

## CHAPTER 2.

# THE VOCABULARY OF POSTPROCESS; POSTPROCESS AS VOCABULARY

In the last chapter, I occasionally referred to postprocess as a movement/theory/attitude—a cumbersome appellation that may seem to punt on the scholarly obligation to classify phenomena precisely. In the rest of this book, I primarily refer to postprocess as a noun, rather than applying the term adjectivally to some other thing (e.g., “the postprocess movement”). My decision to do so is deliberate, not accidental, and it reflects an important truth: critiques of Process have shown that several of the best and most obvious categorizations applied to it were, ultimately, untenable.

## POSTPROCESS AS PARADIGM? A VERY BRIEF REJOINDER

If there wasn't a Process paradigm—and there wasn't—then there certainly wasn't a postprocess one, either. What Robert Connors wrote nearly forty years ago strikes me as equally true today: “[Thomas] Kuhn's terms, applied analogically as a claim for the essentially scientific or prescientific nature of the discipline [of composition], lead us only to blind alleys or to unrealistic expectations” (“Composition Studies and Science” 17). The methods and procedures of experimental sciences that allow for paradigm-formation simply do not exist in composition and/or writing studies. Although this distinction is often framed as demonstrating an inherent deficit in writing research, I would caution against such a conclusion. Rather, I would follow Gesa E. Kirsch in affirming that “as scholarship in composition expands and diversifies, it becomes more insightful and valuable (133).

## THE TROUBLE WITH MOVEMENTS AND THEORIES

Of course, many scholars imagined themselves as belonging to the Process movement. Chris Anson recounts being “transformed by” and even undergoing “a kind of metamorphosis” after his exposure to it (214). Similarly, Nancy DeJoy's chapter in *Post-Process Theory* is entitled “I Was a Process-Model Baby.” Process was a term for self-identification with strong affective dimensions; it offered a sense of progress and of belonging. But, one might rightly ask whether scholars'

self-identification with a given banner provides sufficient justification for historians to consider them to have been unified under it. In some obvious sense, the answer to such a question would be yes. However, any answer would ultimately be a function of the resolution of one's conceptual apparatus, the extent to which one distinguishes between closely related items.

Although many scholars identified with Process, they didn't always identify their work with one another's. Despite extensively demonstrating the existence of a discernible group of "supporters of writing as a process," Richard Fulkerson agrees that the term *movement* should not apply to them. Instead, he conceives of them "as a political party (the WAP), with members frequently willing to vote together for the same candidates, and more or less united around certain slogans lacking in nuance and short enough for bumper stickers" ("Pre- and Post-Process" 98). Lisa Ede notes, "At the level of scholarship, the term 'movement' was certainly elastic enough to allow for what in retrospect seems to be considerable diversity" among Process approaches (*Situating Composition* 70). And she continues,

Though there was broad support for and interest in process-based research in the 1970s and early 1980s, it is important to remember that there were many scholarly and curricular projects—many "movements"—on-going in the composition during this time. It's certainly true that few of the scholars involved with these projects saw themselves as working in opposition to the writing process. But it is equally true that research on the writing process was not central—and in some cases not relevant—to their efforts. (71)

Thus, she ultimately concludes, "Depending on where and how you look, there both was and was not a writing process movement" (*Situating Composition* 64). This is no small point—one worth applying to classifications of Process as a theory or even as a set of theories.

Depending on where and how you look—depending on your conceptual resolution—there was and wasn't such a thing as Process theory. This ambiguity is fundamentally related to how words work. As Friedrich Nietzsche carefully demonstrates: "every word . . . has to fit countless more or less similar cases—which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things." Any given word—*Process*, for instance, or *postprocess* or *leaf*, which is Nietzsche's example—"is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects" ("On Truth" 83). This truth was infrequently applied to Process, though.

In her 1978 response to Sharon Crowley's "Components of the Composing Process," Nancy Sommers castigates Crowley for failing to define her central

term, *process*. However Sommers' primary quarrel isn't with Crowley but with a broader tendency among composition scholars: "The word process exists in such a terminological thicket and has become so much jargon, so maligned and misunderstood, that the more the term is used, the less we seem to understand what is meant by the idea that composing is a process" (209). I would affirm that Sommers was, in all likelihood, correct on this point. Yet, I would also affirm that any other, single term would, eventually, have suffered the same fate.

Although the term *Process* was applied extensively and enthusiastically, Process tenets did not impact all areas of collegiate writing instruction simultaneously or in the same ways. As scholars of L2 writing themselves admit, Process entered their domain well after it had begun to affect L1 writing pedagogy and research. In a 1995 article, Tim Caudery surveys the impacts of Process on L2 writing scholars, ultimately hoping to validate the movement. In doing so, he also provides what I believe is the best and most straightforward explanation of how the term *Process* proliferated. "As teaching approaches become more widespread," Caudery observes, three trends tend to emerge. The first of these is diversification: "different people interpret ideas in different ways." Second is simplification, which implies a sub-element of distortion: "as ideas spread from one teacher to another, it is the strongest and most distinctive elements of the original approach that tend to survive." And third, selection: "while some teachers may use, say, a particular teaching method in its 'pure' form, others come to incorporate bits and pieces of it into their teaching." Thus, for Caudery, Process could not help but mean different things to different people—and the same would be true for any other pedagogical approach. But, he suggests, the evolution of the term (*Process*) might be seen as demonstrating the strength of the movement in question, not a fault within it.

In a 1986 reply to Daniel Horowitz, Joann Liebman-Kleine similarly praises the polysemy of *Process*. In her estimation, to attempt to fix the meaning of the term, or to affix only one set of associations to it, is to do violence to Process itself. Only its critics, acting in bad faith, would do so. She writes,

People who criticize the process approach seem to treat it as some sort of monolithic entity, complete with canon and commandments. Horowitz says it has been "miscast as a complete theory of writing." If so, the casting agents are not the advocates of process, but its detractors. The process approach is not *an* approach; it is many approaches. There will never be *a* process approach because writing—the process of writing—is such a complicated and rich process. . . . The process perspective will inevitably encompass many different ap-

proaches, for a key assumption of all process theory, research, and pedagogy is of difference: Writers have different processes. (“In Defense” 785)

As Liebman-Kleine’s response demonstrates, Process was sometimes understood as an umbrella term, even by those who self-identified with it, and the accusation that it meant one and only one thing was seen (by some) as an outright attack on it.

Postprocess was not granted the same level of terminological flexibility, in contrast. I will gladly grant that the clean-cut linguistic distinction I am employing here—separating politically oriented, “social” post-process from paralogic, externalist postprocess—was not always so clear in earlier scholarship. But, even granting the confusions that these homophones produced, *post-/postprocess* was never so generalized a term as *Process*. It never grouped together phenomena so different as cognitivism and expressivism and social-epistemicism. Even so, from its early stages, terminological clarity and consistency were demanded of it in ways not initially demanded of its predecessor. Its semantic indeterminacy was used as a bludgeon against it, typically as evidence that it did not exist at all.

In concluding this section, I would offer one final, crucial remark. Even in demonstrating that Process was a highly disparate phenomenon and that Process theory only exists as a very generalized abstraction, I would still resist assuming that *postprocess* (as an adjective) should modify the noun *theory*—at least as theories are commonly conceived. That is, I am rather dubious about calling postprocess a *theory*—except as a “theory with a very small *t*”—and I have consciously avoided doing so in this book, given the baggage that the term *theory* has been made to carry (Kent, “Preface” xvi). I prefer to see postprocess as describing a state of affairs regarding the limits of what is conventionally called (capital-T) Theory: something that can stand outside of practice and guide it. To make a broad-scale distinction, Process scholars generally believed that learning more about writing processes and then teaching that knowledge would enable students to produce texts better and/or to produce better texts. In contrast, postprocess scholars have tended to assume that “an appeal to theory—an attempt to construct a theory of writing, whether process or some other—is misguided, because theory simply does not guide or govern our practice.” Rather, as Gary A. Olson affirms, “Practices arise instead out of the very specific, local conditions that generate them” (“Why Distrust?” 426). Just as knowing that one is in a rhetorical situation provides one with little guidance for how to act within that actually existing situation, knowing that one has a writing process (or even several writing processes) offers almost no direction in terms of how to approach any specific writing task (Olson, “Fish Tales” 253-54).

Though I hesitate to acknowledge the existence of postprocess theory, I do believe that postprocess has functioned as a theory, if *theory* is understood in a constrained and specific way: as a form of practice itself—in Kory Lawson Ching’s words, “a way of seeing, a vehicle, a momentary rest stop, an instrument with which to think otherwise” (“Theory” 452). Ching offers a rigorously externalist conception of theory, one that recognizes that words and concepts are not merely neutral media for thought; rather, they alternately enable and constrain it. Elaborating on this conception, Karen Kopelson affirms the value of theoretical *relexicalization*: offering a different lexicon, an alternate vocabulary. She argues, “One of theory’s most indispensable, urgent tasks is the work—or *play*. . . —it does on and in language. Theory works against received grammar so that we might exceed the constraints language imposes upon the thinkable itself, so that we might uncover, resist, explode, and enter into what is foreclosed by the habitual” (“Back” 602). Scholars who lament the “difficulty” of theoretical language are thus not entirely wrong to do so. Theoretical language does demand that one expend cognitive effort not normally spent when using what Nietzsche might call “the usual metaphors,” those constructions that have been attributed by convention the force of truth—statements like *writing is a process* (“On Truth” 84). I will have more to say about relexicalization at the chapter’s close, when I consider the value of framing postprocess as a *vocabulary*.

