CHAPTER 7.

LEAVING MATTERS OPEN AT THE CLOSE

A common critique of postprocess scholarship is that its insights are not so very different—certainly not radically so—from those espoused by Process scholars, especially those writing and teaching and theorizing in the early days of Process. This is, I think, a fair point. What became postprocess is one of the many hypothetical or potential extensions of Process that existed at the origins of the earlier approach. Gary A. Olson has admitted as much: "What changes when you are operating from the assumptions of post-process theory is that you are likely to conform even *closer* to the original goals of the process approach because you will have come to terms with the thoroughly rhetorical—that is, radically contextual—nature of writing and the teaching of writing" ("Why Distrust?" 427). By Olson's account, postprocess differs considerably from what (actually existing) Process all too often became, though it resembles what (an Edenic) Process may have once been and what it could have remained. Rather than frame postprocess as a *break* from Process or an *extension* of it, two metaphors that assume the stability of Process, one might frame postprocess instead as an *intensification* of certain internal tendencies, thereby attributing to Process a dynamism that might result (via some indeterminate, complex series of events) in its own transformation.

Indeed, it's possible that the existence of postprocess may have led some scholars to return to Process texts with renewed vigor and renewed focus. Sidney Dobrin argues something very similar:

> Posts are really discursive demarcations more than anything else; posts mark a period in which conversations initiate about not only what we have been doing but what we are still very much currently doing. This conversation occurs in a reflexive, critical way that was not possible during the period prior to the post. This is what is hopeful about the post: the possibility of seeing and knowing the effects of that which is posted becomes greater. (*Postcomposition* 196)

In other words, asserting a *post* is a performative gesture, one intended to change a state of affairs at least as much as it is intended to describe that state of affairs. This is no small point. One of the (very few) merits of the term

postprocess, then, is that it opened up a space for further reflection and analysis and engagement on *Process*. It led scholars to understand the merits, as well as the drawbacks, of Process more fully. I value Dobrin's perspective on *posts*, and I'll apply it to postprocess itself shortly.

However, in fairness to postprocess, I think one ought to consider it on its own terms, as well. I have attempted to do that throughout this book. As Reed Way Dasenbrock suggested before *postprocess* became the name for the phenomenon in question: it is "far from being purely a negative critique" ("Forum" 103). It really does offer a specific and robust vision of how written communication occurs, and, though it does not directly suggest a narrow set of pedagogical applications, certain logical entailments do seem to follow. Rather than affirm postprocess in terms of how it benefits Process, then, one might re-frame it as a lateral gesture, a side-stepping, a separation that is neither an outright dismissal nor a rejection: postprocess as a new (enough) vocabulary, another way of talking and writing that enables new ways of thinking. Postprocess was that which could de-center "the fundamental observation that an individual produces text by means of a writing process," shifting its place in the field's collective perceptual field "from figure," the point of focus, "to ground," that which remains but recedes from attention (Petraglia, "Is There Life?" 53).

In writing this book, I strove to analyze postprocess without addressing its relation to Process more than absolutely necessary. Paul Lynch argues, "The prefix *post* never really escapes the gravity of the word to which it is attached. To be postprocess is to operate out of the terms of process" (*After Pedagogy* 7). I certainly agree with the first part, but I would quibble with the second. It is true that those opposing postprocess have forced it to validate itself within the vocabulary supplied by Process—an impossible task, something it cannot possibly do. Rather, as I have previously quoted from Richard Rorty, "The trouble with arguments against the use of a familiar and time-honored vocabulary is that they are expected to be phrased in that vocabulary," and thus they are unable to demonstrate the limitations of prior concepts, "for such use is, after all, the paradigm of [what is presently understood to be] coherent, meaningful, literal speech" (*Contingency* 8-9). I have framed postprocess as an alternate vocabulary, though, one capable of implicitly demonstrating the limitations of Process by enabling new and compelling insights about writing. To the extent that postprocess has succeeded, it has not done so by criticizing Process in the language of Process but by doing something else entirely and demonstrating the utility of that something else. So, I would affirm something very similar-sounding to Lynch's second claim—and yet importantly different from it in meaning. By his account, "To be postprocess is to operate out of the terms of process." By my estimation, in contrast, to be postprocess is to operate *outside* of the terms

of Process, to whatever extent possible, given the constraints and normalizing tendencies of disciplinary discourse.

