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Negotiating "post" era writing pedagogies

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NEGOTIATING "POST" ERA WRITING PEDAGOGIES

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by
Hannah Sloan Holbrook

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how post-process theories are being defined, negotiated, and enacted in composition classrooms. While recognizing that most composition instruction remains shaped by modern and process oriented theories, this research asks how post-process considerations might be currently informing teaching practices in some classrooms. To research this question, composition scholars familiar with “post” era concepts were asked to define post-process, tell how this definition informs their teaching practices, and to provide examples of post-process enactments and/or activities in their own classrooms. Scholars responded to an initial questionnaire and engaged in follow-up email conversations regarding these issues. This project discusses the findings of these interviews within the context of contemporary composition concerns, which include the purpose of writing instruction, the subjectivities of student writers, and the conflicting understandings of “reality” and knowledge.
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We are in the midst of radical intellectual, social, and political change. We are shifting paradigms (maybe even megaparadigms) from those of a modernist nature to those of a postmodernist nature: post-structural, post-philosophical, post-patriarchal, post-industrial, post-national. [. . . ] We are entering a new, eclectic, "post" era. In this era, the past will not disappear but will be reframed continually in the light of an ongoing, changing present. (Doll 157)

"[We] cannot start from nowhere when we write" (Kent 2). The question becomes where to start. In this thesis, I concern myself with the "post" era in Composition Studies, but where does the story begin? I like history, evolution, continuums, and linear sketches, so do I start at "the beginning"? I also like patterns and paradigms, drawing correlations, finding associations, and observing contexts, so do I start somewhere in the middle and
describe the shapes around me? On reflection, I realize I have no choice but to start from where I am and see where my inquiries lead me – mesmerized by the swinging ropes, I jump in. My goal in this chapter is to provide, and situate myself in relation to, a context for the conversation at hand.

Almost every student of composition has encountered some version of the following story: “Since the 1960s, the discipline has experienced paradigmatic shifts from current-traditional rhetoric to process and post process theories. . .” (Gale 4). I enter this scene as an amalgam of all three “movements”; time has not clearly defined beginnings and endings to these paradigms, and I am living proof. Growing up, I experienced both current-traditional rhetorical influences and process generalizations at different times and from different teachers - and often as mixed pedagogy. In college, I encountered post-process ideas of subjectivity, dialogue, and situatedness, but rarely. And, as a graduate student preparing to teach, I face the dilemma of whether to design “a dialectical and dialogical pedagogy” or offer students “clear directions regarding the traditional form of the academic theme” (Goleman 54). I hope to negotiate between them as I answer
institutional demands in ways that remain open to post era contingencies and teaching strategies that engender new relationships between teachers, students and writing. The ropes are swinging.

I have lived in the current-traditional-slash-process space for most of my life, but in light of an “ongoing, changing present,” revision of that space might be in order. On one hand, I like shapes that shift and finding ways out of boxes and slipping into new perspectives. On the other, while I love thinking about new paradigms, I prefer moving through familiar spaces. So, like the field of Composition Studies, I hesitate, perhaps rightfully, to move fully into new and “reframed” spaces without prior investigation. My intrigue with post-process as pedagogy began when I read Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch’s provisions against a post-process pedagogy (the inherent paradox of a pedagogical agenda based on anti-foundationalism is that it is no longer anti-foundational); rebellious at heart, I couldn’t help but wonder: Yeah, but, what could a “post” era, post-process pedagogy look like, and might it serve student writers better than our current practices? Surely, I thought, there must be evidence of post-process-informed pedagogies out there. And, Breuch’s initial caveat aside,
she believes post-process "offers valuable pedagogical principles that guide" teacher practices (118). This thesis investigates these principles, even the agendas, and their current applications by asking scholars and teachers to define post-process, and then to describe classroom pedagogies informed by post-process.

First, though, some background. In the 1960s, American scholars of writing began to move away from current-traditional rhetoric, described as a "devotion to a small set of modes and error-free prose," toward what came to be known as the "process movement" (Schilb 179). The process movement, described as the "distillation of the practices in which all 'good' writers engage" (Pullman 23), was valuable in moving students toward a relationship with the process of writing and away from the mastery of a product. If I could leave the description there, I might not feel the need to discuss post-process, but while process teachers were teaching students to reconnect with the process of writing, the emerging field of Composition was also moving toward disciplinarity, which may have stunted the field's ability to consider alternative ideologies and the many contexts in which writers write. Simultaneously, as I explain in the next chapter,
Composition Studies answered the institutional imperative for repeatable teaching strategies, and process "ultimately degenerated into lockstep formulas" (Schilb 179). Nonetheless, as mentioned, process scholars made valuable progress in the field, which "opened up a whole universe of considerations besides the surface features of text" (179).

So, even as Composition Studies has moved away from current-traditional rhetoric, it has continued to be challenged by its long history as a skills-based subject, "invented purely to train students in the mechanics of language" and to prepare them for the "specialized demands of higher education and the [. . .] circumstances of corporate life" (Schilb 177-78). This (institutional) imperative still exists, and, as such, the field of Composition Studies continues to be "a product of modernism" (178). In addition to the utility of language, modernism has dictated writer personality. Linda Brodkey depicts the modern writer as "a solitary writer alone in a cold garret," which helps create "a thoroughly modern romance" (61-62) that ignores relationships to people and texts. Indeed, the early process movement nurtured just such a writer by focusing on authentic, private, expressivist writing. Although much of process scholarship
now admits that writers write within a social context, the significance of that knowledge is still debated. And although social epistemic versions of rhetoric are more common and many scholars believe the mastery of modes to be unhelpful, pedagogical practices still run the gambit; I have personally witnessed the teaching of modes and expressivism (private writing) within the past several years. While "reasonable people may disagree" on these things, it should not be overlooked that post-modern era questions and versions of language, knowledge, and truth complicate modern conceptions of writers and texts.

As suggested, the past two decades have offered "serious efforts to view writing in social contexts" (Schilb 179), but Composition Studies still finds itself, mostly, ensconced in the modernist paradigm - a "pedagogical enterprise" of "general writing skills instruction" (Petraglia 49). It is difficult, says Faigley, "to connect the claim that we live in an age of fragmentation, multiplicity, drifting, plurality, and intensity to how writing is taught in the United States today" (Fragments 15). Allison Fraiberg agrees that a "radical divide" exists "between what happens in composition research (social, post-process) and what
happens in composition classrooms (expressivist process)” (172). Part of the reason may include what Faigley describes as “the proliferation, fragmentation, and rapid consumption of scholarship in composition studies” (Fragments 16). Although this description suggests “postmodern chaos,” Faigley says there are regular sites of scholarly debate; a “chief” site in the ongoing conversation considers “the subjectivity of the student writer” (16). The issue of subjectivity (where the writer sits in relation to text and to other language users) becomes a key focus in post era scholarship, reframing the act of writing from mechanical textual (re)production to an awareness of the contextual complexities of language. It is this “chief” site, which tends to examine relationships between writer, language, and others, that seems to underlie many of the potential changes in the composition classroom.

During the era of current-traditional rhetoric, writing was all but authorless - what mattered was an effective (in terms of eliciting a desired effect from an intended audience), well-structured product reflective of some appropriate model. Early process scholarship changed the focus from product to process, which in turn shifted
some of the focus away from audience and toward the author. But who was this author? At first, this writer was either a novice or an expert, and her primary goal was to discover, know, and express her authentic self. This writer was modern. A modernist definition of an individual is “a coherent consciousness capable of knowing oneself and the world” (Faigley, Fragments 16). This autonomous writer perceives the world as separate and outside of herself—this author is “removed from any specific setting and [is] represented as living outside of history and having no investment in particular issues” (15). Later, when scholarship explored the social aspects of communication, this modern writer began to consider others as she expressed herself. When an awareness of social contexts entered the writing scene, then, this individual still existed but became cognizant of others in the room. For example, the modern but socially aware writer includes rhetorical moves in her writing that take into consideration her audience, including socio-historical “facts.” This individual writer imagines and constructs audiences for the purpose of producing exacting texts. This writer is positioned in context with others, but
ignores the intersubjective nature of her interactions with those others.

A postmodern definition of individualism includes the ability to "change identities at will because identities are acquired by what one consumes" (16). Although Faigley here identifies "consumer capitalism" and "consumer goods" as prompting these changes (16), the idea of consumption can extend to knowledge and language: an individual is changed by his or her consumption of language, interpersonal communications, culture, and values. In other words, the post-modern individual is "reframed continually in the light of an ongoing, changing present" (Doll 157). In post-modernism, "contingency abounds," and "all is relational" (Doll 158); the post-modern individual, then, is contingent and relational. This concept of individualism alters the modern conception of a writer from someone who "knows" oneself and "knows" others, to someone who is only capable of "interpreting" oneself and others contingent on the communicative moment. Thomas Kent, speaking of individuals as writers, says that "we are never alone; we write always in a relation with others" (1). In this relational scenario, writers are also in relation with an ever-changing context. The post-modern writer, then,
must interpret audiences rather than judge them, and will be cognizant of the situatedness of her own consciousness.

In 1986, Faigley stated that social views of writing "range from those urging more attention to the immediate circumstances of how a text is composed to those denying the existence of an individual author" ("Competing Theories" 535). He subsequently states his position that "human language (including writing) can be understood only from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual" (535). This social view rejects "private consciousness" and includes more than "simply paying more attention to the context surrounding a discourse" (535). This particular picture of the "social view" of language cannot be placed distinctly in a process or post-process model, or in a modern/post-modern box, though it does move away from the early process conception of an "authentic" self and toward a more post-process examination of the many implications of social contextuality. And, just as there is no one process stance on the social view, post-process theories present a variety of understandings of what it means to write within a social context. Kent states that "most post-process theorists" hold that "writing is public," while some "expand this claim" to say that "we
could not write at all if it were not for other language users and a world we share with others" (1). As mentioned earlier, "[. . .] the subjectivities that teachers of writing want students to occupy" has been one of the "chief" sites of scholarly attention over the last twenty years (Faigley, *Fragments* 17). Those subjectivities are determined, in part, on where a teacher falls on the social continuum.

One thing shared across the social view continuum is caution. For example, Faigley discusses how Donald Stewart, a principal advocate of "authentic voice" pedagogy, criticizes "social constructionist philosophy and collaborative learning" for its association with "conformity and totalitarianism" (*Fragments* 17); and Faigley cautions that, historically, "consensus often brings oppression" (*Competing Theories" 538). Other cautionary tales suggest particular perspectives. For example, a modernist (perhaps process) view of the social aspects of writing will be careful to avoid relativism, holding that individuals are capable of knowing themselves and then of understanding the social context within which they operate - particularly the audience for whom one writes. This view of audience would hold that others are
individuals at specific historical moments and in specific relations with others and with the world and [...] because these moments and relations change, no process can capture what writers do during these changing moments and within these changing relations. (Kent 1-2)

A post-process teacher, then, would be concerned with a student occupying a subject position that recognizes that while academic discourse is socially constructed, the exigencies of the moment are relational; within the institutional setting, therefore, students would be cognizant of a relational reality while navigating prescribed communicative artifacts such as Standard English and academic discourse.