## A BRIEF DIGRESSION ON DOUBLE STANDARDS

Before proceeding onward, I want to pause briefly to consider two common criticisms of postprocess. First, several scholars, including Bruce McComiskey, Helen Foster, Richard Fulkerson, and John Whicker, have attempted to undermine the existence of postprocess by demonstrating the ambiguity of the category *postprocess* (Foster 5; Fulkerson, “Of Pre- and Post-Process” 107; McComiskey, *Teaching* 47; Whicker 499). Even scholars sympathetic to postprocess and hoping to extend its rationale have felt compelled to address their key term’s inherent polysemy before proceeding onward (e.g., Breuch 121; Heard 285). Second, several have accused postprocess of caricaturing its predecessor in order to validate its own existence (Ede 75, 85; Fulkerson, “Twenty-First Century” 670; Hawk, *Resounding* 48; Matsuda 74; Sánchez, “First” 186). I hope I have already demonstrated that the first of these criticisms could have been—and often was—leveled at Process. The second also could have been—and occasionally was, as well. I would note here a historical irony: in theory, at least, postprocess was better suited to absorb criticisms concerning semantic ambiguity than Process. It is a vision of language which does not demand that terms have clear and stable referents.

Bemoaning the homophonic status and/or the linguistic indeterminacy of *post-process* and *postprocess* entails applying a criterion that postprocess, at least, fundamentally works to undo or reject. To assume that words have clear and static definitions and that those words (can or should) carry those meanings in(-to) every new context is to deny that language-in-use constructs language-as-system and to deny likewise the inevitability of hermeneutic guessing and radical interpretation. In my estimation, criticisms of postprocess that fixate on terminological indeterminacy betray a failure to understand or—per the principle of charity—even to try to understand what postprocess scholars worked so hard to convey.

To approach postprocess on its own terms is to approach those writing about it as though they are ethical and intelligent actors making true statements about the world. It does not demand that one (i.e., the reader) understand in advance what those authors mean by their terms. Rather, a central postprocess premise is that arriving at a “proper” or “correct” interpretation is not a function of knowing a language. Instead, postprocess would seem to request that readers work with authors (and the textual traces they have provided) to negotiate workable meanings by considering whole utterances, rather than individual statements or passages.

The underlying logic of postprocess implies that the term *postprocess* could not help but have multiple meanings, as it would be employed by an indeterminate number of writers/speakers in an indeterminate number of settings for a relatively wide array of uses. In this way, postprocess offers a large-scale critique of language use as it had come to be conceptualized by Process-era compositionists. Indeed, Olson distinguishes postprocess from Process on precisely these grounds: the term itself (i.e., *postprocess*, which Olson notably hyphenates as *post-process*) cannot have just one meaning because the upshot of the theory is that words neither have nor need to have just one meaning. He admits, “Post-process does *not* refer to any readily identifiable configuration of commonly agreed-on assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that would constitute a paradigm.” But, immediately thereafter, he hastens to add, “Neither does ‘process’—it only seems to refer to something specific and identifiable to those caught in process’s thrall” (“Why Distrust” 424). When Olson refers to “those caught in process’s thrall,” I believe he references scholars working from internalist suppositions who accept and even demand ahistorical, prescriptive definitions. To distinguish a Process vision of language from a postprocess one, Olson refers to the meaning of the word *writing*. He argues, “Despite attempts to deny that they are doing so, process theorists always return to a language”—by which he probably means a vocabulary, but by which he might also mean an understanding of language—“that assumes that writing and the activities that comprise it can somehow be filled with a content, can somehow be specified

and made stable.” That is, they want the word *writing* to mean something consistent and predictable, regardless of the context in which it appears. The trouble here, of course, is that writing (the act or object, i.e., the signified) differs so wildly from one instance to the next that no single signifier (e.g., *writing*) could adequately address or describe each instance. From Olson’s perspective, then, specifying and stabilizing the definition of writing represents “an impossible goal, for it assumes that writing can be untethered from specific contexts, that somehow we can describe writing detached from specific acts of writing, specific attempts to communicate particular messages to particular audiences for particular reasons.” Postprocess, in contrast, rejects this impossible goal at the outset. It focuses on particulars, especially those that cannot be captured or conveyed by generalized theories or generalized terms. “So,” Olson concludes, “to say that ‘post-process’ doesn’t have a specific referent is to pay it a compliment. It’s to say that the message has gotten through that no such specificity is possible—and never was” (425). Many readers either did not understand this critique or failed to accept it, though. As a result, they assessed postprocess according to their conventional methods for scholarly argumentation. In Thorstein Veblen’s (and later Kenneth Burke’s) terms, they may have had a trained incapacity for engaging differently with postprocess.

To undermine postprocess—even to deny its claim to exist—its opponents have also demonstrated its (alleged) tendency to create a straw man or caricature out of Process. By Sánchez’s account, without this caricature, postprocess would have been “unidentifiable, unimaginable” (“First” 186). According to Fulker-son, post-process actually “commits the straw-character fallacy twice over,” by suggesting that Process emphasizes linear rigidity (i.e., a singular, non-recursive writing process) and in portraying Process as solely expressivist and cognitivist and thus not also social (“Twenty-First Century” 670). It’s worth remembering three points, though.

First, those various scholars who benefited from operating under the Process umbrella were also disregarding just how very different their work was from some other Process scholars. That is, each of them, in their own way, also made a caricature of Process, accentuating some features and diminishing others. In Caudery’s terms, they selected and distorted. In this light, I would suggest, Process was always a caricature, even long before postprocess.

Second, Process has also been accused of caricaturing current-traditionalism in order to validate its own existence (Matsuda, “Process” 71; Miller, *Textual Carnivals* 110; Tobin, “Introduction” 4). George Pullman, for example, demonstrates the “oversimplifications and obfuscations” within commonplace histories of Process, and he argues that “the Process movement first constructed and then dismissed current-traditional rhetoric in order to valorize itself” (“Stepping”

16). If anything, I find the logic of this critique more persuasive when applied to Process than to postprocess. Postprocess simply did not invent Process in the same way that Process invented current-traditionalism. As I've already demonstrated, many, many scholars self-identified with Process of their own accord, well before the terms *post-process* and *postprocess* entered the discipline's conversation. In contrast, as Pullman convincingly argues, current-traditionalism, as it's often discussed these days, "did not exist as a theory except to the extent one could extrapolate a theory from the textbooks current at the time" (22). In an important sense, current-traditionalism (as a unified theory, a noun) never existed, except as an argumentative straw-man. From one tenable perspective, then, Process did not invalidate current-traditionalism, given that it could not: current-traditionalism had never really existed previously. Instead, current-traditionalism was invented to validate Process by contrast (Pullman, "Stepping" 23).

Third, current-traditionalism was internally variegated, in the same ways as Process, and for the same reasons. In a 1981 article, Robert Connors identifies current-traditional rhetoric as "a palimpsest of theories and assumptions stretching back to classical antiquity," and he argues, "C-T rhetoric is not, as is sometimes supposed, a coherent, static whole. In actuality, it is a dynamic entity forever in flux, dropping used-up or discredited theories and assumptions and gradually absorbing new ones" ("Current-Traditional Rhetoric" 208). Notably, Connors concludes his article by affirming, "C-T rhetoric will never, can never, merely 'wither away' or be overthrown as many of us dreamed it might be in the sixties and the early seventies. C-T methods will always be the armature upon which change is shaped" (220). In his "Discursive History" of Process and post-process, Paul Kei Matsuda similarly suggests that "the popular history of the Process movement . . . oversimplifies the multiplicity of perspectives that have always been present throughout the twentieth century," that is, during the time in which current-traditionalism purportedly reigned ("Process" 67). Current-traditionalism was far from monolithic, he argues, and Process was not the first critique of it, only the most successful (68).

Postprocess, we are told, called forth its own being by creating a straw man out of Process. The force of this accusation is clear: postprocess doesn't exist—and never existed—because its existence was justified on false premises. But, if one were to trace out the underlying logic of this accusation, one would have to say that postprocess doesn't (or didn't) exist because Process didn't exist because current-traditionalism didn't exist, either. For what it's worth, Ede presents this argument concisely: "Just as scholars arguing for the writing process movement established a strawman they termed current-traditional rhetoric, so too have those who have critiqued this movement, for they have reified and essentialized a loosely held affiliation of projects" (Situating 75).



On one level, I completely agree with her reasoning: critics of prior models have often selected and distorted features to build their own cases in opposition.

And yet, I worry about one possible, logical extension of her argument. If one were to call each movement an imaginary, unreal strawman, thereby undermining the existence of each, in turn, one would end up with an oddly flattened and conceptually undifferentiated vision of the history of the field. Claiming that postprocess doesn't exist because it differentiated itself against something else that did not exist may produce one benefit—a “better” acknowledgement of the variegated qualities of each historical epoch. But, that benefit would necessarily come at a very high cost in terms of being able to differentiate periods from one another. To argue that nothing has changed in one hundred years would be absurd. That gesture would also ignore something fundamental about how language works: it always produces certain distinctions and flattens others. But, the flattening that's so commonly lamented is offset by—and worth it for—the benefit of being able to construct knowledge at all.

On top of all that, I'm not convinced that this strawman argument actually disproves the existence of postprocess in the way that its proponents contend. As Olson has been very direct in demonstrating, postprocess is very much a critique of (one particular vision of) Process (“Why Distrust?” 424). But, it isn't simply or solely a function of a reductive characterization of its predecessor. Regardless of how one feels about its characterizations of Process, it also differs in important ways, particularly in its emphases on paralogy and externalism. Postprocess has “positive” content (i.e., it affirms things); it is, as Reed Way Dasenbrock once described Kent's *Paralogic Rhetoric*, “far from being purely a negative critique” (“Forum” 103). Any characterization of postprocess as simply a continuation of Process (according to some necessarily and yet still arbitrarily selected category) would thereby do a sort of reductive violence to it.

Ede emphasizes that scholars “would do well to develop some healthy suspicions” of disciplinary taxonomies, “particularly when they are used primarily to establish hierarchies and create opposing theoretical camps that suggest that teachers can and should enact ‘purified’ theoretical positions.” I strongly support that reasoning, and yet, because that argument has proven so persuasive, I want to affirm her immediately prior point: “Scholars need terms and taxonomies to help organize our thinking” (*Situating* 97). Yes, whenever one generalizes, one always risks over-generalizing. But, every word is, in some sense, a generality, a concept, “aris[ing] from the equation of unequal things”—and we haven't dispensed with words yet. Therefore, in the same way that we have learned to use words, despite the dangers incumbent in doing so, I would argue that we ought not dispense with taxonomies—say, current-traditional versus Process versus post-process versus postprocess.

