the extent that communicative interactions (i.e., conversations or textual interchanges) may be said to succeed, their success derives from the ability of communicants to align their interpretive strategies during the process of communication itself (31).

In this book, I have followed other postprocess thinkers in dividing movements within composition scholarship according to their underlying philosophies of mind. Kent may have been the first to do so, but Joe Marshall Hardin states the case most pointedly: “Even the most social of process theories . . . are internalist philosophies masquerading as externalist,” whereas, from his vantage, a “radical externalism . . . undergirds postprocess theory” (“Putting” 71, 65). Hardin asserts a clear division between Process and postprocess theories according to their respective internalism and externalism, but I would temper this claim slightly. Considering Process to designate a (very broadly defined) theoretical and/or pedagogical approach, as well as a temporal era, I would acknowledge externalist outliers during the period, including Richard Coe, Robert Zoellner, and the difficult-to-categorize Ann E. Berthoff. Even so, if one were to follow the commonplace tripartite taxonomy of major Process approaches—cognitivist, expressivist, and social—one could illustrate the internalism of each subfield’s leading theorists.

Internalist suppositions are most evident in the early cognitivist models of Linda S. Flower, John R. Hayes, and their followers—one thinks here of their attention to the student writer (singular) and to their characteristic method of studying physically quarantined students. But, they appear equally in the expressivist call to express oneself, to take ideas that (allegedly) found their origins internally and move them outward. As Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford rightly demonstrate, many of the expressivist theorists most commonly associated with student-centered instruction, including James Moffett, Donald Murray, Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie, quite ironically avowed “traditional concepts of autonomous individualism, authorship, and authority for texts” (*Singular Texts* 113). Though I might situate them in a historical interregnum, as those providing a conceptual bridge between internalism and externalism, or between

Process and postprocess, Kenneth Bruffee and other social constructionists/social-epistemic rhetoricians did ultimately avow internalist principles, as well (Kent, *Paralogic Rhetoric* 98-104). Bruffeean collaborative learning, for instance, supposes that individuals can, if they so choose, operate alone. In contrast to these Process-era approaches, the externalist theories emerging since the dawn of postprocess suggest that such aloneness is an ontological impossibility, forbidden by the very fact of one's being in the world. All writing is always already over-written by other people and, crucially, other stuff. Or, to give one final illustration: while analyzing the socio-economic and/or cultural factors "conditioning" or otherwise influencing subject-formation, Marxist and/or left-wing social-turn scholars typically presupposed the prior existence (if only at birth) of a "pure" or "unsullied" mental core. Externalists would dispense with these metaphors of purity and pollution, of conditioning and influence; for them, the inside-outside logic that presumes a separation between the (interior) mind and the (external) world cannot hold. Mind is smeared or distributed across world and entangled with it.

At the same time, the break between Process and postprocess is "clean" only to the extent that one privileges philosophy of mind as a disciplinary movement's or epoch's defining trait. Those who have preferred to ground their taxonomic schemes on separate criteria have often argued that postprocess continues the legacy of Process rather than stepping out from it. By Kevin Porter's account, Process and postprocess share an underlying theory of meaning ("Literature" 369-70). Raúl Sánchez sees the two connected by a "subject-oriented, representational writing system" ("First" 187-88). Following Diane Davis, who sees postprocess hermeneutics as failing to attend adequately to the otherness of the other ("Finitude"), Byron Hawk argues that postprocess is, like Process, still oriented toward "the goal of communication and understanding," rather than "an ever-new invention that breaks out of dialectic and into multiplicity" (*Counter-History* 222). And, Collin Brooke and Thomas Rickert have faulted postprocess for retaining humanist assumptions, rather than fully accepting posthumanism ("Being Delicious" 163-66). The viewpoint from which and the (conceptual) apparatus through which one observes the phenomenon shapes the phenomenon itself, and so I would acknowledge the validity of those alternate viewpoints, even if I do not personally endorse them. There's no necessary reason why any criterion should prove superior to any other; each is ultimately arbitrary. Still, I have attempted to narrate the history of postprocess from its own perspective, which means that I'm privileging externalism and paralogy here—and also producing a certain version of postprocess in the process.