In addition to complicating subject positions and communicative acts, post-modernism brings into question the nature of reality itself. The cliché "perception is reality" reflects the influence of post-modernism on society. My father, an old hippy doing time as a corporate vice-president, used the phrase in the boardroom a few years ago and fast became the president's million-dollar baby. Mainstream post-modern sentiments aside, however, a modern, Enlightenment-tinged reality of objective truths
and a static world lures us with the certainty of "knowing." Within these competing realities, teachers and students continue to negotiate a common ground. As I have noted, Composition Studies has advanced from a purely modern endeavor toward a field that invites some uncertainty, but it continues to struggle within the institutional framework to accommodate different views. So far, writing instruction has toyed with the idea of a subjective writer, but another consideration looks at how knowledge is constructed. A "subjective" writer asserting truths still overlooks the possibility of a contingent reality and intersubjective knowledge building. While modernist prose represents the "truth" of mainstream academic discourse, perhaps alternative practices will accommodate those who see truth and reality as more complicated.

I do not mean to present post-modernism as "the way to go" in the composition classroom (remember, I'm comfortable in old familiar spaces). But post-modernism has nevertheless been influential in Composition Studies over the past ten years, shaping a variety of classrooms in a variety of ways. Claims that Western culture has "radically changed" over the last thirty years must of
theories of writing attempt to examine, and what I attempt to observe in classroom practices.

The link, however, between post-process theories and possible practices has not been clearly established. As a community, we've been really interested in theorizing about post-modern issues of language and writing, but we have mixed feelings about how it informs our pedagogy, and this is the space we continue to negotiate. One of the complications considers how scholars in the field view the act of theorizing and its possible role in shaping pedagogy differently.

In keeping with post-modern critiques of theory as "totalizing, essentialist, and a residue of Enlightenment thinking," post-process appears to privilege what Gary Olson calls "theorizing" (8). Theory, which hopes "to arrive at some kind of truth," is replaced by theorizing, "the act of engaging in critical, philosophical, hermeneutic speculation" (8). With this move, we deprivilege "master narratives" and "theory building," and instead privilege the "local," where "useful 'knowledge' is generated" (7-8). This post-modern move invites critique and conversation within the profession. For example, Raúl Sánchez, a professor at the University of Utah, suggests
that post-process theory "is less a distinct theory of composition than it is the application of pre-existing theoretical inclinations." He says, "[. . .] it's not clear to me that, beyond the level of assertion [. . .], writers who espouse 'post-process' theory have made this case, theoretically" ("Re: You Say Theory"). Sánchez believes in "careful and rigorous" theorizing defined as "arguments based on propositions" in the effort to analyze "an existing theory" or construct "a new one" ("Re: You Say Theory"). His description seems to echo objective, modern theory building that seeks to arrive at generalizable truth (although he resists such categorization). From a modernist standpoint, "Theory" is seen as a noun, and we are enticed "into believing we somehow have captured a truth, grasped the essence of something" (Olson 8). Olson describes the post-modern alternative:

Theorizing, the verb, can be productive (so long as a "theory" is not the objective) because it is a way to explore, challenge, question, reassess, speculate. Theorizing can lead us into lines of inquiry that challenge received notions or entrenched understandings that may no longer be productive; it can create new vocabularies for
talking about a subject and thus new ways of
perceiving it. (8)

I recognize that capturing truth and grasping the essence
of life may be the goal of many people; I only wonder how
we might consider the alternative - that truth and essence
are not fixed. This important modern/post-modern
negotiation affects both Composition’s identity as a
discipline and how we teach students to view knowledge
building - will we have them continue with Enlightenment-
variety truth building, or will we have them engage in
ongoing post era forms of inquiry that support complicated,
critical, and nuanced understandings of language and
knowledge? These are the swinging ropes...

In addition to the varying ways we see knowledge
construction, some scholars (from across the process-post-
process continuum), have reservations about prematurely (if
at all) applying theory (or theorizing) to practice.
Sánchez, for example, believes in establishing a link
between theory and research before moving on to the
question of theory and practice. He says on this subject
that "[Composition Studies'] talk about 'theory and
practice' is riddled with problems and doomed to failure.
And, more specifically, perhaps the main problem arising
from composition studies' misunderstanding of the function of theory is the very idea of talking about 'theory and practice' rather than, say, 'theory and research'" ("Re: You Say Theory"). There is no doubt that many scholars on the modern/post-modern continuum agree that research is a good thing (note that Petraglia and Ewald in the next few chapters refer to research that continues to explore the complexities of language and the future of educational paradigms). Beyond those who see a link between theory and practice (with research acting as a buffer), others believe that theory and practice should remain separate scholarly endeavors. Countering this last idea, James Sosnoski says, "I am not concerned with protecting the 'integrity' of a theory. Protecting theory from the classroom seems to me a very unpostmodern attitude. Why protect theory? To insulate it from contamination of persons?" (200). So, a negotiation continues in this post era - how do we construct knowledge (modern theory building or post-modern theorizing), when do we inform our practices with that knowledge (after careful and rigorous research or when it has become mainstream discourse - even speculation), and is there a reason to "protect" theory from practice altogether?
Regardless of how we define composition theory and theorizing, and even as we continue to research such things as language and the nature of knowledge building, Sánchez believes that "one probably shouldn't justify practice with theory (big T or little t) in the first place. One should evaluate classroom practices by how well they help students achieve desired outcomes, whatever those might be in a given situation" ("Re: You Say Theory"). When asked to expound on this, Sánchez outlines a relationship between theory and practice:

Think of outcomes as an extension of pedagogy, or as the endpoint of pedagogy. If you do that, then you can say that both pedagogy and outcomes should be derived from (or based on) research, which in turn is informed by (while also informing) theory. Outcomes and the pedagogy devised to reach them are applications of the knowledge generated by research and theory. ("Re: Clarification")

Although this interplay sounds reasonable, post-modern and post-process theories might reject such a system. They might agree that theory (big T or little t) shouldn't justify practice, but for different reasons. Because
knowledge and truth are seen as contingent, interpretive, and situated, then basing pedagogy on an outcome, regardless of how that outcome has been decided, poses a paradoxical dilemma - it suggests grand narratives, which restrict post era contingencies. (And yet, recognizing post era contingencies could itself be seen as an outcome of post-process theories - an admitted problem with applying these theories to practice - once applied, they become subject to the very systematic, outcome-based grand narrative they sought to deprivilege.)

Whether a theory has been rigorously researched or whether it represents the type of theorizing espoused by post era scholars, and regardless of when or whether it emerges as a desired outcome, it still represents ideology. For example, much has been discussed about critical pedagogies and their different incarnations (including ties to post-process), and the often privileged status Composition Studies gives political agency (as an outcome). If we admit that critical writing is a desired outcome, we seem to be claiming truth. Faigley writes that “postmodern theory attacks the discourses claiming the status of knowledge and truth,” and that we can examine “the motives for engaging” in that critique. As an example, he quotes
Kate Soper: "Why [. . .] lend ourselves to the politics of 'difference' if not in virtue of its enlightenment - what it permits in the way of releasing subjects from the conflations of imperializing discourse and the constructed identities of binary oppositions?" (Fragments 21). This "desire to understand the world and change the world on the basis of [postmodern] awareness" contradicts the no-grand-narratives motto of the post era. Post-process writings also engage in the notion of subjectivity against the backdrop of questioning power structures. Certainly this complicates the scene and poses a paradox: Who are we to tell them. . . . And yet, I don't believe the post conversation should be ended or dismissed out of hand; instead, a negotiation will continue between the grand narrative of the few who get to objectify and transmit generalizable knowledge, and the admitted grand narrative of the many who get to participate and contribute to the construction of an ever-subjective knowledge - and who knows, maybe one day we will find a way to escape grand narratives altogether (if that's what we want). For now, however, the question of whose ideology works best for students, acknowledges post era changes in society, and
meets the demands of the institution will have to be negotiated.

In the following chapters, I will look at ways the post era has already influenced writing pedagogy. Examples of classroom practices, including assignments, will answer how some pedagogical scenes are changing and will serve to illuminate post-process possibilities within the modern-post-modern negotiation. First, however, I will discuss possible definitions of post-process theory.
CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING POST-PROCESS

How is post-process defined, and by whom? Kent, in his introduction to Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm, says that post-process, which breaks "with the still-dominant process tradition in composition studies" holds "that the writing act is public, thoroughly hermeneutic, and always situated and therefore cannot be reduced to a generalizable process" (1, 5). Although he offers this summary, Kent leaves room for others' definitions by intentionally employing "many, most, or some" when he refers to "post-process theorists as a group" because they may "understand and represent post-process theory somewhat differently than the way [he frames] the notion" (5). Kent admits there may be disagreements about the "post" in post-process, but he believes these scholars see "the process tradition giving way to something new, perhaps not a new coherent 'tradition' in the modernist sense [.. .] but certainly a new way of talking about writing and about what writers do" (5). Because interpretations of post-process range from a full-out rejection of process to an extension of process,
and because the available scholarship invokes various incarnations of the term, I decided to ask teachers and scholars in the field of composition how they define post-process – in effect, I wanted to know the ways in which teachers familiar with post-process were “talking about writing and about what writers do.” Also, because this thesis ultimately looks at pedagogical enactments of these definitions, the following discussions often draw relationships between these definitions and the pedagogies they may point to.

During my initial research, I identified a handful of scholars who seemed willing to discuss post-modern and post-process theories, including their possible implications for teaching practices. Realizing that these scholars were spread across the United States, I thought the best way of “talking” with them might be via email. In the name of efficiency, I decided that an initial questionnaire might help scholars understand my questions, delve into the subject, and open further lines of inquiry. So, rather than begin with multiple, open-ended conversations, I asked scholars to address my questionnaire with the understanding that we might engage in follow-up discussions. The interview questionnaire, which I modified
slightly over the months, primarily asked participants for their definition of post-process, asked how their definition influenced their teaching, and asked them to describe teaching practices or activities they considered related to post-process. Scholars were also invited to offer additional comments or feedback, which many of them did. Depending on time constraints, some scholars ended their participation with the questionnaire, some entertained one or two follow-up emails, and some engaged me in lengthy back and forth emailed conversations. The responses I received were informative, challenging, and thoughtful.