## ON NOT OVER-EXTENDING PROCESS

In the previous section, I demonstrated that two of the most common criticisms of postprocess could have been (and sometimes were) leveled equally at Process. And yet, *Process* became and has remained a conceptually and theoretically necessary category for theorists and historians of composition, so much so that they have found themselves unable to dispense with it, even after admitting all its faults and perils. There's now a general agreement that theories of Process (Process theory, Process pedagogy, the Process movement, and so forth) reduced the complexity and diversity of underlying phenomena. But, whereas there's now a (generally unspoken) moratorium on discussing current-traditionalism and postprocess for those exact reasons, Process has remained oddly insulated. It rests on unsteady but still hallowed ground. As a result, Process comes to absorb everything, if only by default. The tendency to leave Process intact doesn't just occur in the works of postprocess opponents, though. And it isn't simply an effect of theoretical naiveté, either. It also arises in theoretically sophisticated texts by those who have shown themselves sympathetic to and/or respectful of postprocess. Consider, for example, Byron Hawk's *Resounding the Rhetorical* (2018).

In that text, Hawk attempts to produce “a more expansive sense of composition, one based on new materialist ontologies that see composition as a larger material process in constant modes of transformation” (36). Composition as a practice is and should be understood as being more expansive than just writing, and so the discipline that studies it must also be understood as fundamentally dynamic and emergent. To develop his argument, Hawk categorizes composition as a “quasi-object,” something “primarily relational . . . constituted via social relation and circulation” (22). However, as Hawk also notes, quasi-objects are not entirely relational; they have certain objective properties that exist, regardless of what viewers attribute to them; they are also “part material specificity. They aren't simply static or preexistent—they are partially moving, emergent, composed events that are slowed down and partially stabilized by relations” (28). That is, composition is an ongoing and inherently dynamic historical entity that is constantly re-made as it (re-)circulates and (re-)connects with other nodes in an expansive and proliferating conceptual network.

Now, notably, in the course of *Resounding*, Hawk attempts to reimagine the meaning of several key disciplinary terms: “composition, process, research, collaboration, publics, and rhetoric” (12). In a gesture reminiscent of Stuart Hall's work, he plays upon the dual nature of articulation: as both a saying and a form of joining. He uses words in relatively novel ways so as to join them to different concepts, thereby transforming both the terms themselves and the intellectual networks through which they circulate and which they co-construct. This

method also accords with one of his long-standing approaches to historiography, which he elaborated in *A Counter-History of Composition* (2007): “Writing affirmatively by using categories to open up possibilities rather than exclude them” (270). That is, he focuses less on what a word *has been taken to mean* and more on what it *might come to mean*. In each chapter, he aims to “produce a reorientation of the field through the iteration of the key term” in question (*Resounding* 12). This is very high-level, impressive theorization.

Hawk’s second chapter, “Process as Refrain,” re-works his entry in *Beyond Postprocess* (2011), which I will apply for my own purposes in Chapter 6. In both of his texts, Hawk attempts to “reassemble” postprocess by connecting it to Deleuzian, Heideggerian, and Latourian concepts. In his earlier text, he aimed to do so by “articulat[ing] a posthuman world of open invention through the expression of worlds” (“Reassembling” 77). In the latter case, he writes, “Reassembling postprocess theory articulates a parahuman world of the refrain, open invention through the expression of worlds where the quasi-object of composition is the network that inscribes the subject as the subject scribes the network” (*Resounding* 53). As even this sentence alone shows, his latter text is considerably more complicated than its earlier iteration.

But, more to the point, the latter text is considerably less affirmative toward postprocess. In it Hawk draws heavily from Ede’s *Situating Composition* in order to articulate a different vision of Process—one that, in my estimation, arrives at the expense of postprocess. Hawk begins with some arguments that might seem to undermine Process: it was never as coherent a paradigm as it has sometimes been credited with being; its existence as some sort of coherent entity was “far from obvious”; and “its history has largely never been written in a way that accounts for its large body of scholars, its wide array of practices and institutional locations, its wide array of agents, and its more complex chronology” (47-48). I agree with each of these claims but disagree with the conclusion Hawk draws from them. Rather than disintegrate Process, he aims to extend and entangle it in novel ways—to treat it as a quasi-object.

Even if he might explain the operation in more complex terms, Hawk’s basic argumentative operation involves subsuming postprocess back into Process, framing it as an extension of its predecessor rather than a departure. In this way, his work aligns with continuationist appraisals offered elsewhere by Bruce McComiskey (*Teaching* 47) and Helen Foster. In *Networked Process: Dissolving Boundaries of Process and Post-Process* (2007), Foster writes, “My primary purpose is to (re)acclimate our sensibility to the historical richness of writing process discourse and to bring into relief those aspects of process against which post-process situates itself” (31). As Lance Massey notes, Foster “finds a ‘rebuttal’ to post-process in the sheer diversity of process approaches” (“Book Re-

view” 158). Hawk seem to do something quite similar, though his argument also rests on the continued application of Process pedagogies within individual classrooms.

Per Ede, Hawk endorses a turn toward the local, the “material sites of practice where theory gets used and produced, such as the classroom.” Focusing on localized concerns would, by this account, “keep scholars from making overly general paradigmatic claims about the field, such as a movement into postprocess, that cover over practices such as the continued use of writing process pedagogies” (48). To my mind, this sort of attention to only one level of scale (i.e., the local) presents its own problems. Historical transformations don’t occur all-at-once. As the science-fiction writer William Gibson notes, “The future is already here—it’s just not very evenly distributed.” The same, of course, could be said of the past: it is still here—just not very evenly distributed. A residual regime can continue to exist alongside the emergence of its replacement, and many do. But, pointing toward the residue of the residual in one’s own classroom does not, *ipso facto*, deny the existence of that replacement. Of course instructors would continue to employ writing process pedagogies even as the theories and methods underlying them were slowly rejected. Many aspects of current-traditionalism remain with us, after all. I would also note another objection: here Hawk posits a movement into postprocess as a problematic, “overly general paradigmatic claim” (48). One is left to wonder, then: why not apply the same logic to Process? And, perhaps even more: why continue to absorb more and more things into Process when its internal diversity already presents incumbent conceptual challenges? Why generalize an already-too-generalized phenomenon further still?

Hawk admits that “the concept of process allowed the works of many people to be collected together even as their projects and practices varied widely.” Even so, he credits Ede with “looking at the ways past practices continue under present theories” and being able to see “writing processes, social processes, and postprocesses as blurring together and evading clear breaks.” From Ede’s perspective, which Hawk seems to endorse here, “postprocess is a continuation of process, not a break” (51). By this account, it did not produce a rupture because Process was always itself dynamic and emergent; at most, Hawk suggests, “postprocess rearticulated process through the social turn” (53).

At the start of his chapter, as I’ve noted, Hawk claimed to be reassembling postprocess theory. But, by its end, postprocess has been absorbed back into Process. Again the differences between the *Beyond Postprocess* and *Resounding the Rhetorical* versions of his text are illuminating. In his former entry, Hawk offers not “a refutation of Kent’s model of postprocess but an extension of his position beyond the limits of his passing hermeneutical theory,” arguing that “the theory itself has to change and evolve. It has to move beyond itself as it reartic-

ulates with new situations, new assemblages, new expressions, new publics, new worlds” (“Reassembling” 92). The underlying logic here is not so very different from what he re-presents in his updated account. But, there, Kent’s work is no longer classified *as postprocess*. In *Resounding*, Hawk claims that a reconfiguration of Kent’s key terms (situated, interpretive, and public) “extends Kent’s model of *process* beyond the limits of his passing hermeneutical theory and into a version of *process* that shifts it from the social turn into the material turn” (*Resounding* 73; emphasis added). Indeed, the three terms that Kent had used to differentiate postprocess approaches from process ones “ultimately collapse into a model for processes of material composition, which builds, invents, coproduces associations with highly localized sets of practices, agencies, and mediators” (75).

I think that Hawk correctly conceives of Process as a “quasi-object” with a “variable ontology,” that is, “a network of multiplicities, multiples, and swirls that materially entangle pasts, presents, and futures” (53). Although I have tried to state my case in less dense language, I am conceiving of postprocess (and, for that matter, Process and current-traditionalism) in very similar ways: as something that transforms as it connects with other concepts, an internally variegated thing—that is, an assemblage or multitude—with (at minimum) spatial, temporal, and relational dimensions. However, I disagree with the conclusion that Hawk derives from this premise. After defining Process as a quasi-object, he states, “The move, then, is not to oppose process but to extend and entangle it—produce other versions through particular compositions or locations” (52). There isn’t one and only one move one could make here, though.

The decision to privilege Process is *a decision*, one with both benefits and costs. And, at the risk of redundancy, I would repeat myself: there is no reason why Process would need to be the preferred or privileged term in his or anyone else’s analysis, especially given the problems incumbent in constituting it as an object in the first place. If anything, I might suggest, postprocess actually has less conceptual baggage, if for no other reason than that fewer things were ever connected up to it. Furthermore, even if Process is a quasi-object, surely other quasi-objects must exist, as well, each with its own bounds and limits.

In justifying its own existence, postprocess faced a stronger burden of proof than Process ever did. Hawk’s chapter, I would argue, serves as a strong example of this tendency. Within his argument, Process remains a useful and even necessary analytic category, despite its dubious claims to existence, whereas postprocess is deemed merely an extension or variant of Process. However, if one is willing to concede the existence of the one, there is no *a priori* reason to deny the existence of the other. If one is willing to conceptualize Process as a quasi-object, I see no reason why one couldn’t conceptualize postprocess as a quasi-object, too.