And yet, although I wished to avoid talking about Process, I could not help but do so. In those minimal gestures, I hope I have demonstrated that Process (theories, pedagogies, and the movement itself, to whatever extent any of those can be said to have existed) suffered from two competing tendencies: dispersal and sedimentation. On the one hand, the word *Process* came to mean everything and thus nothing. In effect, because it was also a temporal indicator denoting a period set apart from its current-traditional predecessor, *Process* meant *something that compositionists are doing now.*

On the other hand, although the insight that writing is a process, rather than a product, had once spurred radical change, it could not maintain such inertia indefinitely. In Marilyn Cooper's words, "Revolution dwindle[d] to dogma," or, in Joseph Petraglia's words, "the mantra 'writing is a process'" came to be seen as "the right answer to a really boring question" (Cooper, "Ecology" 364; Petraglia, "Is There Life?" 53). Eventually, in Olson's words, "the vocabulary of process" proved itself to be "no longer useful," which is not to say that it was *never* useful. Of course, it was. But, its diminished utility need not have represented "a reason to despair." Instead, it offered "an invitation to rethink many of our most cherished assumption about the activity we call 'writing'" ("Toward" 9). It offered the opportunity for *relexicalization*, to borrow a term from Karen Kopelson ("Back" 602). Or, in Louise Wetherbee Phelps' words, scholars were given the opportunity to *proliferate their interpretants*: to see that writing is a process, and a product, and an ecology, and a network, and an event, and an activity, and an interaction, and a negotiation, and a visual artifact, and on, and on (*Composition* 46).

One of the merits of the term *postprocess*, I might suggest, is that it makes very little sense as a metaphor for writing; unlike *Process*, it fits very poorly in a *writing is X* construction. Nor does it come pre-packaged (or, perhaps, retro-actively packaged) with a concomitant metaphor—that *writing is a product*—as current-traditionalism did. Thus, inasmuch as postprocess (the signified, the vocabulary, the theory with a very small *t*) denies the existence of writing-in-general, affirming instead its radical situation-specificity, it is very well suited to proliferate interpretants. It resists sedimentation. If one endorses the supposition that no X can sufficiently fill the *writing is X* slot, one can start to ask the sort of interesting questions Petraglia seemed to invite: an un-ending series of *what is its?*

In her chapter "Why Composition Studies Disappeared and What Happened Then" and again in a 2002 interview with Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi, Susan Miller offers a realpolitik critique of postprocess, objecting not to its principles so much as to its potential economic ramifications. Curiously, Miller

had established herself as a strident critic of "sanctified composition studies," which, by her estimation has tended to rely on ethical arguments about the intrinsic value of the so-called "writing life," and thus to justify itself as creating better, more ethical subjects via writing ("Why" 50, 53). In its place, she advocated "a different writing studies" that might focus its attention on "situated literacies" and "very well-developed and smartly managed, indigenous writing practices, even those in academic disciplines that vehemently ignore insight and consciousness," in other words, one that "directs attention to practices rather than an interiorized writing life" (53-55). This sounds quite a lot like the form of Writing Studies I explored in Chapter 5, which traces its genealogy through postprocess. And yet, in both of the aforementioned places, Miller condemns postprocess because, she alleges, it offers insufficient grounds for universities to employ writing instructors.

In the book-chapter version of this proposition, she states, "Without a stake in a general theory of how composing and texts work, there is no justification—as some already suspect—for hiring *composition* specialists. . . . There will certainly be no reason to support graduate degrees in *composition studies*" ("Why" 55; emphasis added). In the latter interview, she reasons, "To assert that [postprocess scholars] are not experts about the writing process and that no one can be is to announce that there will be no reason to hire faculty members in *composition* at any institution. I am very cautious about the implications of saying that we don't study writers in the process of writing. If you don't, then what is your career-long, Ph.D. trained expertise?" (Bawarshi and Reiff, "Composition"; emphasis added). I cannot help but note that Miller continues to speak of the purportedly eclipsed composition studies even within a new writing studies regime, thereby indicating an inability or unwillingness to move her thinking beyond it. As Dobrin might point out, she also presumes that scholars of writing must study *writers*, rather than writing itself (i.e., texts, however broadly defined). If they were to depart from studying "writers in the process of writing," she suggests, they would no longer have an object of examination nor any trained expertise. To be direct: I think there are compelling reasons for rejecting Miller's rationale. In particular, I would like to question her realpolitik critique.