Sánchez, the first of my respondents, defines post-process “as a theory of interpretation” (Interview). Continuing, he says that from what he has read, post-process “stands in for ‘hermeneutic’ when applied to composition studies” (Interview). When asked whether he means Donald Davidson’s triangulation theory (the interplay between what we know, what others know, and knowledge of shared objects) as discussed by Sidney Dobrin (140-42), he says “not specifically,” explaining that Davidson’s is “perhaps a British version of a continental theory which flows from Heidegger and Gadamer in the first half of the
20th century” (“Re: Questionnaire”). Together, these theories "create what comes to be called 'philosophical hermeneutics’" (“Re: Questionnaire”). Continuing, Sánchez states that in “English studies, specifically in theory, [. . .] this view of hermeneutics has become an assumption rather than a point to be argued” (“Re: Questionnaire”). Further, it seems to Sánchez that “this assumption is either false, or it is so generally true as to be trivial” (“Re: Questionnaire”). And, bringing it back to post-process, Sánchez asserts, “The notion of hermeneutics I see deployed by post-process theory fits squarely within this tradition. So, for me, post-process notions (or theories) are built on weak foundations” (“Re: Questionnaire”). Curious about Sánchez’s statement that English studies’ assumptions about hermeneutics, and therefore about post-process, might be “so generally true as to be trivial,” I said, “I think what you are saying is that [Kent’s assertions of writing as public, situated, and interpretive are] too obvious, and nothing new, to be a theory?” Sánchez responded: “[. . .] You’re right: assuming this case were to be made [theoretically], the response would rightly be, 'well duh’” (“Re: You Say Theory”).
If, as Sánchez suggests may be the case, writing is public, interpretive, and situated, and we can take that for granted, then why (theory and research debates aside) are post-process enactments not common in the classroom? Perhaps because, while it may appear simple to enact a process version of the three moves, it is not as simple to consider them in a post-process light. It is easy, if one believes in objectivity, to know others in the room (public), interpret (in stereotypical fashion and in some predictable way) the context, and to situate oneself (for example, “Here’s what I have to say in this context”). These would be examples of things we may take for granted in contemporary writing classrooms. Post-process, however, considers these moves from a contingent and relational standpoint. First, writing is public, but the public is not pre-determinable or possibly even knowable. Second, a post-process version of interpretation complicates the assertion that “an individual comes to know an object through interpretive moves with other interpreters” by contending that “the processes by which we name objects are not codifiable into any recognizable or identifiable process since access to the world, to objects, to each other is afforded through the randomness of discourse”
(Dobrin 141). If, considering the above, "there are no codifiable processes by which we can characterize, identify, solidify, or grasp discourse, and hence, there is no way to teach discourse, discourse interpretation, or discourse disruption" (140), then post-process departs from all previous traditional writing pedagogy in general, and from process pedagogy specifically, leaving application of post-process at question. Finally, that writers are situated is, as Kent says, an idea "accepted by process theorists just as much as by post-process theorists" (3). That "writers must have something to communicate in order to communicate" is only a beginning for post-process theorists, though. While students in a process classroom might begin to write when they have "something to communicate," post-process suggests "having something to communicate" is only the beginning of the interpretive moment. Armed with a "cohesive set of beliefs about what other language users know and about how our beliefs cohere with theirs," we "start to 'guess' about how others will understand, accept, integrate, and react to our utterances" (4). What Kent seems to be saying here, is that what we come ready to communicate is unforeseeably and inescapably changed by our interactions with other language users.
This is quite different from autonomous self-expression, and dimensionally different from communicating with the mere knowledge that we are socially constructed, as if construction is something that took place sometime in the past and now we only have to figure out how others have been socially constructed and communicate to them. Post-process, then, acknowledges and reacts to a fluid, "ongoing, changing present" which is not generalizable or systematic (Doll 157). As Kent says, "this hermeneutic dance that moves to the music of our situatedness, cannot be fully choreographed in any meaningful way, for this dance, our ability to improvise, to react on the spot to our partners, matters most" (5). For reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter (see Petraglia), unsystematic, unchoreographed pedagogy is problematic within the traditional academic setting.

A broader, more contingent (than Sánchez's) definition of post-process comes from Porter. Beginning with an analogy, Porter says the question (what is post-process?) reminds him of Jacques Derrida’s answer to the question, "What is rhetoric?” (Interview). The answer, something to the effect that “rhetoric is what rhetoricians do,” according to Porter, “recognizes the contingent – and
therefore contestable - nature of the ‘object’ being defined” (Interview). This was a good beginning, I thought, to a question about a term as loaded as “post-process.” Concluding, Porter says that post-process theory is “a convenient label for the (open-ended) set of all ‘post-process theories’ that have been produced by particular scholars who identify themselves as ‘post-process theorists’” (Interview). Porter then expounds on the subject by asking a “more difficult question”: “What is the common attribute shared by theories (or theorists) that would lead us to apply the same adjective, ‘post-process,’ to them?” (Interview). He answers:

[A] post-process theorist is a person (1) who believes that the “writing process movement” has failed (and necessarily had to fail) to find the grail of a universal set of cognitive skills that underlie the performance of “expert writers” and that could be systematically taught to “novice writers”; (2) who believes that the people who belonged to the “writing process movement” actually had that goal (i.e., you can’t be “post” to a movement that never existed); and (3) who, rather than abandoning all thought about writing,
attempts, in a systematic way (whether it be speculative, empirical, or a combination thereof) to understand - and to share with other people that understanding - the contingent factors that enable and shape the manifold ways in which particular people in particular circumstances inscribe particular signs upon particular "surfaces" (e.g., papyrus, paper, computer screen). (Interview)

So Porter here describes post-process theorists as those who potentially break with process theorists who have or had as their goal a universal and repeatable understanding of "what writers do." But rather than surrendering to extreme relativism, where our ability to understand anything about writing is impossible, post-process theorists, suggests Porter, commit themselves to understanding, contingently, what they can about language and language-users. This is a subtle point, and an important one. Many critique post-process for its supposed inability to become pedagogy, thereby dismissing ways that post-process might inform pedagogy - Porter's belief that post-process theorists must not necessarily be relativists allows scholars to posit understandings that may be shared
in composition classrooms. Some who make the criticism that post-process cannot inform pedagogy may be working from within an old paradigm, assuming that writing pedagogy must concern itself solely with the imparting of specific and knowable skills. This perspective is best understood in light of Composition’s long-standing alliance with Social Scientism.

In “Is There Life after Process?” Joseph Petraglia points to ways the process movement in Composition Studies used social science concepts to legitimize its endeavors. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the process movement was “devised as an antidote to the current-traditional paradigm in writing that focused on the written product rather than the means by which the product was produced” (Petraglia 50). Simultaneously seeking validity as a discipline, however, scholars of the process movement understood they “could not stop at the level of speculation; [they] had to offer a regime” (51). Enter Social Scientism, which “permitted [writing] specialists to make the very important claim that an individual’s writing process not only could be understood but also could be fixed” (52). Petraglia concludes:
Sacrificing a growing awareness of the situatedness and complexity of writing to the greater gods of process enabled theorists, researchers, and teachers to do something they very much wanted to do: develop strategies and heuristics that were applicable to general writing-skills instruction. (52)

Petraglia’s view of the motives of the process movement seem to answer Porter’s second definition – that the goal of process was to discover a “universal set of cognitive skills” that explained how writers write. It would be narrow-sighted to believe this was the only motive or goal of the process movement; however, this concern may have overshadowed others in the rush to disciplinarity.

Porter’s suggestion that post-process has as its goal the understanding of “the contingent factors that enable and shape the manifold ways” writers write, then, realigns the field to the “awareness of the situatedness and complexity” (Petraglia 52) of language and language users once sacrificed by the process movement. Petraglia correlates this move to post-process with a move from “Old” Social Scientism to “New” Social Scientism. This New Social Scientism has “evolved to meet the challenges the
hermeneutic turn has presented" (54). Petraglia cites "Reason and Rowan" as dubbing recent changes as the "'New Paradigm': a sometimes radical theorization of empirical methodology that seeks to accommodate our postmodern skepticism toward foundations while retaining its scientific essence" (55). Of course, as Petraglia points out, this new paradigm is "not a paradigm at all, but a shorthand for an eclectic assortment of frameworks devised for the study of human activity" (55). So, the argument of what makes pedagogy can now be reframed to take into account the "intersubjective nature of knowledge and learning" (54). New Social Scientism sees "writing as a socio-cognitive phenomenon dependent upon historical and cultural context," and as a research endeavor, hopes for the "generation of [a] deeper and more complex understanding of writing and its contexts" (55). While post-process and the new social scientism cannot possibly answer to an old paradigm's imperative of pedagogical exactness, they can more honestly and fully explore what writers do when they write. So, while some may critique post-process as falling subject to a radically relativistic (and therefore useless) view of writing, some, like Porter and Petraglia, suggest that post-process (and this new
social scientism) can seek complicated understandings of what writers do, which I find to be a wholly useful endeavor. Indeed, I question why, as a field, we would ignore these understandings of language at the pedagogical level. Perhaps the prospect of “redefining how we envision the very nature of pedagogy,” and the knowledge that these theories might lead us to “radically reconceptualize not only how and what we teach, but what we think teaching is” (Dobrin 134-35) is daunting, but if the alternative is to perpetuate an artificially constructed writing pedagogy of mastery and assertion, then the more constructive move is to subject ourselves to the growing pains of progress.

Echoing Petraglia’s assertion that process pedagogy sacrificed an awareness of the complexity of writing, David Foster, Professor Emeritus at Drake University, sees post-process as “a collective resistance to an overconfidence in cognitive learning theory, leading to efforts to re-mystify notions of cognitive function and broaden understanding of the contexts of writing and its work” (Interview, Part One). Continuing, Foster says,

As a broadening force, the post-process idea has enabled us [to] look far more attentively at cultural, political, gender-related, and
historical forces which shape students’ development as learner-writers. Under the post-process banner, our understanding of how these forces shape writing and learning continues to evolve [...]. (Interview, Part One)

I found Foster’s use of the “banner” metaphor helpful in thinking about post-process “theories.” Like Kent, who allows for multiple interpretations of post-process, Foster seems to see post-process as an opportunity to address “what writers do” without feeling the need to assert a particular “right” way of doing things. Instead, Foster sees the post-process conversation as “a broadening force” to better understand “writing and learning.”

Continuing the idea of generating a “deeper and more complex understanding” of what we do when we write, Nancy DeJoy, of Milliken University, sees “post-process theory as an opportunity to continue enriching and improving our field’s theories and practices of writing as a process” (Interview). Now, obviously this definition assumes that writing is a process – a proposition not shared by some post-process theorists. For example, Dobrin discusses at length how a “process philosophy” throughout Western history has guided “human inquiry” (135). “As recent
postmodern critique has noted,” says Dobrin, “these processes have been distinctively linear and frequently phallocentric” (135). In summary, process philosophy, having informed the process movement in writing, “seeks to codify the ‘real’ world” (135). These descriptions of process would suggest that an artificial construct is placed on language users as they write. But Dobrin admits that this version of process is “essentialized,” which leads me to question whether we need to throw the word out with the bathwater. Recognizing that this particular paradigm of process “precludes, subsumes, encompasses, characterizes, distinguishes, engenders, and determines what that thing of writing is to be” - in other words, recognizing that this version of process dictates a product, let’s consider this issue in light of post-process and post-modern theories - both DeJoy and David Russell, for example, suggest post-process moves which serve to re-envision what we mean when we say “process.” Russell’s questions, “What kind of writing does the writer process, for whom and for what purposes?” are examples of these moves (84). And DeJoy explores with her students what is meant by “writing as a process rather than enacting some particular notion of writing as a process” (Interview).
Finally, this issue of whether writing is a process or not can, I believe, be summed up by Petraglia when he says that "writing is a process" is the "right answer to a really boring question" (53). He asserts:

[The] fundamental observation that an individual produces text by means of a writing process has not been discarded. Instead, it has dissolved and shifted from figure to ground. It infuses our awareness of writing, it tinctures our thoughts about writing instruction, and trace elements of it can be found in practically every professional conversation. Ironically, however, I take this as a sign that our increasing disciplinarity has led us past process. [. . .] We have better questions now, and the notion of process no longer counts as much of an insight.