To be clear, though, I am not chiefly concerned with which term Hawk has chosen to privilege. The term is ultimately arbitrary. Instead, I want to point out that he could not conduct such an analysis without *some term* to fill the argumentative slot. His argument requires historical periodization, even if periodization is complicated and messy. In continuing to employ the term *Process*, and in arguing that it should be continuously articulated and entangled anew, Hawk applies standards to one term (*Process*) that he cannot, by extension, apply to the other (*postprocess*). Within the structure of his argument, there could never be something like postprocess (i.e., a replacement for Process) because it would always already be some newly entangled, emergent form of Process itself. In the end, Hawk is willing to differentiate Process from current-traditionalism, if only by implication. But, he ends up unwilling to differentiate postprocess *from it*.

### POSTPROCESS AS *PERIOD*

Having contemplated the dangers of characterizing postprocess as a paradigm, a movement, and a theory, I'd like to consider the merits of treating it as a temporal indicator, a period or an era. To do so, I'd like to turn to a text that seems to have everything and nothing to do with postprocess: Kent's *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts*, a work of literary criticism that has its roots in the author's dissertation at Purdue University. As its name indicates, *Interpretation and Genre* is chiefly concerned with the "clear relation" between how readers conceptualize genres and how they interpret literary texts (9).

Throughout the book, Kent attempts to formulate a "systematic, reader-centered theory of genre" that would account for both its synchronic (i.e., "static and rule-bound") and diachronic ("dynamic and culturally dependent") elements (9, 15). He presents these various aspects as "interact[ing] in a continuous dialectical activity," and therefore concludes, "A genre is a changing perception within the human mind just as much as it is a fixed set of things" (33). In Kent's model, then, "each literary text should be viewed simultaneously as an unchanging body of words and as a continually developing cultural artifact" (27). William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* both was and wasn't the same text in 1967 and 2017, after all, and so on. One can know the conventional, formal elements of a Petrarchan sonnet and even how contemporary poets are re-appropriating the form and yet not know in advance how to interpret a given instance of the genre—nor how it will be interpreted in the future. Because genres change over time, so do the meanings of texts. Thus, even if it isn't postprocess *per se*, *Interpretation and Genre* still closely connects to his later work on communicative interaction and paralogic hermeneutics. Rather than focus on writers whose work

will be interpreted, though, it focuses on readers who will do the interpreting. It asks similar questions but from the opposite angle.

Given its concern with the dynamic and evolving (diachronic) elements of genre, *Interpretation and Genre* requires a theory of historical change, which will be my primary concern here. Importantly, within Kent's genre model, many diachronic elements of genre remain tacit. They are, in his words, "unformulated conventions" (38). Those who write at a given time may share a set of core assumptions, even if they are not consciously aware that they share them, and a careful reader can derive those premises or strategies or rules. However, those unformulated conventions are not fixed, either. Because these unformulated conventions achieve an unspoken commonality in the absence of direct negotiation and/or prescription, they "always ha[ve] something to do with change and a culture's inconstant sense of what is significant and important" (40).

To account for the evolution(s) of unformulated conventions, Kent turns to Leonard Meyer's *Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, extrapolating several historical principles. First, in its cultural-determinedness, history is hierarchic: some phenomena are considered to be more important than others, and those important elements hold a longer "reverberation time," thereby outlasting less important elements and remaining in "the present" longer (40). Furthermore, events can become important by being associated with other important events. Second, only when the (alleged) "full significance of an event is known" is it "closed out," thus entering into "the past" (40). Third, periodization schemes function like genres for historical narration. On this last point, Kent quotes (and I will repeat) Meyer at length:

Periodization is not . . . merely a convenient way of dividing up the past. It follows from the hierarchic character of history. Periodization is a necessity, if the succession of particular events in the past is to be understood as being something more than chronicle—that is, as being more than a series of events strung like beads upon the slender thread of sequence. Were it not hierarchically articulated into reigns, epochs, style periods, movements, and the like, the past would lose immeasurably both in understandability and in richness. . . . Our conceptual classification of an event influences the way in which we perceive and understand it. (43)

That is, just as genre-perceptions guide literary interpretations, so to do periodization schemes guide historical interpretations. Thus, one cannot simply dispense with periodization; periodizing events endows them with meanings and makes them understandable.

In Kent's framework, periods are understood to hold some sort of internal consistency and to differ from other periods. However, their boundaries are "fuzzy and indistinct" and "characterized by turmoil" (44). The work of the literary historian, then, entails describing the emergence and disintegration of periods, which Kent comes surprisingly close to equating with unformulated conventions:

One of the literary historian's projects is to provide a description of the disintegration of unformulated conventions and the emergence of new ones. Or stated another way, part of the literary historian's task is the description of periodization, how periods develop and how they collapse. (*Interpretation and Genre* 44)

While describing historical periods, however, the historian must remain mindful of her own historical positioning, the present in which she exists (44). From his analysis of unformulated conventions, then, Kent identifies "three independent sets of hierarchic structures" that the historian must contemplate: first, periodicity, the traits that "differentiate one set of events from another; second, the unusual or unconventional events that have affected the author, given that authors often compose texts that do not "reflect the unformulated conventions of [their] time"; and, third, the unformulated conventions that affect the historian's own writing (44).

In terms of its relevance to literary study, I am not qualified to assess Kent's assertion that periods can be (and perhaps are) defined by their unformulated conventions. However, this insight strikes me as quite useful to the disciplinary historian of rhetoric and composition and/or writing studies. As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, the vast majority of inventional strategies during the Process era relied upon an internalist conception of the mind. To my knowledge, nobody within the discipline ever said outright: this is what the mind is, and therefore this is what invention ought to look like. Nobody needed to. Internalism was an unformulated convention. However, its status as a convention seems to me to be beyond dispute. One could find (externalist) historical outliers, if one were really willing to dig, but one would struggle to do so. Given the centrality of the unformulated convention, when externalist models of invention began to appear within composition scholarship, they were un-recognizable as theories of invention. Some were dismissed; some were ignored; some were absorbed into the exact (internalist) conversations they had intended to critique.

Because the unformulated conventional—invention is internalist—held such sway, no less a scholar than Janice Lauer ("Rhetorical Invention: The Diaspora") could only express puzzlement at the apparent absence of new scholarship



on invention in the 1990s. She couldn't find other inventional work because she couldn't accept that externalist scholarship *was* inventional scholarship. To be clear: I don't fault her for this inability. That work was, functionally speaking, invisible to her. Rather, I use Lauer as an example because her work has been so obviously admirable.

At some point, though, the unformulated convention switched over; (what was once called) invention became externalist. Again, nobody announced that a transition was occurring, but the transition did occur. These days, one would be hard-pressed to find a reasonably current article or book on invention that doesn't (at minimum) gesture toward posthumanist or ecological, externalist conceptions of the mind.

One might also consider this same issue—the invisibility of externalist invention—from a separate perspective. Throughout this book, I've argued that postprocess differs from Process inasmuch as it foregrounds (i.e., formulates conventions regarding) externalism and paralogy. In contrast, as Joe Marshall Hardin argues, “Even the most social of process theories . . . are internalist philosophies masquerading as externalist” (“Putting Process into Circulation” 71). Following the transitive property, then, one might say that inventional scholarship had presupposed internalism and thus presupposed a Process approach. Turning once more to Lauer's scholarship, one can observe how an unformulated convention—invention is internalist—can attach itself to a formulated, explicit convention: invention requires Process.

In “Composition Studies: Dappled Discipline” (1984), Lauer famously celebrates the existence of multiple modes of inquiry and suggests that composition does not require paradigmatic unity. Even so, she identifies one research branch that (in her estimation) does require conceptual consensus: invention. She writes, “Social fields like composition studies depend on attributions of consensus that act as preconditions for arguing the validity of any theory. For example, in composition studies, those who advance new theories of invention must presuppose consensus in the scholarly community about the conception of writing as a process” (“Composition” 23). Here, Lauer implies that “writing as process” is so central to invention that there can be no inventional scholarship apart from it. If one were to reject Process, by this logic, one would find oneself unable to study invention.

So far as I know, this invention-requires-Process convention had been unformulated prior to Lauer's statement, even if the converse claim—that Process depended upon inventional research—had been previously expressed (Harrington; Lauer, “Heuristics”; Young and Becker). But, her reasoning helps explain why so few externalist conceptions of invention were considered to be theories of invention at their moments of emergence: they weren't Process approaches. Rather,

sometimes even overtly (e.g., Reither “Writing and Knowing”), those scholars forwarding an externalist vision of invention expressed frustrations with the limit(ation)s of Process. Because I’ll spend an entire chapter expanding on this claim, though, let me turn now to some separate issues here.

In particular, I want to assess (by applying) Kent’s assertion that the historian’s task is to describe “the disintegration of unformulated conventions and the emergence of new ones,” or, stated differently, “how periods develop and how they collapse” (*Interpretation* 44). To do so, I want to examine a text that existed along the borderline between eras, asking how different periodization schemes impact what contemporary readers might understand it to mean or to be saying.

In 1986 Gary A. Olson published “Extending Our Awareness of the Writing Process” in *The Journal of Teaching Writing*. Since that time, the article has only ever been cited once. I am less concerned here in hypothesizing reasons for that silence than I am in periodizing and thereby interpreting the document. Throughout the rest of this book, I’ve tried to triangulate my interpretations of texts against other scholars’ interpretations—especially the most immediate responses. Olson’s text becomes useful here, though, because triangulation isn’t possible. The other texts that I might triangulate my interpretation against simply do not exist.

I should note, at the outset, my reason for selecting this article: I think there are compelling reasons for considering it to be an example of Process scholarship and also of postprocess scholarship. In that light, I plan to analyze the text twice: first as though it were a Process-era document, second as though it were a postprocess-era document. To do so, I’ll need to repeat some passages—but for a reason: as Kent points out, readers interpret texts based off of their genre expectations, such that different categorizations produce different meanings. Ultimately, then, what I do with the text may also justify Kent’s assertion that a text remains in the present to the extent that it is associated with other, important events, thereby “reverberating” historically.