Inasmuch as postprocess proliferates interpretants and offers a conceptual space for questioning the utility of generic first-year writing courses, it opens up in(de)finitely many possible lines of analysis: it invites more research, more theorizing, and more teaching. It shows that writing is more difficult, more contingent, more situation-specific and activity-system dependent than Process theories had imagined. The same is true of writing instruction: it is more difficult, more contingent, more situation-specific and/or activity-system dependent than Process theories had imagined. Postprocess suggests that you need to study and

teach writing in the myriad places where it arises. No single site deserves special (and thus invariably undue) privilege, not even the hallowed first-year writing classroom. Certainly, the researching and theorizing and teaching that it calls out for may occur beyond the narrow, conventional bounds of composition studies. It may occur in departments of writing studies, or further afield, in the disciplines. But, I suspect that such a development would prove to be a net-gain for writing instructors, even if they are, to some extent, scattered to the winds, carrying the seeds of postprocess with them where they go.

Throughout this book, I have argued that postprocess ideas have ascended during the last thirty years, even if the word *postprocess* seldom appears within our collective scholarship anymore. These days, relatively few scholars would disagree that "writing constitutes a specific communicative interaction occurring among individuals at specific historical moments and in specific relations with others and with the world." Most of those assenting to that claim would accept a corollary: "because these moments and relations change," no generalized theory "can capture what writers do during these changing moments and within these changing relations" (Kent, "Introduction" 1-2). Fewer still would deny that readers and writers co-construct the meanings of texts, or that "when we write, we interpret our readers, our situations, our and other people's motivations, the appropriate genres to employ in specific circumstances, and so forth" (2). And, hardly any would deny that the material conditions in which one writes, the words one employs, and the physical or imagined presence of one's readers all affect that which is written. In 1999, Thomas Kent could tenably suggest, "This [final] claim is a commonplace idea nowadays" (3). It is even more broadly agreed-upon now.

In other words, though the collective body of scholars would (and should) find reasons to criticize and reframe some of the foregoing statements, there's a general agreement that writing is public, interpretive, and situated. Externalist suppositions now inform many, many more theories of writing—and particularly theories of what was once called *invention*—than they did in the 1980s, even if their externalism isn't identified *as such*. And, on top of all that, the argument that there's no such thing as Writing-in-General, and thus one cannot teach it for "nothing exists to teach," has also gained widespread assent, as evidenced by numerous entries in *Naming What We Know* and *Bad Ideas about Writing* (Kent, *Paralogic Rhetoric* 161).

Relatively few scholars address postprocess anymore. Those that have done so in the last decade have tended to consign postprocess to the discipline's "deep familiar" (Rule 36), to align their thinking with postprocess principles while distancing themselves from the category itself (Duffy, 418; Rule 104), to place their theorizing very conspicuously *Beyond Postprocess*, or to question whether

postprocess may be dead (Heard, 285). I understand, and accept, and even support the logic of each of those choices. But, if we are now post-postprocess (and I suspect we are), then we now encounter the opportunity explained by Dobrin: to explore "what we have been doing but what we are still very much currently doing . . . in a reflexive, critical way that was not possible during the period prior to the post." As I've tried to show in the book, postprocess is indeed "what we are still very much currently doing," even if it's seldom acknowledged as such. I want to suggest some ways, then, of exploring it in a reflexive and critical way. But, I also want to offer some methods for responding to whatever will come next and, eventually, writing its history. As one might expect, many of these will be methods I have employed or attempted to employ in writing this very book.

First, for the sake of accounting for large-scale or broad transformations in disciplinary thought and/or for documenting the formation, re-formation, and/or evolution of publics, I strongly recommend citational tracking. This action, I believe, will be as useful in re-assessing postprocess as in analyzing whatever movements/theories/attitudes arise next. Rhetoricians and compositionists have long been enthralled by the metaphor of the Burkean Parlor—a space for ongoing conversation in which participants enter and exit according to their availability, needs, and whims. But, while that metaphor accounts for some aspects of how scholarly conversations occur, its spatial emphasis (a parlor is physically situated and its existence is presumed to be stable) may blind us to many non-trivial features of actually existing scholarly discourses in our wired world. There isn't just one parlor; they are multiple. The many parlors that presently exist are distributed across and time space. Few conversants actually remain in one place for very long; they pass from parlor to parlor. But, it's not equally easy to pass from each to each. Some parlors will stay open longer than others. Some will be more crowded than others. Some will be dominated by the loudest voices; some will be less hierarchical. A conversation begun in one parlor may migrate to another, then to another, then to another. As that migration occurs, some conversants may travel together, but some may not. The conversations occurring simultaneously in different parlors may be making similar points but with different terms, or they may be making different points with the same terms, but one cannot know if either of those is true at first glance. What counts as an obvious or boring remark in one parlor may prove to be wildly interesting in another. All of that is to say: if one wants to trace out a given conversation, one faces a complex challenge in determining where and when and for how long to look. Even recognizing who is and is not participating in a given conversation is a more difficult task than we have often presumed.