(53)

And, ironically, Petraglia's take on process as the "right answer to a really boring question" reminds me of Sánchez's earlier "well duh" take on post-process's assertions about the nature of language. I am reminded that we are not theorists and researchers on the outside of the contingency ring - this conversation, as well as students' writing will
always be situational and the best we can do is continue the conversation. I am also reminded of an ideal put forth by DeJoy - that "to be able to talk with each other and to create a literacy environment in which all members of the writing classes can talk with one another we must be strategic about shared focuses, and even vocabularies" ("Re: Your Book").

Later, DeJoy continues her definition of post-process: "My particular belief is that post-process theory is defined by a complex relationship to the writing as a process movement. Specifically, post-process theory does not construct itself totally in identification with or rejection of process movement histories, theories and practices" (Interview). I am relieved by this definition because, although Porter earlier attempted a distinct definition of post-process theorists, and helpfully so, I am again reminded that this project does not seek to distill and codify what is meant by post-process. I only intend to be in the conversation, mulling momentary definitions of seemingly impervious terms like process and post-process. To say, then, that a complex relationship exists between one movement and another, is appropriate to the subject. Paradigms, though helpful conceptual tools,
do not always have clear beginnings and endings (though it should be noted that post-process doesn't consider itself a paradigm...). To say that post-process “breaks” with process seems to expect that we have the ability to jump cleanly from one context to another. Kent acknowledges that we are all “somewhere,” and that we are “positioned in relation to other language users” (4). A break would only serve to silence that relationship, that conversation. I question how that is helpful. If, as DeJoy hopes, we are able to “create a literacy environment in which all members of the writing classes can talk with one another,” we must recognize the relational aspect of our conversations with each other.

Another scholar who considers the relationship between process and post-process in his definition is Bruce McComiskey of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. First, McComiskey explains what “post-process theory should not be” (Interview). He says post-process should not reject process altogether. For example, McComiskey argues that invention techniques and revision for “structure and argument” should not be abandoned. Next, McComiskey tells “what it is”:
Post-process theory is a response to the individualist orientation of the early process movement; it is, more specifically, a social revision of expressive and cognitive approaches to composing. Post-process writing teachers extend the writing process into the social world of discourse, asking students to recognize the social influences on their writing, and asking them to understand the social influences that their writing has on others. The "post," in other words, means extension, not rejection.

(Interview)

In "The Post-Process Movement in Composition Studies," McComiskey discusses the evolution of Composition Studies and the multitude of ways it has been described and viewed. Defending his position that post-process extends process, he points to terminology that illustrates the negotiation of ideas as scholars have attempted over time to define what happens when we write. McComiskey outlines the movement from expressivist and cognitive views toward seemingly "oxymoron[ic]" descriptions like "social-cognitive" and "social-expressivist," which suggest integrated beliefs of writers as "both constructed and free
agents” (39). He offers these examples of integration as an illustration of how seemingly disparate concepts can inform each other.

Illustrating his belief that post-process extends process “into the social world of discourse,” McComiskey teaches what he calls “social-process rhetorical inquiry,” a method that enables students to “look at how discourse shapes their thinking and writing, [. . .] how distributing media influence meaning, and [. . .] how people from different social backgrounds receive various messages” (Interview). While McComiskey’s method of inquiry seems to address post-process theorizing that writing is public, contextual, and situated, I wondered where on the continuum he might fall, for example, in my earlier discussion of process versus post-process ways of seeing writing as “public, interpretive, and situated”? Concerned that “social revision” could be either process or post-process (I also remembered Porter’s suggestion that I use a more “specific term” than the vague “social concept” I had used in my early questionnaire), I looked to a conversation Professor McComiskey and I had regarding liberatory (critical) theory. On this subject, he writes:
If post-process extends the writing process into the cycle of production, distribution, and consumption, as I argue it does, then critical pedagogy (ala Ira Shor, for example) isn’t very post-process. The goal of most articulations of critical pedagogy is self-enlightenment, and these teachers then hope that something real will come of it. [. . .] critique is not (or should not be) an aim of discourse, a goal in itself. If post-process extends writing into distribution and consumption, then critique isn’t enough. So I think critical pedagogy falls short. How can you resist an oppressive political structure when all you have is self-critical knowledge? (“Re: Questionnaire”)

Deducting that McComiskey’s vision of social indeed moves writers into a more interpretive and situated position with other language users (than modern and process versions of “social”), I then only wondered about his overriding goal to have students resist “oppressive political structures” in light of a post-modern aversion to grand narratives – I questioned his seemingly unapologetic socio-political agenda. In an online review of McComiskey’s book Teaching
Composition as a Social Process, Jonathan Alexander attempts to negotiate McComiskey's potentially problematic moves toward "transforming the world." Alexander writes that McComiskey "has students concentrate on local struggles as opposed to re-composing the decomposed grand narratives of earlier times." Of course, this makes what he does situated, and maybe even interpretive, but still potentially a grand narrative. Alexander next quotes McComiskey as saying that "postmodern subjectivities must not disperse into a politically impotent multiplicity of different individuals, and they must not accept centralizing authorities that coagulate differences into politically impotent universalizing identities." So, it would seem that McComiskey hedges his bets when it comes to negotiating post-modern critiques of authority and power structures with post-modern aversions to grand narratives by not allowing "subjectivities" to keep him from making politically motivated moves in the classroom.

As I struggled to understand McComiskey's definition of post-process, which seems inseparable from his pedagogy of social-process rhetorical inquiry ["a method of invention that usually manifests itself in composition classes as a set of heuristic questions based on the cycle
of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption" ("Post-Process" 42), I returned to Dobrin’s "Paralogic Hermeneutics, Power, and Pedagogy" in Kent’s post-process anthology for some insight. Dobrin juxtaposes two scenarios of liberatory pedagogy. First, Dobrin discusses how "(postmodern) forms of inquiry [. . .] seek to identify forces that affect process," and that "current paradigms are dominated by scholarship and pedagogy of empowerment and liberation that examine larger systems and ways in which they affect discourse" (138). "Yet," says Dobrin, "even in this (supposed) post-process paradigm of questioning language in larger contexts, process still takes precedent in the teaching of discourse [. . .]" (138). Within the process paradigm, suggests Dobrin, liberatory and critical pedagogies fall victim to a "depositing" version of teaching where students are taught "a particular process for becoming critically aware through understanding the oppressive nature of language" (138). In other words, students are taught "what is oppressive, what is politically virtuous, how to become critically conscious, and so forth" (138). And this takes place, says Dobrin, "all under the guise of post-process inquiry" (139).
While Dobrin admits "pedagogies of empowerment" to be "ethically sound," and that process versions of critical pedagogy are "'better' than other kinds of process pedagogies," he believes post-process paralogic hermeneutics "afford [. . .] opportunities to be critical participants in the very discourses that liberatory pedagogies promote or resist" (140). As Dobrin begins to juxtapose the process pedagogy of empowerment with his evidently post-process take on how we negotiate power (paralogically), I return to what I know of McComiskey's focus on what he calls the "discursive level" of his pedagogy (Interview). He says that he and his students "talk about how [. . .] writing is influenced by others in culture, and how [. . .] writing may, in turn, influence that culture" (Interview). Having reviewed examples of the heuristics McComiskey employs (to be presented in the next chapter), I feel the pedagogy of empowerment he teaches may teeter between the two scenarios offered by Dobrin. Without observing the communicative moments that take place in McComiskey's classroom, it is difficult to draw a conclusion, but for now, I recognize that his definition of post-process distinguishes itself from process (albeit a social form of process) in potentially small degrees.
Indeed, McComiskey doesn’t assert otherwise, but as definitions blur, I feel it is important to magnify the areas of contention as I attempt to define - in this moment at least - post-process.

Helen Ewald, of Iowa State University, offers a definition of post-process which takes into account its use as a label. She says, "A simple definition of [post-process theory] is that theory or theories that post-date the process movement in teaching composition in stages: prewriting, writing, revision" (Interview). I am grateful to Ewald for stating what so simply gets missed in most conversations about post-process - that it has become a catch-phrase describing the period of time after the process movement. Using the term in this way considers two important points. One, that the field of composition somehow left behind the process movement at some given moment, and that we are somehow in a new era - this would be to elide the complexity of the situation, especially in light of DeJoy’s and McComiskey’s views on the complex relationship between process and post-process (seeing it as a continuum rather than two distinct historical eras). Secondly, the use of the term in this way is an important indicator that these theories are trickling into mainstream
pedagogical research and language. For example, essays can easily be found which casually use the term "post-process" as code for "alternatives to the pre-write, write, revise model." Post-process theories of language and writing and writing instruction, then, have begun to construct new lines of inquiry in mainstream Composition Studies. I use the word mainstream because I find references to post-process pedagogical moves in surprising places - for example, in Teaching English in the Two Year College, an article recently appeared on "The Role of Ethnography in the Post-Process Writing Classroom."

A second part of Ewald's definition complicates post-process the term and moves it into the pedagogical arena. She writes that this more complicated definition "might entail the accommodation of poststructuralist paradigms in the teaching of composition, e.g., a 'staged' framework may be okay as a crutch, but we all know that writing and communication is situational and, therefore, uncodifiable" (Interview). Lisa Hermsen, a professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, extends this definition. She says, "I define [post-process theory] as radically situational. Assumes writing is always context-bound. So much so that no predictions can be made as to how
communication will best take place. What we can do is practice in different situations and build up a group of strategies" (Interview). Ewald, too, tries “to have a number of organizational options for students to use as touchstones” (Interview). These views accommodate post-process’s assertion that writing is always situated by facilitating students’ awareness of how their writing projects are affected and altered by varying contexts.

It is important to recognize the interpretive nature of this whole discussion. These definitions have not been presented in any attempt to either pin down post-process or to box-in these scholars. Obviously, understandings of an issue as complex as language and writing are not easily codified (nor should they be). Although definitions are varied and nuanced (interpreted, contextual, and situated), it would seem that these teachers agree on at least some things, and it is convenient at this point to say that Kent’s assertions that writing is public, interpretive, and situated are adequate descriptors of the conversation in general. How we understand these concepts varies, and in what ways we see these moves playing out in the classroom will range from “not at all” to “in a multitude of ways.”
During research for this project, I posted to the Writing Program Administrators' list/serv, asking for definitions of post-process. Joseph Eng responded in a way I think best sums up this chapter:

[All] in all, post-process means a lot of things to [a lot] of people. And I think that the dialogic, the cultural, the ideological, the [postmodern], etc., [are] all there at least in the praxis - which suddenly reminds us how far we have moved beyond the type of neutral process approach underscoring "prewriting, writing, and rewriting" in the early to mid 1980s (and therefore the term "post-process").

("Re: PS. . .")