Much like Kent’s early works, which may appear to be surprisingly “practical” compared to his later theoretical texts, many of Olson’s articles in the early-to-mid 1980s are surprisingly “empirical.” At the outset of “Extending Our Awareness” he recounts overhearing an excellent student writer confess to having written an essay while “sky high” on marijuana (227). Intrigued by this insight and curious about its generality, Olson created a questionnaire that included “one open-ended and 19 multiple-choice questions” (228). The first few questions included therein ask students to assess their ability as writers. However, the rest ask about elements of the students’ writing environments and/or their somatic experiences of/while writing: their preferred times of day and locations for writing, whether they listen to music or keep the television on while writing,

whether they consume alcohol or smoke marijuana while writing, and whether they believe that consuming “euphorics” is helpful or harmful to their writing (229-31). He distributed the questionnaire to instructors at seven institutions throughout the southeast United States and received 1,021 anonymous replies.

I think there’s a strong case to be made for characterizing this article as a Process-era document. Considered in this light, Olson is arguing for—as the title indicates—extending scholarly examinations to previously un- or under-examined aspects of the writing process. In his initial framing, he states, “Throughout the last two decades, scholars and educators have become increasingly more sensitive to the fact that composition involves a series of complex, integrated activities and is more than a simple matter of generating a product according to rigid, preestablished strictures” (227). Thus, by Olson’s account Process-era research does not depict writing as narrow or linear. However, he admits that students “introduce elements into the composing process that many of us as educators and scholars might not have considered previously.” And, while acknowledging some foregoing research on “the writer’s composing environment,” he asserts that “no one, to [his] knowledge, has asked questions beyond those related to ‘writing atmosphere,’” that is, the affective mood in the room (228). Even at the close of the document, Olson never quite makes the kind of turn one might expect (based on his later, theoretical work). Drawing insights from his survey responses, he states, “Certainly, the writing process is much more than prewriting, arrangement, revision and the other activities and techniques we have been studying for over two decades,” and, “if this study reveals anything, it is that our present conception of the writing process is limited” (235-36). But, he doesn’t use those insights to ground any grand theoretical pronouncement or even to provide practical applications. Thus, both in terms of his empirical approach and his continuationist framing, Olson appears to be engaging in Process research. The phrase “the writing process” (singular) appears frequently, and, even if the results of his survey show that students’ processes actually differ dramatically from one another, he doesn’t attempt to problematize the idea of the (singular) writing process. The closest he gets is an admission on the article’s first page:

We have failed to remember perhaps the most important fact about the composing process: all writing originates from *human beings*, each with unique writing habits. Studying only the *mechanics* of how writers compose tends to make us forget that writers, particularly the student writers with whom we are most concerned, bring to the composing process a bewildering assortment of personal writing habits that are certain to influence that process, often in complex ways. (227)

When considered as a Process-era article, Olson does present an intriguing new direction for empirical research—learning more about the roles of embodiment and environment on writing—but his work may have relatively limited appeal. When he offers practical applications for his insights, they're relatively mundane: for instructors “to spend the first few class periods of each semester covering proper study habits” and to invite “study skills specialists” to their classes (235) And, besides, I can understand why other scholars did not immediately follow him in asking students about their recreational drug use.

On the other hand, as even the mere presence of this discussion in this book indicates, I think there's a compelling case to be made for “Extending Our Awareness” as a postprocess text. It presents Olson as a scholar colliding with the limits of an internalist Process approach and struggling to conceptualize an externalist approach to writing. After all, the boundaries between periods are not only “fuzzy and indistinct,” but also “characterized by turmoil.” When read in a (proto-)postprocess light, Olson's text takes on a new meaning. The opening sentence, for instance, now seems mildly disdainful: “Lately it has become almost a cliché to speak at professional conferences and in journal articles about the ‘writing process.’” In the paragraph that follows, Olson admits that Process scholars have become “increasingly sensitive to the fact that composition involves a series of complex, integrated activities and is more than a simple matter of generating a product according to rigid, preestablished strictures.” However, in calling the complex recursivity and non-rule-bound (paralogic?) nature of writing a “fact,” and in noting that scholars have become “more sensitive to it,” he doesn't voice much confidence in his peers. He can be read as saying, “I'm glad the rest of you finally noticed this obvious point.” Olson then provides an extensive list of conceptual improvements in Process research, but he frames some other scholars as “studying only the mechanics of how writers compose.” In doing so, he argues, they “fail to remember . . . [that] all writing originates from human beings, each with unique writing habits” and “forget that writers . . . bring to the composing process a bewildering assortment of personal writing habits that are certain to influence that process, often in complex ways” (227). These things, he seems to be saying again, are and should be obvious. But, occupational psychoses produce distortions.

As I'll explore later, complexity has become a key term in ecological and posthuman, postprocess theories of writing, especially in the works of Byron Hawk and Sidney Dobrin. While I don't assume that Olson intends to use the term in precisely the same way, he does use *complex* twice on his article's first page. In both instances, he contrasts a complex model of composing, which he prefers, to a mechanistic one, which he opposes. Again, he never arrives at a fully complex or externalist or ecological approach and he even seems somewhat

dubious about its possibility, but he also moves toward it. After rather mildly acknowledging that “marijuana users believe that use of the drug while writing should not be considered to be a problem,” he follows with a stronger claim: several well-known authors famously wrote “under the influence of various euphorics” and “perhaps [the effects of euphorics on the writing process] should be a matter of great concern (231-32). Similarly, after discussing the widespread use of background media, especially music, while writing, Olson asks, “Is it possible that they can contribute to a writer’s composing process?” In the sentences that follow, he indicates his own answer: yes. He quotes from Dr. Darwin Nelson, Director of Counseling and Testing at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, who claims, “Background music . . . can even help some students concentrate” (233). And Olson also quotes an anonymous survey respondent who concedes, “I can’t write without music” (235).

Thus, Olson ultimately concludes, “The writing process is much more than prewriting, arrangement, revision and the other activities and techniques we have been studying for over two decades.” It is less mechanical, and it’s less governed by the autonomous wills of internalist minds: “writers perform under the influence of external elements such as euphorics and stereos. . . . It may even be possible that the factors discussed in this study can help individual writers compose more effective prose,” even if, Olson admits, “such an assumption seems doubtful.” In any case, he suggests, scholars ought to acknowledge that their “present conception of the writing process is limited,” and they should no longer “restrict [their] investigations to academic and procedural elements of the process of writing” (236). In terms of pedagogical applications, then, “students need to know . . . that their writing environment can affect their performance and that they must, therefore, choose such an environment carefully” (235).

I’ve spent a fair amount of time on “Extending Our Awareness,” which is obscure in multiple senses: unknown, difficult to periodize, and thus difficult to interpret. At this stage, I’d like to turn away from it and back toward Kent’s principles for historical narration. “Extending Our Awareness” has neither been nor yet become an important work in the history of composition and/or writing studies. But, the hierarchical nature of history can help to account for its status as such. Despite having a well-known author, it was not published in a particularly well-known journal. Furthermore, if—as I want to argue—it stands at the end of one (Process) tradition of scholarship, and if it considers aspects of the writing process that other scholars were not at the time interested in contemplating, then one should not be surprised that it did not become associated with “important” events or ideas that might have elevated it, in turn. Quote/unquote disciplinary “importance” is often a measure of a text’s afterlife, its circulation, rather than anything immanent to the text itself or its delivery. Responses pro-

duce importance. And, this article has, to date, represented a historical dead-end, though its status as a precursor to contemporary, ecological models of composing may endow it with relevance and thus citations and thus importance. In this way, it may eventually have an afterlife akin to Richard Coe's 1975 "Eco-Logic for Composition," which was only cited twice before the year 2000 but which, at the time of my writing, has been cited more than forty-five times since the turn of the millennium. To the extent that Coe's article has returned to the scholarly conversation, it is as a result of (not because it was a cause of) renewed interest in ecological perspectives on composing.

In addition, Olson published his text in the Fall 1986 issue of *The Journal of Teaching Writing*. As the title of Chapter 6, "Around 1986," makes clear, I want to argue that this is a crucial year in the history of postprocess. While Process-era scholarship had been trending toward increasingly "social," quasi-externalist-but-still-internalist conceptions of "mind" for quite some time, this is the year when the transformation becomes clear and identifiable. When I published an earlier version of that chapter (Lotier, "Around 1986"), I was unaware of "Extending Our Awareness." But, even if I had known of it, I may not have included it. Still, I cannot help but note its resonance here. And, this sort of resonance—not necessarily a harmonization, but not an echo, either—strikes me as an important but relatively under-explored element of history and thus historical narration. Unformulated conventions still exist despite their unformulatedness, and historians can recover them.

In "Around 1986," I focus on three articles (by James A. Reither, James E. Porter, and Marilyn Cooper, respectively) and a book (by Karen Burke LeFevre) published between 1985 and 1987. Those texts, I argue, present an externalist conception of the mind while examining ideas directly relevant to (what had previously been called) invention. However, in cross-referencing the works cited by those documents, I found only one shared work: Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?* Only eight authors are cited by three of the four documents in question: Patricia Bizzell; Thomas Kuhn; Elaine Maimon, et al.; Roland Barthes; Kenneth Bruffee; Jonathan Culler; Linda Flower (sometimes solo, sometimes with John Hayes); and James Kinneavy. And, from that small sample, only three individual texts are shared: Bizzell's "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty"; Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; and Maimon, et al.'s *Readings in the Arts and Sciences*. LeFevre cites Reither. Reither cites one of Cooper's articles, and she returns the favor by citing his work. Certainly, there's a social constructionist bent to these shared texts and many of them assert perspectives drawn from post-structuralist and/or deconstructionist and/or reader-response-theory. But, I think it's fair to say that Cooper, Lefevre, Porter, and Reither approached an externalist position circa 1986 from (at least somewhat) different paths.