If one wants to make a general claim about a highly dispersed, decentralized, and discontinuous scholarly conversation, one needs to have some basis for ac-

counting for that phenomenon's particulars. Citational tracking—backward and forward in time, from author to author and back again recursively—offers those willing to attempt it a basis for making (more) accurate claims about generalized but dispersed phenomena. I hope that this book, taken as a whole, offers a basis for understanding the utility of this citational tracking approach, oriented toward accounting for the conduct of publics. But, to give but one more example of why this approach matters, I'll turn to my favorite book ever written on writing instruction, Lynch's *After Pedagogy*.

Lynch begins his book by accepting the fundamental correctness of postprocess and postpedagogical arguments that directly undermine what has commonly been called *writing instruction* and/or *pedagogy* (xv). Even so, he asks a reasonable question: "What next?" (31). How does one teach, if teaching is impossible? I find his answer, that pedagogy should be reimagined as a form of response, extremely compelling (54). Even so, I believe that Lynch clears the ground for his own intervention a bit too thoroughly. I also find aspects of his argument lacking on historical grounds, even if I very much agree with his separate theoretical claims.

Lynch's basic complaint with postprocess—which he mostly associates with Kent's work—is that it over-emphasizes the radical singularity of each act of communication and thus "de-emphasizes" the role of experience and learning (89). From his perspective, Kent does not adequately address the relationship between prior theories and passing theories, particularly the way that passing theories become the fodder for subsequent prior theories (or, in non-Davidsonian terms: how what you learn *this time* helps you *next time*). Even in statements where Kent seems to do so, Lynch believes that his "emphasis . . . is misplaced" (90). In other words, Lynch never accuses Kent of not having done something; he accuses him of not having done it *enough*. Lynch thus turns to the work of John Dewey, which he believes offers a corrective: a robust philosophy of experience.

In some instances, I think that Lynch misreads Kent, wanting to see over-emphasis and under-emphasis where they're actually more evenly weighted. From my perspective, then, he doesn't need Dewey to correct an error in Kent's work, *per se*, because that error doesn't exist. (Although, to be sure, Dewey may offer a more thorough account of the issue in question, as does Lynch himself.) In a passage from *Paralogic Rhetoric* that Lynch quotes, Kent writes, "Once communication takes place . . . the passing theory, in a sense, disappears *to become a part of a prior theory* that may or may not be used in future communicative situations" (Kent, *Paralogic* 87; emphasis added). In his next sentence, Lynch writes, "For Dewey, such experiences do not disappear so much as become available means for the shaping of future practice" (Lynch, *After Pedagogy* 90). But,

Kent never says that the passing theory disappears altogether. It only disappears to the extent that, once communication takes place and communicants go their separate ways, it no longer counts *as a passing theory* because the passing moment is past. It is now "a part of a prior theory that may or may not be used" in the future—something quite similar to it becoming "available means for the shaping of future practice."

As I have explained previously, Kent assumes that—regardless of how much background knowledge one acquires—communicative interaction will invariably involve hermeneutic guessing. By Lynch's account, though, he "fails to distinguish between shots in the dark and informed hypotheses" (92). But, that criticism strikes me as not-quite-right, either. At several places in the book Lynch cites, Kent argues that one learns to become a "better guesser" in engaging with one's "neighbors"—i.e., those that one engages with regularly (*Paralogic Rhetoric* 31, 37, 39, 72, 118). And, though I hesitate to stress the point, Kent had already addressed Lynch's primary criticisms (before they were ever raised) elsewhere. In his Introduction to *Post-Process Theory*, for instance, he acknowledges our ability to learn from experiences and reformulate subsequent plans accordingly, and he suggests that our guesses can become increasingly informed hypotheses as time moves along. He writes,