In the following chapters I will look at some pedagogical enactments described as post-process, asking whether this responder is right - is it "all there" in the praxis?
classrooms. In Kent’s anthology on Post-Process, Ewald writes:

The pedagogy I have envisioned [. . .] defines teachers and students as knowers involved in communicative interaction that, in part, serves to demystify both writing and learning. Whether this demystification is possible depends in large part on our ability to research and re-envision the educational paradigms [. . .] that currently shadow our efforts. ("Tangled Web" 130)

Ewald’s vision describes three moves shared by other scholars I have researched as attempting a post-process pedagogy: "defining teachers and students as knowers"; the demystification of "writing and learning"; and moves toward re-envisioning paradigms (of pedagogical and academic discourses). Breuch suggests that post-process theory may make "helpful and even profound contributions that inform our pedagogical practice," suggesting that we should "reexamine our definition of writing as an activity rather than a body of knowledge, our methods of teaching as indeterminate activities rather than exercises of mastery, and our communicative interactions with students as dialogic rather than monologic". (98-99).
I begin my exploration of intersecting post-process-oriented pedagogies with Porter, who makes seemingly simple moves to redefine the student-teacher relationship and demystify the genre of academic writing, which in turn allows students to position themselves contingently and reject the presumption of mastery. During the teaching semester, Porter critiques “notions of Standard English — and even [. . .] ‘the English language’” (Interview). He continues to teach what he knows “about matters of form and content,” but, he writes, “I try to do so in a way that acknowledges the historical and contingent nature of what ‘I know’ and, furthermore, that acknowledges this ‘knowledge’ cannot be simply transferred from teacher to student” (Interview). By admitting to students that “writing is more than a body of knowledge to be mastered” (Breuch 104), he revises the conventional teacher-student relationship. And by “demystifying ‘academic discourse,’ revealing it to be not a single, immutable thing, but a set of localized, contingent, historical practices,” Porter invites students to participate in new ways (Interview). Once students become cognizant that language and writing are not unquestionable bodies of knowledge, they have the option of naming their world — a move Sidney Dobrin says is
denied when "prescribed processes take care of the naming" (139). One way Porter has students practice these moves is by submitting his "own work for their scrutiny" (Interview). He explains, "rather than treating my ideas as immutable principles that inform and hide behind authoritative comments on students' texts, I put them into play and remain open to students' responses" (Interview). These moves by Porter accomplish two things. Firstly, Porter aligns himself as a reader and a writer, and thereby redefines the teacher/student relationship. Secondly, by moving to the side, as it were, Porter leaves room for students to create their own positions. Instead of requiring that students master what he knows, he invites them to be fellow knowers.

Foster makes a similar move to thwart the conventional teacher/student relationship by repositioning himself "as a reader of student work to emphasize the formative rather than the summative" (Interview, Part One). Foster gives his "reaction and response rather than evaluation" when he works with student writers (Interview, Part One). He explains:

This is not because I want to lessen my authority as an experienced reader and teacher, but because
I want to increase students' sense of ownership and authority over their own drafting and text-building. I want to position myself as a well-informed responder to whom they can be attentive, but whose advice for change they can choose to accept in part or not at all. This stance does not abrogate my obligation to apply a grade [. . .]. Rather, I try (not always successfully) to help students recognize that while grades are system functions governing us all, my comments [and] responses are functions of our individual writing-reading relationships. (Interview, Part One)

This "teacherly readership," which Foster says has "accelerated roughly in keeping with the post-process move of the [last] fifteen or twenty years" (Interview, Part One), along with Porter's moves to interact as writer and reader with his students, seems to support Ewald's vision of "teachers and students as knowers involved in communicative interaction that, in part, serves to demystify both writing and learning" ("Tangled Web" 130).

One of the questions I put to Professor Porter concerned the dangers of professing in a post era.
classroom. Borrowing a quote by Craig Dworkin, I asked Porter if he agreed that an inadequate pedagogy would be one that was "familiarized, domesticated, inoculated, neutralized, and counteracted – in short: professed" (609). First, Porter says that he doesn’t define "professing" as Dworkin does, so he doesn’t avoid it (Interview). In fact, he says, he may believe the opposite:

The attempt to be "true" to a theory – to articulate (and advocate) a theory despite its difficulty for students, resisting the easy routes of simplification, reification, and intellectual detachment – requires a teacher to profess that theory (i.e., to affirm it publicly). (Interview)

In addition, Porter believes that "an inadequate pedagogy is not so much one in which ideas get, say, 'neutralized,’ but one in which the ideas that inform the pedagogy are treated as immutable (i.e., a pedagogy in which [it is] impossible for the ideas that inform the pedagogy to be put into play, to be placed at risk)” (Interview). I believe Porter’s statement that a good pedagogy will place the very beliefs of that pedagogy at "risk" is at the heart of post-
process theorizing. By re-envisioning the student as knower and meaning-maker alongside the teacher, we admit to the interpretive and contingent nature of language and knowledge - even of truth. Inviting students to participate in this way deconstructs power structures and opens the door to alternative subject positions. In sum, these moves place the ideas informing academic discourse at risk, but invite richer and more meaningful interactions between teachers, students, and knowledge.

By chance, my emails with Porter revealed another post-process consideration. Just as Olson pointed to the importance of "local moves," Porter resisted my request to include his syllabi in my research because "what happens in the classroom is vital; the syllabus is just a skeleton - and a potentially misleading one, at times" ("Re: Research"). I was thankful to Porter for reminding me, perhaps relationally, that post-process is a set of considerations capable of informing pedagogy, and that a "post-process syllabus" is an impossible oxymoron. What could a post-process syllabus possibly accomplish? Writing Assignment #1: to be determined. Writing Assignment #2: to be discussed. Writing Assignment #3: to be
paralogically interpreted. Writing Assignment #4: resist mastery on this one.

But what about content? Can there be a post-process content? Originally, Porter misunderstood my question about whether he enacts a post-process pedagogy. He writes, “I read the phrase ‘facilitate post-process theories’ along the lines of ‘explicitly discuss and advance post-process theories,’ which I rarely have the opportunity to do” (“Re: Research”). However, Porter has taught Kent’s Post-Process Theory in an introductory graduate course. Porter’s interpretation of my question – to “explicitly discuss and advance post-process theories” – seemed to me far-fetched at the first-year level anyway, until I discovered that DeJoy uses composition literature, which I presume might include post-process theories, as content in her first-year composition classes. I will discuss this move by DeJoy at length, but first, I explore how DeJoy and others extend Porter’s and Foster’s moves toward opening subject positions and toward the rejection of mastery.

In “I Was a Process-Model Baby,” DeJoy writes extensively about “Other-Than-Identificatory Routes to Subjectivity” (171-77). Her concern is that in "the
driving force behind the constitution of self/other relations (i.e., self as writer/other as audience), identification has claimed an overarching hold on translations of rhetorical activity that position mastery (over) as the end of writing” (171). For example, if students are led to believe that academic discourse is immutable, and they identify the teacher as authority figure and as audience, then students will seek to identify with that authority and presume that they can master written discourse to satisfy and mimic that identity. This goes against post-process theorizing by denying students the opportunity to position themselves in the communicative moment, which restricts opportunities for discourse analysis, interpretation, and participation. DeJoy writes that, as a student, “identification of those stereotypes was supposed to lead to prose identified with those stereotypes,” and therefore, her “job was to reproduce them rather than to engage in activities that explored their sources, ramifications, and the falseness of their inventions” (172). Because her subject position was determined by the assumption and expectation of mastery, DeJoy was positioned “as a consumer and reproducer rather than as an analyzer and creator of rhetorical practices”
In chapter one, I quoted Lester Faigley's definition of the post-modern individual as one who is changed by what is consumed. An important post-modern and post-process move, then, allows students to first consider what is being consumed in traditional academic paradigms, and then allows them to practice negotiation of those discourses as they interact with teachers, texts, other language users. Ultimately, the student with post-modern sensibilities would be able to make choices about what to consume and then decide to interact with, rather than reproduce, that knowledge.

In a post-process informed pedagogy, students are positioned as meaning-makers able to resist what Sidney Dobrin calls "the twist of triangulation" (144). In his description of paralogic hermeneutic theory, where language users are in a constant struggle to interpret communicative moments, Dobrin says we must teach students "to become aware of oppressive discursive structures, such as academic discourse," which will give students "the opportunity to become more skilled in their own hermeneutic guessing skills" (144). In a classroom where students are seen as participants allowed to analyze and interpret language, texts, and contexts, power structures become less opaque;
when students “become participants in communication,” they develop “the skills needed to be adept triangulators” (144). And teachers, such as Porter, Foster, and DeJoy, by demystifying academic discourse and the role of the authoritative teacher, create opportunities for students to identify and better understand the relationship between language users, which equips them to engage in communicative moments not as the subjected, but as participants.

In Contending with Words, a compilation of essays about teaching composition in a postmodern era, Sosnoski imagines, based on the other essays in the book, what a postmodern classroom might look like. In his section on “Assignments,” he suggests that the first writing assignment ought to “involve students in a personal understanding of their ‘oppression’” (213). Recognizing that students “usually begin writing in a state of frustration,” Sosnoski outlines an assignment that has students writing a narrative “dealing with their problems as writers” (214). Because students are used to “‘discouraging voices,’ the class could provide an environment in which ‘encouraging voices’ are heard” (213). The community created by this assignment “would later be
problematized as contentious voices became increasingly audible" (213-14). Sosnoski offers this assignment in reaction to the "idea of being oppressed by a subject position forced on one by another's discourse" (213).

Drawing from Don Bialostosky's essay in the book, Sosnoski quotes Elaine Maimon to illustrate the student's predicament:

The lonely beginner condemned to the linearity of ink on the blank page hears all the wrong voices. As he tries to imagine those absent strangers to whom he must write, he hears the voices of doubt and despair: "You don't belong here. This paper will show your smart English teacher how stupid you are. You never could write anyway." (213)

Further, writes Sosnoski, "these pains are occasioned by discourse, the discourse of parents, former teachers, and other authorities who place students in particular subject positions" (213). Sometimes it's easy to forget that students come to the college composition class with a lifetime of language experiences. We expect them to come with skills, but to learn "fresh" what we have to offer about composition. The voices from language experiences past echo loudly in their ears, however, and in a post era
classroom, teachers may have to begin by deconstructing those voices. In other words, we begin by recognizing, and helping students to recognize, that we are all situated in some way by our past "beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears" (Kent 4). This "baggage," positions us in relation to other language users, which is what Kent means when he says that "writers are never nowhere" (3). Sosnoski's writing assignment helps students understand how they have been positioned by others in the past and simultaneously positions them in relation to the classroom community.

This move to have students write about, of all things, writing, is extended by DeJoy's inclusion of literacy and composition studies discourse in the classroom. DeJoy's first-year students read "articles and discussions of writing that occur in composition studies" (Interview). This invitation to participate in the composition discourse is, says DeJoy, "a post-process movement" (Interview). It allows "writing students and teachers to view their literacy pasts not just as artifacts, but also from a critical perspective" (Interview). In addition, adds DeJoy, "The activity invites subject positions other than identification with the discourses of the field that often define the literacy lives of first-year writing students.
and teachers" (Interview). In other words, student writers are invited to think critically about how they are being defined by others. Indeed, DeJoy’s goal of “centering participation and contribution in theory and pedagogy” exposes students to “more writing subjects and subjectivities” (“Re: Your Book”). This strategy debunks the modern era edict to have students be consumers and reproducers of knowledge; in a post era education, students can become participants in the making of knowledge and contributors to the ongoing conversation about literacy. DeJoy’s pedagogy also recognizes that students, when given the chance, have valuable insight to offer about their own writing processes. In summary, DeJoy complicates the processes of writing by asking “Writing is a process of what?” and then enabling students, through analysis of and participation in writing discourses, to “respond to that question in new ways” (Interview).