Of course, scholars interact with each other in non-textual ways, and so my focus on citations here is somewhat misleading. The relationship between LeFevre and Reither provides a case-in-point. Though LeFevre does cite “Writing and Knowing,” she provides a much more extensive thank-you to him and two other Canadian scholars (Anthony Paré and Richard Coe) in her book’s acknowledgements, noting, “By debating points, suggesting readings, and directing me to other people with like interests, each has helped me test ideas and bring this work to completion” (*Invention* xiv). Furthermore, *Invention as a Social Act* was published in 1987. However, LeFevre gave a presentation of the same name at the 1986 Inkshed conference, which carried the theme “The Social Context of Reading and Writing,” which Reither organized and attended, and at which he also presented (*Inkshed* 5.2, page 2; *Inkshed* 5.5, page 1). Notably, only one presentation would occur at Inkshed at a time (i.e., it did not feature concurrent sessions). Thus, Reither may have had access to LeFevre’s ideas before their publication in book form. LeFevre, Reither, and Coe also led a full-day, pre-CCCC workshop on “Teaching Writing as a Social Process” in Atlanta on March 18, 1987 (*Inkshed* 5.6, page 9). Finally, as a demonstration of the reciprocal bonds of this relationship: in the acknowledgments section of their 1989 “Writing as Collaboration,” Reither and his co-author, Douglas Vipond, thank LeFevre for helping workshop their paper. Furthermore, they write, “Those who know LeFevre’s *Invention as a Social Act* will recognize in this paper an intertextual debt which is but poorly acknowledged in our few direct allusions to that fine book” (866).

Let us return to the textual record for a few more moments, though. As I’ll explore more fully in the next chapter, whatever else it may be, postprocess represents the incorporation of theories of reading into theories of writing. Reader-response literary theories, as embodied by Fish, and deconstructive literary criticism, as embodied by Culler, strongly influenced externalist approaches to invention. And, of course, Kent was himself a reader-response literary critic, as evidenced by his first monograph, *Interpretation and Genre*. This genealogy has remained largely un-accounted-for in histories of postprocess, although Dwight Atkinson does point toward it, obliquely, in a footnote to his “L2 Writing in the Post-Process Era: Introduction.” Atkinson states, “Another way of looking at what I am calling the ‘post-process’ era in L2 writing would be to think of it as an unpacking and reconceptualization of the ‘coherence’ concept” (5). I find Atkinson’s proposition intriguing and historically tenable, although I believe it applies even better to (what I am calling) postprocess than to post-process. As I note in Chapter 5, Thomas Kent’s proto-postprocess scholarship in the 1980s was generally concerned with cohesion strategies (e.g., the given-new contract). Likewise, Russell Hunt and Douglas Vipond, whom I discuss in Chapter 4, were then researching how readers construct a sense of coherence within texts through “point-driven

reading.” Marilyn Cooper, who figures strongly in Chapter 6, was similarly concerned with coherence (e.g., “Context as Vehicle”) at the time. So were scholars engaged in lateral, but not necessarily post-process research, including the subjects of Chapter 3, Louise Wetherbee Phelps and Martin Nystrand. All of this is to say: though Atkinson provides no documentation for his genealogical claim, I would affirm its validity.

But, I do not think that theories of reading and/or theories of cohesion can fully account for the genealogy of postprocess. Instead, I think another alternative suggests itself as equally plausible: by the mid-1980s, externalist ideas had become or were becoming broadly distributed, perhaps even widely shared. However, before the closing months of 1985, they had been either tacit or nascent. Then, all of a sudden, they weren’t. All of a sudden, there they were: stated, explicit, circulating.

We have now arrived, I suppose, at the contentious portion of this chapter. But I hope that the foregoing analysis has prepared those who might otherwise recoil to reconsider the position I’ll forward. As I’ve mentioned previously, Kent quotes Meyer to argue that “periodization is not . . . merely a convenient way of dividing up the past” but also “a necessity, if the succession of particular events in the past is to be understood as being something more than chronicle.” Were it not for periodization “the past would lose immeasurably both in understandability and in richness,” inasmuch as periodization schemes inform interpretations of historical events (*Interpretation and Genre* 43). As I’ve demonstrated by way of Olson’s article—which has essentially no citational history, and which is thus as close to a disciplinary “blank slate” as one could hope to find—slotting the text into different historical periods produces very different textual meanings.

In affirming the importance of periods, I am all too aware of the predictable objections; however, I would note here an underlying assumption of many of them: that a convention must be formulated or explicitly stated in order to be real or demonstrable. Even Richard Young, who did as much to popularize the term *current-traditionalism* as any other, was forced to remark on this point: “The main difficulty in discussing the current-traditional paradigm, or even in recognizing its existence, is that so much of our theoretical knowledge about it is tacit” (“Paradigms and Problems” 30). Because scholars of the “current-traditional era” didn’t talk about current-traditionalism (under that name) or necessarily always apply its insights uniformly, some critics argue that it did not exist. However, according to the analysis I have been running here, unformulated conventions and periods are closely intertwined. Furthermore, in line with Kent’s work in *Interpretation and Genre*, I have been conceiving of unformulated conventions as the diachronic (i.e., dynamic and culturally determined) elements of historical narration. However, diachronic elements are no less important than



synchronic (static, formal[ized]) genre elements in Kent's estimation.

Although unformulated conventions are extraordinarily difficult to prove in a definitive or empirical sense, I would argue that disciplinary historians of composition have tended to be more comfortable, though still reluctant, to talk about a/the Process period, as opposed to either current-traditionalism or post-process. This predilection, I suspect, stems from a simple fact: nearly from its outset, self-identified Process scholars attempted to formulate rules and models and methods for a Process approach to writing. They created check-lists of criteria for inclusion. In "Teach Writing as a Process, Not Product" (1972), Donald Murray offers ten implications of his pedagogical model. In "The Winds of Change" (1982), Maxine Hairston offers twelve "principal features" of what she had come to call the Process "paradigm." For those who espoused it, Process wasn't (supposed to be) tacit or unformulated. But the various prescriptive formulations were, if anything, remarkably unsuccessful in gaining widespread assent. Because it was institutionally and disciplinarily expedient to be seen as doing Process work, an extremely wide variety of theories and pedagogical practices came to be called Process approaches, some of which seemed eerily similar to those current-traditional ones they had aimed to expel. As a result, for a time, producing taxonomies of Process became an intellectual fad—and, seemingly, one of the easier ways to get published in *College English* or *College Composition and Communication*. One only needed to explain how these various elements were somehow alike yet importantly different. Calling something a "Process" approach came to mean *this is something that people are doing now*. Those who employed what would come to be called "current-traditional" methods did not acknowledge themselves to be doing so, and those employing quote/unquote "Process" approaches did. But, the distinction of one period (Process) relying on a set of formulated "rules" that could not and did not hold and the other (current-traditionalism) relying on unformulated ones that also could not and did not hold strikes me as more or less meaningless in terms of demonstrating that one period did (or did not) exist and the other did not (or did).

To be clear, I am not interested in trying to establish the historical veracity of the existence of current-traditionalism or, for that matter, Process in any sort of objective sense.

I could not be less interested in trying to do so.

What I do want to suggest, though, is a commonsense claim: members of any number of cultures or groups or organizations agree to follow—or, at minimum, submit to—rules and orders that they are never directly taught; norms emerge and evolve without centralized planning.

But, Kent does not merely say that periods exist, or even that periodization schemes inform interpretations. He argues that they are necessary for interpre-

tation. He suggests that they are more than useful; they are essential. Unless one wants to present history as entirely non-hierarchical and undifferentiated—every event of equal importance—one needs to allow that periods exist. And, of course, the disciplinary history of composition and/or writing studies is itself hierarchical. At any given moment, some texts are being cited more than others, and those that were once cited very heavily continue to be cited frequently, even well into the future. Such texts reverberate, remaining within the “present.” But, just as crucially, some texts come back to life or gain new life.

Consider this: every one of the four key texts I will examine in Chapter 7 (“Around 1986”) was cited less frequently in its second full decade in print than in its first, as one might expect. The laws of physics at work: loss, entropy, decay.

But, also consider this: each was cited more frequently in its third full decade than in its second—or even in its first. For two of the four texts, the increase in citations has been massive. To be precise, Cooper’s article was cited ninety-three times in its first decade, seventy-three times in its second, and 261 times in its third. Porter’s was cited seventy-eight times in its first decade, seventy-seven times in its second, and 213 in its third. (Given publication lag-times, I have exempted the year in which each article was published from consideration. Thus, since Cooper’s article was published in 1986, her decades run from XXX7-XXX6, and so on.) Thirty years after publication, each has become increasingly important within the scholarly conversation(s) in which it finds itself. Scholarly readers, I would therefore argue, have come to rely on a new set of unformulated conventions in conducting their own work.

As a corollary, I would suggest that contemporary scholars have come to periodize those 1985–1987 texts and their own scholarly practices differently—whether or not they are aware of doing so. One could trifle over what to call this new period, in which we currently find ourselves—whether *postprocess* is indeed the best term, for instance—and one might likewise argue over its boundaries or borders or defining traits. Those are productive discussions, and I hope that readers will engage with me over precisely these points. But, I hope that readers will agree with me that periods exist because they need to—even if they are social constructions and thus only real in their (reified) effects, not in their essences. And, if periods exist in this virtual sense, then there is no a priori reason to argue against the existence of a postprocess period.

## **POSTPROCESS AS VOCABULARY**

To conclude this chapter, I want to present one other possibility for how to characterize postprocess (and, for that matter, Process, and current-traditionalism, and a host of smaller conceptual enterprises). As I mentioned, Kent wrote *Interpreta-*

*tion and Genre* while still, in effect, a literary scholar. Although it exemplifies an important phase in his thinking about historical interpretation, that text emerged well before he made any concerted turn toward (what would come to be called) postprocess writing theory. While he was developing his externalist, paralogic approach, Kent preferred to talk about disciplinary formations as “vocabularies.”