> Interpretation constitutes the uncodifiable moves we make
> when we attempt to align our utterances with the utterances
> of others, and these moves—I have called them "hermeneutic
> guesswork" do not constitute a process in any useful sense of
> the concept, except perhaps in retrospect. By "in retrospect,"
> I only mean that when we look back on a communicative
> situation, we can always map out what we did. We can always
> distinguish some sort of process that we employed. However,
> if we try to employ this process again, we can never be sure
> that it will work the way we want it to work. Of course, we
> will be better guessers the next time we write something in a
> similar situation; we will know what went wrong or right, and
> we will know the process we employed to produce a successful
> written artifact. (3)

Now, one could find other passages from other texts in which Kent says very similar things—even going so far as to note that our hypotheses can gradually become so informed that we stop recognizing them *as hypotheses*, at all ("Preface" xiii). But, to multiply such citations would hardly be in service of my primary point. To be clear, I am not trying to undermine Lynch's work as a whole—which, again, I think is stunningly good. Instead, I want to suggest that now is a

good time to return to works that we think we know well. We may find that we have not known them as we thought we did.

In narrating the history of any movement/theory/attitude, one will struggle to balance an emphasis on "representative" or "leading" individual scholars and the more general grouping—what has often been called the movement, but which I prefer to call the *public*. To demonstrate this point, I will use Lynch's work as a foil once more. However, I only do so out of respect. If he has fallen into this pitfall, then it must be a very hard one to avoid. Indeed, I worry that I have not always avoided it myself. Let me acknowledge, then, the board in my own eye before reaching for the speck in his.

In any case, Lynch identifies a fault in Kent's work and subsequently frames it as a fault with postprocess as a whole. That fault does not necessarily exist in Kent's work—at least not to the extent that Lynch claims. But, rigorously applied citational tracking can demonstrate an even more crucial point: the very thing that Lynch finds lacking in postprocess scholarship as a whole—a theory that can account for learning and experience—has been one of its persistent concerns. In offering this statement, I claim no special insight. I am about to refer to three obscure texts, two of which do not use the word *postprocess* at all. But, if I have seen farther than others, it is because I stood on the shoulder of giants while holding a telescope (i.e., the citation tracker) that someone else built.

Before postprocess was called *postprocess*, Reed Way Dasenbrock suggested that an externalist orientation toward writing could improve upon a social constructionist one because the former "model of interpretation," unlike the latter, "allows for the possibility of learning from experience" ("Do We Write?" 14). Of course, as a good proto-postprocess thinker, Dasenbrock would admit that no general explanation could account for how such learning occurs or how new knowledge affects future practice: "It remains open, and interestingly open, how much of the passing theory is reintegrated into the prior theory, how much one's beliefs are changed by the encounter with another's beliefs" (16). But, that concession is just another way of saying that situations vary and we cannot do anything other than guess, as best we can, at how to respond to them. In any case, for Dasenbrock, the merit of what came to be called *postprocess* was found in the very thing that, according to Lynch, it lacked.

Of course, to be fair to Lynch, Dasenbrock's works have mostly fallen out of circulation within the primary postprocess public(s). Even so, there's good reason to see him as a founding member of it/them. Before *postprocess* was the name for a certain disposition or attitude or viewpoint toward writing, Charlotte Thralls and Nancy Roundy Blyler referred to it as *the paralogic hermeneutic* approach in a 1993 text ("Social" 22). At that time, they identified two scholars working from that position: Kent and Dasenbrock. Thralls and Blyler also dis-

tinguished Kent and Dasenbrock's views from those of social constructionists and of post-process scholars, whom they categorized as employing an "ideologic" social approach. And, notably, in a text published that same year, Dasenbrock acknowledged a public of two members—himself and Kent—studying Donald Davidson's philosophy within composition studies ("Myths" 31).