DeJoy’s decision to introduce students to composition and literacy scholarship might seem controversial to some, but she questions why Composition should be the only field which looks outside of itself for subject matter. In addition, DeJoy believes that the disconnect caused by not continuing the Composition conversation in the first-year
classroom, where thousands upon thousands of students have their first and sometimes last exposure to composition as a subject, has created a faculty unfamiliar with the theories ultimately informing the field. When asked whether she can "use anything to teach writing," DeJoy responds, "Maybe, but why even try? Why not create curricula and faculty development practices that require people who teach composition to know the field?" ("Re: Your Book"). In other words, why, if we are committed to "teaching students something other than how to be standardized subjects," wouldn't we teach them using the discourse of our own field ("Re: Your Book")? If we acknowledge that "participation and contribution are not only goals, but expected activities" in every other field of study, why do we not have this expectation in the field of Composition ("Re: Your Book")? DeJoy explains:

Basically, I un-bracketed the field of composition studies itself and, as a result the materials and methodologies of the field, and made composition studies important to the teaching of composition at the level of practice (just like math or nursing or art are often the
subjects of classes in those fields. ("Re: Your Book")

Indeed, DeJoy asks, "Why is it Ok if a first-semester writing student can tell you more about the Simpsons or reality TV than they can tell you about composition studies?" ("Re: Your Book").

DeJoy invites student participation, both analytical and generative, by having them "analyze texts to discuss the processes implied by products (heresy in most earlier process movement approaches)" (Interview). This analysis also serves "to broaden [. . .] understanding of invention arrangement and revision beyond the activities favored by the prewrite/write/rewrite model" (Interview). In Process This, DeJoy explains this move: "When students and teachers explore the connections between and among the implied activities behind texts, they begin to see process and product as connected endeavors" (86). DeJoy believes that students have been limited by the way they are positioned "in relation to the field [of Composition Studies] through the pedagogies that inform their lives" (67). The process movement of the 1970s created the genre of "student writing," which began the placement of students as subjects of the field's theorizing (67). This "student
"writing" genre (focusing as it originally did on students' own stories instead of literary texts, and in today's classroom as the traditional academic theme) "has no structural relevance for the writers outside of its function as a product for classroom evaluation" (67). This disconnect between reading and writing is what DeJoy hopes to bridge as she opens spaces for student participation and contribution. The question then becomes what texts to use in this process. DeJoy believes that centering composition studies in the classroom allows students to see the "interconnectedness" of reading and writing through the discourse of the field, an important move if we want to open "opportunities for collaborative explorations of the history of literacy, the history of writing studies, and composition studies in general" (70).

DeJoy's strategy for bridging "the gap between reading and writing" revises the prewrite/write/rewrite model by re-envisioning invention, arrangement, and revision both as an analytic activity and as a generative practice (Process This 70-71, 151). I believe these are the sites of DeJoy's pedagogy where process is extended or complicated by post-process theory - an opportunity for the "practices of writing as a process" to be enriched and improved, as DeJoy
stated in her definition, by those theories (Interview). At the macro level, students engage in an analysis of literacy and composition-related texts. They do this by collaboratively asking the following questions (Process This 72):

- What is invention? (What did the writer have to do to create the text?)
- What's being invented? (What ideas, beliefs, world-views, and actions does the text call up?)
- What is arrangement? (How are things being put in relationship with one another?)
- What's being arranged? (What's being put in relation to what?)
- What is revision? (What is/has to be done to accomplish those changes?)
- What's being revised? (What changes is the author trying to inspire?)

DeJoy provides a narrative of her students as they processed these questions — as they interpreted the texts and began to see relationships to their own writing and subject positions. For example, students began to understand the limitations that had been placed on them as
student writers in the past. Once the writing processes of the texts came to light, so to speak, students "wanted to know why there were such big differences between the writing activities informing the essay [they] had read and those they had learned and assumed would serve them well throughout their college careers" (74). As students delved into the inner workings of texts about literacy — texts that depict literacy and literate people in specific ways — they recognized that the writers had "certain ways of creating understanding, ways of making arguments" about the students' "own literacy experiences," which began to make students "feel both afraid of what this might mean in relation to the ways of reading and writing they have become comfortable with and intrigued by the possibility that they may have cracked open some big mystery" (80). Tellingly, one student said that the analysis had revealed "the big black dark secret of why we think what we think" (82). In a very real way, DeJoy's students gain insight into the nature of knowledge and meaning-making; they come to understand that what they thought was immutable is in fact a construct of other writers and their texts, from which they can logically conclude their own authorial roles in either perpetuating the myth of "Truth" or in
contributing to a conversation about knowledge. And in addition to the "analytic activities" detailed here, DeJoy outlines a generative practice where students and faculty talk and write "about the ways that literacy, and the study of literacy, enriches the knowledge bases [students] can draw from as they make decisions about invention, arrangement, and revision as writers" (151).

As I observed the larger picture of DeJoy's pedagogy of participation and contribution (through a rejection of mastery and invitation to find alternative subject positions) in the field of Composition, I had a lingering question: how does this relate to the common assertions of post-process—that writing it public, interpretive, and situated? As I mulled this question, I began to see that as DeJoy's students engaged in the macro act of analyzing texts, they were, at the micro level, working together in interpretive moments to understand and make meaning of those texts, and doing it in public ways. I realize that the only caveat DeJoy doesn't spell out to students is that their analyses are contingent on the very language and language users in the scenario—in other words, that the analyses they are doing will and would be different at any other time and with any other language users—thereby
relaying to students the contingent nature of their
dialogue: that their analyses are interpreted, and that
their findings are situated by the very dialogue and
interaction of their collaboration.

In an email to Professor DeJoy, I asked whether she
overtly relays to students the contingency of their
analyses, and whether she reminds students that they "are
not creating Truth about the texts" they analyze. Her
answer to me was thoughtful, and not what I expected. She
writes:

This is a difficult question – I actually don’t believe that cultures change rapidly enough to
say interpretive acts by people with shared
cultural backgrounds would be different from
moment to moment or are situated as necessarily
contingent upon the language and language users
only, partly because some considerations of
audience and other more generally can (including
considerations of self as audience and/or other)
open what seem like closed language situations in
interesting ways. Their analyses are, of course,
discussed as analyses that, like all analytic
activities, are dangerous if constructed only
through operations of identification. ("Re: A Question. . ")

And at this point, DeJoy reminds me that she does not “fit the dominant post-process model any better than [she fits] the dominant process model” ("Re: A Question. . "). Further, she writes that my question about constructing “some sort of truth about the text” is a “moot point” because her students are not discussing texts as products ("Re: A Question...”). In addition, she contends that my assertion that the analyses “would be different at any other time and with any other language users” has “not always been true” in her experience with “different groups of people analyzing the same texts” ("Re: A Question. . "). I found this interesting as I thought about how “self” is said to be constructed by cultural and social forces; DeJoy’s words remind me that much of my focus on post-process leans toward navigating difference, which has led me to forget about similarities. And even where there is difference, as DeJoy says to me, group analyses “sometimes create a common ground that did not exist before” ("Re: A Question. . ").

Once I had time to absorb DeJoy’s pedagogy, I realized that it works at the local and at the broader social level.
Her strategies to have students explore language, language users, and writing recognize that knowledge and meaning-making can be locally constructed, which in turn reveals that public discourses used to construct "reality" about writers and writing are in fact not immutable, allowing for the participation and contribution that DeJoy hopes for her students.

Also, DeJoy's moves, especially revision (What is being revised?), remind me of Dobrin's suggestion that we teach students to become better triangulators. In the moment when students recognize what is being revised (what an author of a text hopes to revise), they are recognizing that move by another language user which hopes to create meaning in a particular way; students able to resist this moment of triangulation will become better at presenting their own interpretations of the world instead of accepting at face value what they read - they will recognize what they are being asked to consume and can make choices about how to receive and interact with that knowledge. As DeJoy writes about her students' experiences, "Reading was no longer just about knowing what the article said and being able to represent that accurately, and writing was no
longer about the reproduction of familiar ways of making meaning" (Process This 75).

McComiskey, like DeJoy, believes that post-process theories extend the writing process; this is seen especially in his attention to invention, and, as mentioned in chapter two, he believes that post-process moves process into the "social world of discourse" (Interview). In an effort to negotiate process and post-process, McComiskey provides several categorizations of language concerns faced by writers. Fraiberg does an excellent job of summarizing McComiskey's pedagogy in "Houses Divided: Processing Composition in a Post-Process Time." She writes, first, that his "process map includes three levels of composing: textual, rhetorical, and discursive" (176). Next, Fraiberg outlines those levels: at the textual level, students focus on linguistic matters (176); at the rhetorical level, students pay attention to the "generative and restrictive exigencies (audience, purpose, etc.) of communicative situations (McComiskey, Teaching 6); and at the discursive level, students concentrate on "the institutional (economic, political, social, and cultural) forces that condition our very identities as writers" (6-7). Finally, Fraiberg quotes McComiskey as saying that, "consciously or
not," all teachers teach these three levels, but he believes that teachers should be "overt" in that instruction (176). In my interview with McComiskey, he calls the first level "linguistic" instead of textual, adding that students "talk about stylistic matters" (Interview). At the rhetorical level, McComiskey adds that students talk about invention, revision, and audience, and at the discursive level he adds that he talks with students about "how our writing is influenced by others in culture, and how our writing may, in turn, influence that culture" (Interview). Beyond the initial outline of McComiskey’s pedagogy, Fraiberg goes on to focus primarily on his discursive level, which is interesting because his emails with me were mostly about the discursive level, and in his essay, “The Post-Process Movement in Composition Studies,” McComiskey seems to define his "social-process rhetorical inquiry" by moves within this discursive level - leading me to believe that he sees this as the primary site where post-process extends process.

McComiskey’s use of categories, in general, seems to indicate the difficulty of bringing together various orientations, and is, perhaps, a good illustration of how teachers in the post era will have to negotiate what we
have always done with what we would like to do. Coming, as I am, from a position of trying to define post-process and its potential pedagogies, however, I resist overly-structured categorizations that box stylistics apart from audience apart from agency and cultural subjectivity. While I understand McComiskey’s dilemmas, teaching categorizations of language use seems reminiscent of the teaching of modes instead of strategies — a chapter on narrative essays, a chapter on comparison/contrast essays, and a chapter on persuasive essays. When taught separately, these easily create artificial constructs of communication. Admittedly, I am not in McComiskey’s classroom, so I can’t say what local moves he makes to offset this invitation or what overt acknowledgments of these constructed categorizations he offers, and I also don’t know whether he teaches “linguistics” and “rhetoric” as immutable academic artifacts or as social constructs that inform our writing practices but which are open to interpretation and questioning — he may; McComiskey himself states, “Every class I teach, and every day that I enter the classroom, I’m teaching post-process” (Interview).