To my mind, this approach holds considerable merits. First, as compared to a *movement* or *group*, the existence of a vocabulary does not imply common cause or unity. It does not require a shared set of motivations nor a shared set of goals. It doesn't even directly gesture at a group of people—but rather a group of words. At most, the existence of a vocabulary indicates a collective willingness to communicate with the same terms. Second, unlike a period, a vocabulary doesn't imply temporal boundaries. A vocabulary need not have a clearly defined origin or end-point. Third, one can distinguish between vocabularies without arranging them into a hierarchy. Fourth, vocabularies are highly flexible and they lack numerical limits. We continuously add new words to our vocabularies and, although most of us gradually alter our word choices as we age, there's no zero-sum logic of addition and subtraction. New words don't *replace* older ones; old and new can and do exist alongside one another.

In a text that I've quoted previously, his 1991 response to a *JAC* 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). A few years later, he makes the same basic argument but attributes it to another philosopher, Richard Rorty. In *Paralogic Rhetoric*, Kent conceives of shifts (if not necessarily “advances” or “progressions”) in knowledge “in the Rortyan sense of a redescription—a new vocabulary that breaks with an established vocabulary” (67).

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty explains the logic of redescription in concise and direct terms. Opposing correspondence theories of truth, he suggests that no vocabulary ever more fully or more adequately captures (what might conventionally be called) the truth or the real nature of a phenomenon. In contrast, at best, a given vocabulary represents a tenuous social consensus. A group of people has reached a reasonable level of agreement about the usefulness of a given set of words and phrases—whatever minimum level is needed to accept and employ particular terms. But, even if demonstrating the arbitrariness of any given vocabulary is relatively simple, arguing against its continued usage is comparatively harder. Rorty notes,

The trouble with arguments against the use of a familiar and time-honored vocabulary is that they are expected to be

phrased in that very vocabulary. They are expected to show that central elements in that vocabulary are “inconsistent in their own terms” or that they “deconstruct themselves.” But that can *never* be shown. . . . For such use is, after all, the paradigm of coherent, meaningful, literal, speech. (8-9)

To replace an old way of speaking, then, one cannot merely argue against its usefulness. Instead, one can only replace the old vocabulary with the new one by making the latter “look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics.” At its most basic level, the method of redescription is simple: “to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior” to investigate. Quite importantly, this new vocabulary will not present itself as “a better candidate for doing the same old things which we did when we spoke in the old way. Rather, it suggests that we might want to stop doing those things and do something else” (9).

Notably, Rorty suggests that redescription can succeed, but it is most likely to do so among “the rising generation,” rather than among those accustomed to employing certain terms and thus thinking in certain ways and investigating certain phenomena. Applied to society-at-large, this observation is common sense: kids use new “slang” terms far more often than adults do, and they’re willing to cycle through redescription after redescription, seeking out apt vocabularies to account for the subtleties of their experiences. But, I would argue, the same basic phenomenon applies to scholars. Whether the tendency represents a “trained incapacity” or an “occupational psychosis” or something else altogether, academics absorb certain ways of communicating during their training and their early years as researchers, and they prove resistant toward subsequent transitions in vocabulary. So, if you want to gauge the effectiveness of a scholarly effort in redescription, you might not want to look at what happens in the immediate aftermath of an article or book’s publication. Instead, you might want to look at texts written, say, ten or twenty years later.

In his texts from the early 1990s, Kent is quite careful to refer to prior approaches to writing instruction as vocabularies, rather than movements or camps or schools or even theories—a tendency also evident, though somewhat less pronounced, in the works of Olson (“Toward” 8) and Dobrin (*Constructing Knowledges* 23, 67-69). In *Paralogic Rhetoric*, Kent states, “Nowadays, we usually talk about discourse production by employing either an expressivist vocabulary, a cognitivist vocabulary, or a social constructionist vocabulary” (98). He also repeatedly refers to his own “paralogic stance” as a “vocabulary,” noting,

“When we combine Bakhtin’s formulations of genre and open-ended dialogue with Davidson’s conceptions of triangulation and the passing theory, we possess, I believe a powerful vocabulary to describe the activities of reading and writing (66, 156). In “Externalism and the Production of Discourse,” he critiques the assumptions of the “internalism [that] dominates current research in rhetoric” and offers “an alternative vocabulary . . . that allows us to talk about the production of discourse without getting caught up in the old Cartesian dualisms and paradoxes” (“Externalism” 62). In that text’s final section, Kent suggests that externalism will move the field “beyond a Process-oriented vocabulary,” a phrase notably similar to—and yet importantly different from—the subtitle of the 1999 collection he edited, *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm* (69). And he closes that article with some prescient claims,

In fact, we are beginning already (albeit slowly) to talk differently about language, about the production and reception of discourse, and about rhetoric, too, although no one would deny that internalist vocabularies—in the forms of expressivism, cognitivism, and social construction—still dominate the discourse in our discipline. Such a shift toward an externalist vocabulary may not take a Davidsonian turn, and it may not resemble the brand of externalism that I have promoted here. However, I believe that the discipline is nonetheless moving steadfastly toward the rejection of a vocabulary that posits a split between the human subject and the world. (Kent, “Externalism” 70)

In what remains of this book, I hope to show that Kent was correct in each of these three assertions. By the early 1990s, scholars were “beginning already (albeit slowly) to talk differently about language, especially by eschewing internalist vocabularies. But, the Davidsonian terms that Kent employed never quite caught-on. And yet, a longer historical view of the field would demonstrate that scholars eventually did reject “a vocabulary that posits a split between the human subject and the world” (Kent, “Externalism” 70).

As they moved in this direction, though, subsequent scholars tended to avoid talking about *prior theories* and *passing theories* and *triangulation* and *the principle of charity* and instead discussed *ecologies* and *networks* and *new materialism* and *posthumanism* and *embodiment*. Indicating a sense similar to Kent’s—namely, that how we talk about writing will shape how we perceive it—Laura Micciche has recently offered another phrase for consideration. At the conclusion of *Ac-knowledging Writing Partners*, she states, “I hope this book generates a change in thinking and vocabulary from ‘writing about’ to ‘writing with’ to reflect that partnerships abound in relation to writing activity” (111).

Indeed, in the early 2020s, one might profitably consider externalist approaches to writing theory and/or pedagogy a broad (if seldom directly acknowledged) umbrella category. Drawing from the prior insights of Jay Lemke, Jody Shipka presents such a case, although the term *externalism* itself never appears in her *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. Shipka acknowledges that scholars applying insights from actor-network theory; situated, distributed, or social cognition; ecologies or ecosocial semiotics; and mediated activity “all tend to share” two primary insights. “First,” she notes, they accept “a belief that human behavior is social in origin and ‘mediated by complex networks of tools’” (Russell, “Looking” 66; qtd. in Shipka 41). That is, they are how-externalists (and perhaps also what-externalists). Furthermore, Shipka states,

Second, they share a desire to rethink the “person-proper,” to dissolve the boundary between “inside and outside” and “individual and context,” thereby troubling the artificial boundaries separating “the mental and the material, the individual and the social aspects of people and things interacting physically and semiotically with other people and things.” (*Toward a Composition* 41)

In other words, they use their insights about how (externalist) cognition occurs or arises to rethink their notions of what the mind—and thus the person—is or may become. Their externalism leads them toward posthumanism. Writing in the early 2010s, Shipka cited five composition and/or writing studies scholars applying these insights: Clay Spinuzzi, Margaret Syverson, Charles Bazerman, Paul Prior, and David R. Russell (41). These days, one could add many, many more to the list—the authors collected in *Thinking with Bruno Latour in Rhetoric and Composition* (2015), who variously apply actor-network approaches, to give but one obvious example. Because I will discuss those externalist positions, particularly as they pertain to what was once called invention, in Chapter 6, I will lay them aside here.

In this book, I am identifying postprocess as an externalist, paralogic approach to writing instruction. I would note, then, that the same sort of linguistic transformation that Kent prophesied regarding externalism has also transpired regarding paralogy. Subsequent scholars have increasingly accepted that writing (as a form of communicative interaction) is so situation-specific as to be uncodifiable, though they haven’t necessarily employed the noun *paralogy* and/or the adjective *paralogic* to describe their views. This migration occurred slowly, as subsequent scholars re-stated and re-stated each other’s claims. In the course of that transference (and as disciplinary “common sense” has shifted), though, a claim that was once received as heresy has come to appear banal.

To prove my case, let me begin with Kent's assertion that "writing and reading—conceived broadly as processes or bodies of knowledge—cannot be taught, for nothing exists to teach" (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 161). That proposition, which Kent himself would subsequently characterize as "a contentious and underdeveloped position," may be the single most famous (and most controversial, and most misunderstood) claim in the history of postprocess ("Response to Dasenbrock" 106). To be fair, Kent precedes it by explicitly and carefully delineating six fundamental premises that inform his definitions of writing and reading. In short, he identifies reading and writing as uncodifiable (paralogic) forms of communicative interaction that invariably and unavoidably entail guesswork. In other words, his affirmation that reading and writing cannot be taught emerges as the conclusion of an extensive deductive chain. (Really, all of *Paralogic Rhetoric* builds up to it.) Thus, the famously controversial sentence is itself very, very poorly suited for quotation and the decontextualization that it invariably produces. Indeed, Kent follows his assertion about the un-teachability of writing and reading by stating, "In order to be understood on this point . . ." (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 161). Then, he issues a statement that has been very commonly disregarded by his critics.

By Kent's estimation, his argument that writing and reading cannot be taught—given that they are paralogic hermeneutic activities—should not be separated from a related "commonsense observation." He states, "Clearly some of the background knowledge useful for writing—like grammar, sentence structure, paragraph cohesion, and so forth—can be codified and reduced to a system" (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 161). Elsewhere, elaborating on this point, he acknowledges that instructors "certainly may teach systematically and rigorously subjects dealing with how texts operate, how texts shape understanding, and how texts function within different social contexts" ("Principled Pedagogy" 432). However, knowledge of those items cannot guarantee subsequent communicative success; it can, at most, prepare one to become a "better guesser" (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 31). But, becoming a better guesser does, for him, represent an improvement in communicative capacity. So, he accepts the merits of courses in (what is now called) writing studies, or what he himself preferred to call *composition* (as opposed to *writing*).