Central to McComiskey’s appreciation of post-process insights is his sense that it helps us extend “the
individualist orientation of the early process movement into the "social world of discourse" by having students examine how they influence and are influenced by social forces, and by providing a pedagogy he feels enables students to engage with those social forces (Interview). In this regard, he has done some interesting work toward extending early process-movement attention to the strategies for prewriting, creating a heuristic approach in his pedagogy that asks students important questions to help them critically examine the forces shaping their lives. While such heuristics may run counter to Dobrin’s suggestion that students engage with these forces paralogically (which implies a less formalized interaction than McComiskey’s), the reality of school, as one of my professors put it, is that it must be efficient. McComiskey’s heuristics are an efficient route to a critical understanding of subject positions.

As mentioned before, McComiskey defines social-process rhetorical inquiry as "a method of invention that usually manifests itself in composition classes as a set of heuristic questions based on the cycle of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption" ("Post-Process" 42). Those who practice this
form of inquiry, says McComiskey, "understand all communication as 'discursive practice,' as strategic participation in the 'flow' of discourse" (43). This "flow" of discourse is what students examine, first by understanding how they operate, and second by entering the flow with "new rhetorical interventions" (43).

One of the flows, or "formations," that McComiskey focuses on is the discourse of institutions. "Institutions, more than any other communicative contexts," he says, "produce and structure social interactions, thereby both enabling and restricting discourse" ("Post-Process" 43). Although institutions have "profound consequences" on subject positions, there are "competing discourses that vie for sub(versive)-dominance at lower levels of the hierarchy. Yet these discourses usually remain unknown or suppressed" (43). In addition, institutional discourses become naturalized and are given the "status of common sense," says Norman Fairclough, making them difficult to see and question (qtd. in McComiskey, "Post-Process" 43). Social-process rhetorical inquiry, says McComiskey, makes "visible these opaque institutional ideologies," and provides students with "fresh perspectives from which to observe and critique [. . .

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McComiskey's students focus on include "school, work, media, and government" (44). For example, McComiskey provides an assignment called "Work Critical and Practical Essays" (48). The critical essay explores the cultural values they have discovered during the invention phase, and the practical essay attempts to negotiate those values—in the example he offers, students must write a letter to someone in the company identifying a problem and a viable solution to that problem (49-50).

To begin, McComiskey suggests that students choose an approach—either an autobiographical account of a personal work experience or an ethnographic description of a "particular workplace and its employees" (49). Once students have chosen their "general approach," they are to "complete the invention heuristic provided for this assignment," as follows (49-51):

**Cultural Production**

Use the following prompt to generate as many cultural values perpetuated in your workplace as possible: "The ideal X employee should Y." Substitute the company and job you occupy for X and the cultural effects your employers try to
create in you for Y. The more cultural values you can generate, the better your selection will be when you begin writing your critical essay.

Good cultural values are the key to a successful work critical essay. Cultural values answer the question "What kind of people do my employers want me and other employees to be?" Cultural values should be written from the perspective of the company, and they should always express qualities inherent in the ideal employee.

The following examples are several well written cultural values: the ideal Weyerhaeuser factory worker is always thinking about safety first [. . .]. The following examples are poorly written cultural values: the ideal Hardee’s cook should cook each hamburger for 2:35 [. . .].

*Contextual Distribution*

Brainstorm methods your employers use to reinforce (i.e., distribute) each cultural value in the workplace: job descriptions, posted policies, orientation workshops, supervision, observation, training sessions, verbal
reprimands, productivity awards, staff meetings, and so on. Several others should present themselves as you remember or observe your workplace.

Details regarding a company's product/service output, its employee relations and activities, and its geographical layout also contribute to the distribution of cultural values. Use the following prompts to explore how cultural values are distributed in the workplace you have chosen to critique.

Here, McComiskey offers suggestions of topics they might explore, including "Company Output"; "Employee Relations"; "Employee Activities"; and "Geographical Layout."

Critical Consumption

Describe ways that you and other employees accommodate, resist, and negotiate the cultural values perpetuated in your workplace. We accommodate work cultural values when we accept the ideal images the company places on us and we willingly complete the tasks the job requires. We resist work cultural values when we disagree with the ideal images the company places on us.
and we find ways to avoid or subvert the tasks the job requires. Most important, we negotiate work cultural values when our opinion of the ideal images the company places on us varies from situation to situation and we sometimes complete the tasks the job requires and other times avoid or subvert the same tasks.

As I transcribed McComiskey's heuristics, I found myself asking the same questions of myself as a student in the institution of school. I thought, how am I expected to act as a student writing her thesis? In what ways are those expectations distributed to me, and how am I consuming them? Of course, I am my own worst critic, so the heuristics, done in split seconds in my mind as I type this very sentence, make me realize that I have created my own expectations of myself as a student writing a thesis; and this makes me aware of who I am, and makes me want to extract that belief from current institutional expectations, once I analyze what they are. Of course, speaking in a post era, I might really say that I have not created my own expectations, but rather have consumed many values over the course of my life and now believe those values to be "me." What I notice, however, is that I am
basing my perceptions of this experience (of writing a thesis) on those past experiences (those voices and discourses Sosnoski hopes to uncover) more than on any current institutional distribution of values.

McComiskey’s heuristics now appear to me a productive exercise for students to explore who they are as writers and what is expected of them; they would ask: “What does the school expect of me as a student writer?”; “How are those expectations relayed to me?”; and “How do I accommodate or resist those expectations?” I suspect this exercise may give students some perspective on their subject positions as writers, and from there, a teacher might facilitate students’ further examination of writing and writing contexts; for example, students might ask what writing values (in addition to cultural values) their workplace might produce, distribute, and ask them to consume. These heuristics could even be used, as I did automatically, as self-examination: “What are my expectations of myself as a writer, and who or what discourses produced those expectations?”; “How are or were those values distributed to me in the past and at present?”; and “How do or can I accommodate, resist, or negotiate those values?”
As I brainstormed the many uses of McComiskey's heuristics (which I presume he extends as well), I came back to his original intention: that students identify and enter the flow of discourse. It occurs to me that McComiskey's invention strategies and questions do allow for those forces that shape our perceptions to become visible, making them thereby accessible. In effect, McComiskey has opened spaces for alternative subject positions, the demystification of institutional discourses, and created opportunities for participation and contribution. These moves are familiar in the moves of Porter, Foster, and DeJoy; definitions of post-process aside, there are definite intersections at the site of praxis.

Finally, I return again to the pedagogy of Professor Foster. One of the things in the post-process goodie bag that most appeals to me is the idea that students might be invited to become more than consumers and reproducers (as DeJoy puts it) of knowledge - that students can become "knowledge-makers" immersed in the "relational, intersubjective activities of knowledge construction" (Foster, Interview, Part Two). To facilitate these goals, Foster outlines a pedagogy he calls "transformative
writing" (Interview, Part Two). At Drake University, traditional first-year composition classes have been replaced by focused-topic seminars with "significant" writing components (Interview, Part Two). These include "a sequence of small papers, response pieces, and textual analyses plus a major term paper" (Interview, Part Two). Similar to DeJoy's decision to use literacy and composition studies as content, Foster tells me that the subject of the particular course he outlines in my questionnaire is for a seminar called "Exploring Literacies - Ours and Others'" (Interview, Part Two).

Within the shared-topic seminar framework, Foster offers his transformative writing guidelines, including "Key Teaching Priorities"; "Building Project-Based Courses"; and a "Project-Based Course Outline," including tasks and activities. First, Foster points out that transformative writing, a "collective term for the thinking and writing processes that enable students to write in the roles of knowledge-makers in specific knowledge contexts," changes how student writers "build and hold knowledge" (Interview, Part Two). During the process of transformative writing, students will assimilate, critique, and respond to "others' views," and reconstruct "personal
views and voices in relation to them” (Interview, Part Two). (These moves intersect nicely with DeJoy’s moves to have students resist consumption and reproduction of knowledge.) In addition, transformative writing is “inherently self-directed and goal driven”; “inherently recursive, requiring persistent, cumulative rethinking, and revising within communities of knowledgeable others”; and “requires students to develop strategies which recognize the relational, intersubjective basis of knowledge construction” (Interview, Part Two).

Foster’s “Key Teaching Priorities” says much about the ways that teachers might facilitate knowledge building within the real-life context of the institutional semester. Obviously, the “Project-based Course Outline” suggests a sequence of phases, which will “overlap and interconnect as students make progress on their projects” (Interview, Part Two), but the exigencies of the situation are clearly and more fully addressed by his description of priorities.

In Priority One, Foster states that the extended writing projects he envisions should “emphasize self-directed, goal driven planning, research, and writing” (Interview, Part Two). This number one priority of Foster’s demonstrates what William Doll, in A Post-Modern
Perspective on Curriculum, calls a “self-organizing, open system” – a “major component” of a post-modern curriculum (158-59). In an open system framework, “teachers need student challenges in order to perform their role in the interactive process” (159). On the other hand, in a “nonself-organizing, closed system framework, student challenges threaten that role [...]” (159). Doll says that a “curriculum designed with self-organization as a basic assumption,” as Foster’s is, “is qualitatively different from curriculum designed with the assumption the student is only the receiver” (159). In the first, “challenge and perturbation become the raison d’être for organization and reorganization,” and in the second, “challenge and perturbation become disruptive and inefficient, qualities to be removed, overcome, even stamped out [...]” (159). Interestingly, Doll speaks of self-organization as leading to a “unity or holism” (158). This unity, however, does not suggest “bland and entropic equilibrium,” but rather a “transformative union that results [...] from differing qualities, substances, ideologies, selves combining in new and (thermo)dynamic ways” (158-59). Perhaps this is what Foster had in mind when he named his pedagogy transformative writing.

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Effecting priority one in the classroom, Foster sees teachers encouraging students to see the "semester course as a set of opportunities driven by goals rather than deadlines" (Interview, Part Two). Recognizing that frustration is "inherent in sustained projects, opportunities for feedback and interaction should be maximized and grading should be kept to a minimum [.. .]" (Interview, Part Two). There will be tension, says Foster, between "student freedom" and "semester time pressures" in the course structure, so students should be encouraged to "recognize the self-guided choices built into each stage," and those stages should "be identified as necessary elements of self-directed productivity" (Interview, Part Two). I believe these suggestions support, in addition to a self-organizing open system, Foster's goal for students to "sustain learning progress" and his hope that students begin to develop "new forms of authority" and "new authorship roles" (Interview, Part Two).

Priority Two establishes "expectations and tasks which make writing an intersubjective process of recognizing and responding to others' views and voices" (Interview, Part Two). The goal of this priority is to help students "recognize knowledge-making as a shared, interactive
enterprise” and to develop in them “a sense of agency in knowledge communities” (Interview, Part Two). The benefits of moving toward this goal will help students become “insiders in specific knowledge fields”; help them understand that “writing and knowledge-making are inherently social and interactive”; and help reveal the “power and responsibility” of participation (Interview, Part Two). These goals are implemented, says Foster, in the course structure he outlines. This structure includes readings, participation in “interactive classroom feedback and response,” and writing tasks such as “analyses, interpretations, position papers, [and] journal notes” (Interview, Part Two). Remembering that these courses include sustained projects that deal with a shared subject, it is easy to believe that students will be constructing knowledge as they interact with texts from the field of knowledge on that subject, with other students’ findings and interpretations, and with their own developing writing processes.

To nurture this culture of “reflectiveness,” and to “maximize opportunities for long-term rethinking and revision,” Foster suggests that students be invited to see that “rethinking and rewriting are not simply wheel-
spinning, but the means by which project goals are kept in sight" (Interview, Part Two). In addition, Foster believes that “contingency must be built into the project development process” - students must be allowed to “change focus or develop a more workable topic” (Interview, Part Two).

As already suggested, a key part of this pedagogy focuses on “the importance of sustained, cumulative rethinking, reflection, and reformulation for students learning to write as knowledge-makers” (Interview, Part Two). This is Foster’s third listed priority, and a “core priority for undergraduate learning” (Interview, Part Two). He recognizes that “such practices do not take shape easily in the American semester environment,” mainly because they are difficult for “students to acquire” and for “teachers to nurture” (and deadline pressures don’t help); but teachers, says Foster, “through course structure and management, can make it possible for undergraduates to experience the reflective, recursive planning/writing practices characteristic of experienced knowledge-makers” (Interview, Part Two). Indeed, it seems Foster calls for a pedagogy that, while adhering to institutional limitations, challenges teachers and students to use their time in ways
congruent with the recursiveness of post era learning. He recognizes that there are institutional time requirements, and that recursive practices are difficult for both students and teachers, but by framing what he can (the phases, the topic, and the priorities), Foster offers a viable environment for students to engage in intersubjective knowledge building.

When Ewald wrote of re-envisioning educational paradigms, it seems she was speaking of relationships: the relationships students have with teachers, with texts, with fellow students, and with knowledge itself. By changing those relationships in ways illustrated by Porter, DeJoy, McComiskey, and Foster, the educational picture begins to shape-shift. Instead of the traditional teacher-student relationship which allows the authoritative teacher to deposit knowledge and the student to reproduce that knowledge, that relationship becomes a collaboration between meaning-makers. Teachers take on new roles as readers and writers and contingent knowers, while students assume new positions as knowledge builders, participants, and contributors. In the pedagogy Ewald and others envision, students can come to see texts not as models to master, but as textual artifacts they can interact with and
learn from as they make meaning. As this pedagogy evolves, students may see that learning takes place in communities, and that the interaction with, and relationship to, other students is a dance that bears the fruit of knowledge. Students may begin to see that knowledge is not an artifact, but a constructed morphing body of meaning that they can interpret and to which they can contribute. And perhaps most importantly, as this pedagogy evolves, students may come to perceive that their relationship with writing has changed. The discourses, as Sosnoski says, that they hear from past authorities will be deconstructed as they enter the flow, as McComiskey says, of those discourses; and as students sustain writing projects that are meaningful and recursive and interactive and intersubjective (as Foster provides), they may begin to understand what their writing is a process of (DeJoy); they may see that their writing links them to knowledge — knowledge they have built.
CHAPTER FOUR
SOWING SEEDS

My husband, an elementary teacher, recently commented that the math we learned as children is now known as "Voodoo Math." Apparently, this is a term used in teacher education to describe the way math was taught until the last decade. The words that were used, like "borrow" and even "multiply," shrouded the underlying knowledge informing our skills. We weren't really borrowing, my husband tells me - we were regrouping. And multiplication tables, taught as a rote skill, weren't explained as they should have been, as an extension of addition. "Kids don't understand that when they multiply, they are really adding; '3 X 4' is really adding '4 + 4 + 4,'" he tells me. But I'm still stuck on "borrowing." I liked the sort of familial relationship I imagined in my head as I "borrowed" the "one" from the next column. Now I've seen that in kindergarten they teach children about groups of ten using stir sticks, regrouping them to keep count of the number of days in school, for example. And, at nearly forty years old, I have had a revelation. I asked my husband, "You mean ... math is just a bunch of ones and we do a bunch
of stuff with them?” Basically, yes. But when friends talk about math, I tune out, or give this common answer: “Oh . . . yeah, I used to be good at math, but you lose it if you don’t use it – I would have to brush up on my skills.” What I am really saying is that all of the functions I memorized have slowly faded, and I never acquired enough of a foundation to understand what I was doing – to interact or to support a reciprocal, lifelong relationship with math.

Were our early composition models—current—traditional or process—writing voodoo? When I think of Petraglia’s statement that we “sacrificed” the things we knew about language to teach skills, I think voodoo. When I think of grammar exercises and five-paragraph essays, I think voodoo. When we teach writing “skills” removed from the context of what we know about language and language users, writing becomes a technical artifact, something to be memorized and mastered. Even when I think of the pre-write/write/re-write “drill,” which is the way some process writing has been packaged, I think of a witch’s brew – just add this, then this, then a little of this, and voila, good writing. Just as my math instruction helped me move through a system but did not help me become a functioning
mathematician, these forms of voodoo writing may move students through the academic system’s writing chores but are unlikely to offer them a rich understanding of the culture of writing or of their relationship with language.

Post-process, as defined and enacted by scholars such as DeJoy, Ewald, Foster, McComiskey, and Porter, moves to demystify voodoo writing by offering students the chance to view writing and learning as interactive activities rather than bodies of knowledge to be memorized and reenacted. The activities outlined in chapter three are designed to engage students in meaning-making that is local, interpretive, situated, and public. Creating spaces for students to participate in the complexities of communicative interactions may encourage them to observe the foundations on which writing genres are built; in turn, students in a post era classroom may question those genres and their usefulness within an ever-changing present and within varying contexts. In addition, by encouraging students to critically examine the forces that shape their thinking, students may have a peek behind the smoke screens of predetermined academic genres and discourses; and understanding the language acts underlying such genres may empower students to become participants in reshaping those
genres and discourses contingent on the communicative moments they may find themselves in.

This demystification, or re-culturing, of writing begins with acknowledging to students that teachers are knowers, readers, and writers, not keepers of "the secret." And it begins, too, with having students tune into the stream of voices informing their practices - by having students see that the chants of witches and warlocks past are mostly incantations of voodoo. Beyond that, students may see that writing is an extension of language that must be recursively practiced - that no waving of the wand will magically produce "good writing." An understanding of language and writing as public, situated, and interpretive will support a life-long relationship from which to draw. This understanding is at the heart of students "getting" that they are writers, and it gives them the confidence to address writing situations beyond academia. Students who understand these things about language and writing will be able to enter any context and have the ability to analyze and negotiate the writing tasks expected of them - students will know they are not "lacking" (or forgetting) the skills needed to write a business proposal, a newsletter, an obituary, a note to a teacher, a list of questions for the
doctor, a letter to the editor, or a journal entry. Students who study writing in the post era - who have the opportunity to engage intersubjectively with language and other language users - will have the first-hand experience of writing and knowledge as changeable, flexible, and accessible.

In this short study of post-process definitions and pedagogies, we have seen a number of intersections. Building connections and relationships appears to be an important shared goal among the scholars I observed. Reconnecting students to a relationship with language and other language users seems to be at the heart of post-process scholarship and activity. On the surface, this would appear to be a statement about the socialization of writing - process pedagogy originally had students focus on self-discovery and private writing; post-process pedagogy has students interacting and negotiating with public forces. But there is a deeper desire, too, to have students understand how language works in communicative moments, to see how writing transforms writers and readers alike.

From my standpoint, however, the most important move post-process pedagogues make is to transform the
teacher/student relationship. Without this transformation, students will not have the opportunity to build their own relationship with language and writing. Indeed, the teacher/student dynamic informs what is possible in the classroom. While we have seen evidence of that transformation in the last chapter, this work will go on as teachers learn new ways to reshape what Ewald calls the "default classroom speech genres [that] construct students as occupying object rather than subject positions" ("Tangled Web" 128). She points out that both "the death of authority in the classroom" and the "birth of student agency" have been greatly exaggerated (127-28). That said, the teachers discussed here are making moves unheard of a decade ago. Ewald believes that "communicative interaction" will be a "salient feature of post-process pedagogies," and that research should be done "that articulates how classroom discourse might both reflect and construct transactional, as opposed to transmission, models of learning and alternative speech genres with teachers and students as subjects" (128). "In advance of such research," however, Ewald suggests that post-process pedagogies "celebrate" communicative interaction (128). One of the ways she envisions this is having teachers
“reveal their theoretical stances and ideologies to their students,” which offers students the chance to “explore jointly writing skills and pedagogical methodologies” (129). I believe DeJoy’s moves to have students study the theories informing their writing practices answer this call. Porter addresses the “contingent nature of instructional advice,” another of Ewald’s visions (129). And Foster alters the teacher/student paradigm by facilitating students’ self-directed writing projects and by allowing them to take or leave his advice as a reader of their work. These are just a few examples from just a few teachers; I like to hope that there are more teachers working on this transition; only time and research will tell.

I do not believe it is too early to let post-process inform writing instruction. At the beginning of this thesis, I wondered whether “familiar spaces” would be threatened by a post era pedagogy. I believe they will be, and rightly so. However, if post-process informed practices look, at present, like the examples I presented in chapter three, then my own comfort level has not been threatened – there still exists a relationship with a knowledgeable reader and writer (teacher), and writing
remains a focus, if not more of a focus. What will be threatened is the familiar picture of the authoritative teacher standing at the front of the room lecturing about and dispensing knowledge, the picture of students as recipients and mimics of that knowledge. And perhaps less welcomed, but certainly more rewarding, is the idea that students will be invited to do the hard work necessary in forming relationships with language and other language users; students might study literacy and composition in ways that invite participation and contribution, and they might do the hard analyses which expose the structures at play in their lives; they might work long and hard on sustained writing projects that are interactive and subjective, but not necessarily comfortable. These are practices that will challenge teachers and students, but they are practices that are possible.

As Composition Studies continues its journey toward disciplinarity, negotiating theories, research, and pedagogies, I hope it considers student writers as valuable assets, and, like DeJoy, makes moves to include them in the ongoing discourse - not as objects of our research but as participants capable of informing and transforming our theories and our practices. If theory and research
continue to suggest that social, critical, subjective, and contingent writing practices teach language users what they need to know to form lasting relationships with writing, then I hope practice will continue to evolve and reflect those goals - much in the way that the scholars in this study are doing. Although Sánchez cringed when I reminded him of a statement he made over a decade ago, it was one of the considerations that drove this project, and what I hope continues to drive the field [and I don’t agree with him that it’s “overblown language” (“Questionnaire”)]. He said, “Theory and practice, if they are to inform each other meaningfully, must operate in a constant state of mutually transformative flux” (“David Bleich”). These words suggest that we consider theory (and research) and practice not as competing energies, but as endeavors which, through their interaction, transform each other in an ongoing, ever-changing conversation.

As the field grows, the apparent dichotomies of modern/post-modern and process/post-process will continue to be negotiated. There is no doubt that lines will blur and shapes will shift as scholars and teachers continue to talk about writers and what they do. If some fear change, others will welcome it - it is that push and pull, that
negotiation, that will continue to shape post era composition theories and pedagogies.
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