Though he uses reasonably complex philosophical language to do so, Kent means to indicate a relatively simple point: even mastery of those writing-related matters that *can* be taught (grammar, sentence structure, paragraph cohesion, and so forth) does not guarantee communicative success. Many "fully grammatical" and "perfectly coherent" texts that employ the terminology and discourse norms of a given community still fail to achieve their ends—for any number of reasons. The success or failure of any given act of writing is ultimately a function

of situation-dependent considerations that cannot be prescribed by a generalized theory or model. Thus, on the last page of *Paralogic Rhetoric*, he concludes, “We cannot instruct students to become *good writers* or *good readers* because *good writing* and *good reading*, as transcendental categories, do not exist” (170). Rather, he reasons, “*Good writing* and *good reading* can only mean something like ‘utterances that make good sense in some particular situation’” (170). Even if he doubts that writing, as a generalizable or transferable ability, can be taught once and for all, Kent does still endorse what has come to be called Writing in the Disciplines, an effort to “decenter” writing instruction within the undergraduate curriculum (164).

A few years later, Joseph Petraglia would re-brand what Kent had called *writing classes* with a “freshly minted” acronym, GWSI, or General Writing Skills Instruction, an educational enterprise that “sets for itself the objective of teaching students ‘to write,’ to give them skills that transcend any particular content and context” (“Introduction” xi-xii). Petraglia likewise eschews Kent’s Davidsonian language of hermeneutic guessing and paralogy, and he replaces it with the cognitivist vocabulary of *ill-structured problem-solving*, in which “contingency permeates the task environment and solutions are always equivocal.” Even so, he follows Kent in emphasizing the challenge of generalizing methods across situations. Where Kent expresses doubt that a passing theory can simply or straightforwardly inform a subsequent prior theory, Petraglia instead reasons, “Ill-structuredness means that problems that appear to share salient characteristics and might thus be categorized as similar ‘problem types’ are, at root, fundamentally and unpredictably different” (“Writing” 83). But, even if the verbiage is different, the ideas overlap strongly. Even situations that might seem the same may prove not to be, and you can’t know how they differ until you’re (with)in one. The best you can do is guess and proceed.

Finally, Petraglia follows Kent’s affirmation that composition (or writing studies) can be taught, even if writing cannot. Although, once more, his vocabulary diverges considerably from Kent’s. He concedes, “Nothing I have suggested is intended to deny the importance of teaching the building blocks of literacy,” and yet he concludes, “If we genuinely accept the premise that writing is ill-structured problem-solving, we will be dissuaded from insisting that rhetorical skills can be taught as a generative set of axioms or procedures that can be induced within the confines of the writing classroom” (97-98). Or, stated differently: you cannot teach students to write, once and for all, in a first-year writing class. This is, more or less, Kent’s argument, even if it doesn’t sound like it.

At present, neither Kent’s Davidsonian terminology nor Petraglia’s social-scientific, cognitivist terminology pervades mainstream composition research. But, the fundamental ideas they examined—that writing is not a single, stable, or



generalizable thing; that prior knowledge about The Writing Process is only vaguely useful for directing individual acts of writing; that readers co-construct meaning alongside writers; that communication involves something like guessing or risk-taking—have attained disciplinary centrality. Thus, by my estimation, what Kent could foresee concerning his externalist vocabulary has proven true with reference to his paralogic one: scholars have shifted their vocabularies so as to avow the underlying concept, even if their chosen phrases are not those he initially proposed. To prove this case, I would point to two recent collections.

First, let us consider the 2017 textbook *Bad Ideas about Writing*, which officially declares a series of commonplace Process-era assumptions to be Bad and often presents postprocess ones in their place. Among the category of Bad Ideas, we find the following statements: *you can learn to write in general; reading and writing are not connected; and the more writing process, the better*. In contrast to the Bad Idea that writing-in-general exists, Elizabeth Wardle affirms, “There is no such thing”; rather, “writing is always in particular” (“You” 30). And, she continues onward, “A better notion of how writing works is one that recognizes that after learning scribal skills (letters, basic grammatical constructions), everything a writer does is impacted by the situation in which she is writing. And thus she is going to have to learn again in each new situation” (31). This formulation, I would affirm, follows Kent’s ideas very closely: you can teach background skills, but the success or failure of a subsequent act of writing depends upon decisions negotiated in the act of writing. One must revise prior knowledge (or, in Davidsonian terms, one’s *prior theory*) in light of new information gathered while writing (i.e., one must formulate a *passing theory*). In Wardle’s words, this idea becomes *to write well is “to learn again in each new situation.”*

In contrast to the Bad Idea that reading and writing are disconnected, Ellen C. Carillo directly avows an interpretive conception of communication, one of the three central tenets of postprocess: “To read and to write is to create, to interpret” (“Reading” 41). As I will demonstrate further in the next chapter, postprocess can be construed as an effort to re-incorporate reading theories into writing theories, even if it is seldom construed as such.

In his chapter, which very directly critiques Process approaches to writing, Jimmy Butts presents the ideas avowed by Kent and Petraglia as though they were common sense: “Of course, the idea of following a formula to write a perfect draft is a false construction. We write for specific situations, each unique. A certain set of cognitive steps are involved in writing anything—from academic papers to tweets; however, the set of steps used to compose one thing isn’t necessarily a learnable and reproducible set of steps. We cannot follow a writing process, because writing is messier than that” (“More” 111). In other (Kentian) words: writing is interpretive and situated and thus it cannot help but be paralogic.

Though the particular words and phrases adopted by Kent and Petraglia remain largely absent, their way of talking about writing also appears repeatedly in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies* (2015), a text overtly aiming to canonize a particular vision of writing and concomitant approach to writing instruction. Editors Linda Adler-Kassner and Wardle make Kent's writing/composition distinction in referring to writing as "an activity and a subject of study," and they indicate that writing is not a "basic skill' that a person can learn once and for all and not think about again" ("Metaconcept" 15). Kevin Roozen begins Chapter One with a series of externalist claims, highlighting both semantic-externalist propositions ("No matter how isolated a writer may seem . . . she is always drawing upon the ideas and experiences of countless others") and vehicle-externalist ones ("The social nature of writing . . . also encompasses the countless people who have shaped the genres, tools, artifacts, technologies, and places writers act with as they address the needs of their audiences") (Roozen, et al., "Writing" 17-18). Shortly thereafter, Charles Bazerman identifies the inexorably interactive, negotiated nature of textual meaning: "writing expresses and shares meaning to be reconstructed by the reader." Though not employing the language of guessing, he still foregrounds the author's fundamental uncertainty: "We may not be sure others will respond well to our thoughts or will evaluate us and our words favorably. Therefore, every expression shared contains risk and can evoke anxiety" (22). And Dylan B. Dryer similarly affirms that even an author's best efforts to define terms clearly "will not guarantee perfect understanding." Rather, at most "they can help increase the chances that readers will produce the particular meaning the writer intended" (25). And, to reaffirm: all of this happens *just within the confines of Chapter 1*.

Chapter 4, which carries the title *All Writers Have More to Learn* is even more directly invested in paralogic principles. In its opening sentences, Shirley Rose attacks the commonly held assumption (implicitly cultivated by some Process pedagogies, I might argue) that "writing abilities can be learned once and for always." Two paragraphs later, she notes the difficulty of *transferring* skills across contexts. She also suggests that nothing a writer does nor any knowledge that a writer acquires prior to the act of writing can guarantee that act's success: "Even when strategies work"—that is, in the best case scenario—"writers still struggle to figure out what they want to say and how to say it . . . thus a writer never becomes a perfect writer who already knows how to write anything and everything" (Rose, et al., "All Writers" 59). Indeed, one page later, Rose concludes, "There is no such thing as 'writing in general'; therefore, there is no one lesson about writing that can make writing good in all contexts" (60). In a subsequent section of that same chapter, Collin Brooke and Allison Carr avoid the vocabulary of *hermeneutic guessing* and writing's *paralogic* uncodifiability, but they nonetheless

affirm that “there is no way we can expect [students] to be able to intuit [the] shifting conditions” that would grant them success in any and all writing tasks. As a result, then, “they must have the opportunity to try, to fail, and to learn from those failures” (63). And, two sections later, Doug Downs issues a similar refrain: “In the same way that writing is not perfectible, writing also is not in the category of things that are often right the first time” (66). That chapter ends with some very postprocess-sounding assertions from Paul Kei Matsuda. Matsuda frames “the negotiation of language as an integral part of all writing activities.” Though he eschews the verbiage of *prior theories*, he notes that “writers strive to use a shared code that allows for effective communication,” and he acknowledges the role of readers in co-constructing negotiated meaning. Matsuda also suggest that communicants might need to forego their expectations (i.e., *eschew prior theories for passing theories*) in the act of communication itself (69).

All of this is not to say that *Bad Ideas about Writing* and *Naming What We Know* are postprocess texts, exactly. Indeed, both include numerous statements that postprocess thinkers might criticize, even some offered by the scholars just listed. And, furthermore, some of the scholars just listed—most notably Matsuda and Wardle—have expressed their skepticisms toward postprocess publicly. If one wished to know what postprocess has been and might become, *Bad Ideas* and *Naming What We Know* would not be very good places to turn. (Instead, one could keep reading this book.) All of this is to say, though, that a way of talking about writing that traces its roots back through discernibly postprocess texts pervades those books, even if original phrases posited by Kent, Petraglia, and their ilk have been replaced with others conforming more closely to contemporary needs and demands. What was once the source of intense controversy and even scorn—Kent’s claim that you cannot teach writing—has been re-phrased and re-phrased until it achieved palatability, even something like dominance.