If one were to chart out the circulatory history of Dasenbrock's and Kent's (proto)postprocess texts, one might arrive at Anis Bawarshi's "Beyond Dichotomy: Toward a Theory of Divergence in Composition Studies" (1997). In that article, Bawarshi cites one of the Dasenbrock's texts and seven of Kent's, as well other early externalist articles—most notably (per the accounts I have narrated in this book) David R. Russell's "Vygotsky, Dewey, and Externalism" and Johndan Johnson-Eilola's "Control and the Cyborg." Bawarshi, in my estimation, anticipates many of Lynch's later argumentative gestures. He praises prior externalist scholars for demonstrating that "every communicative act is an interpretive act and thus is mediated by and unique to a particular moment, a particular object, and a particular set of people, each dynamically (re)constituting the other." And yet, precisely because it focuses so closely on what is new to each encounter, he believes that externalist composition scholarship "fails to adequately consider the interpretive baggage that we bring with us to every communicative interaction—those prior strategies or conceptual frameworks (gendered, racial, class-based)—that we carry with us from one communicative moment to the next" (71). In other words, while previous postprocess accounts "help us get beyond the social/self dichotomy created by the Cartesian split, they nonetheless do not account for how passing and prior theories interact, and so we are left with yet another dichotomy" (74). Bawarshi, for what it is worth, turns to genre theories as a means of accounting for how conventional (i.e., prior) and passing strategies of interpretation can interact profitably (74-80).

I do not intend to belabor the point, but, if one were to trace subsequent citations of Bawarshi's article, one might encounter Dobrin's "Going Public: Locating Public/Private Discourse," a chapter that "turn[s] to the work of postprocess writing theorists" so as to "propose an ecological model for understanding discourse" (216). There, Dobrin also addresses that the very thing that Lynch believes to be lacking in postprocess, an explanation of why "rhetorical sensitivity does not require the repeated reinvention of the wheel" and how "continuity stretches between experiences" (Lynch, *After Pedagogy* 89, 88). In stating his thesis, Dobrin writes, "In turn, I will consider that individual communicators rely on a host of prior discursive moments to develop passing theories for engaging particular communicative moments and at no time separate those prior theories into realms of public or private but instead rely on all prior theories to enter into any communicative scenario" ("Going Public" 216). Later,

elaborating on the ramifications of this view, Dobrin addresses something "it might seem reasonable to assume," namely "that each communicative scenario requires the individual to develop an internalized or private theory for engaging each new communicative scenario"—in other words, that one must invariably form one's prior and passing theories on one's own or alone (221). However, as Dobrin rightly points out, an externalist perspective suggests that what appears to be "the private"—that is, a function of the self alone—is always invariably a function of "the public"; one's private thoughts are only private to the extent that they have been "privatized" (221-22). If all of this is true, Dobrin concludes, there is no prior theory (nor any passing theory that adjusts it) that is not in some indeterminate way a function of experiences in prior communicative interactions (222). Furthermore, if one's ability to communicate is a function of one's ecology, it is important to affirm that "from moment to moment, the web of discourse maintains operational integrity through its relationships with users of discourse, the place in which those users of discourse use discourse, and its own shifting (lack of) form" (225). Ecologies are inherently dynamic, but they still demonstrate persistence. Things change at micro scales so that they can remain the same at macro scales.

Certainly—and let me be very clear on this point—there is almost no way that one would ever *find* all of the texts that I've just analyzed, were it not for citational tracking, nor would one automatically presume their inter-relations, at first glance. To reconstruct the public after the fact, one must reconstruct its archive of texts, which were published at odd intervals and not always in the likeliest of places. If one were only working in the manner of conventional genealogists, starting with the new and moving toward the old, I'm not sure that one would see what I have now made visible. But, starting with a few early texts (those of Kent and Dasenbrock) and seeing who cited them, and who subsequently cited *them*, and so on, one arrives at novel conclusions.

So, that's part one of my research ethic: if you'd like to make a claim about a generalized phenomenon, attend as carefully as possible to its particulars. Consider treating scholarly movements or commonplace theories as though they were publics and track citations. And of course, along the way, try to read source texts as charitably as possible.

Second, especially as new movements and/or theories and/or attitudes emerge, I hope that we may be patient with them. They are unlikely to emerge fully formed; they may experience growing pains. Scholars expressing broad-scale agreement will almost certainly disagree on particulars—and they should. Demands for consensus are stultifying, costly, and unnecessary. It is good that we disagree with one another charitably; such disagreement can be an engine of progress.

Furthermore, if new ideas do not seem immediately clear or transparently obvious, we would do well to remember that ideas we take to be *clear* are usually just commonplace assumptions that have been expressed with conventional terms applied in conventional ways. But, words are not neutral vehicles, and none is inherently more clear or transparent than any other. At first, scholars attempting to move away from (whatever they take to be) dominant conceptions will likely employ dominant terms under erasure, acknowledging their inadequacy but not yet dispensing with them, either because they do not feel empowered to do so or because they do not yet know how to do so. Or, they may indeed employ alternate vocabularies to indicate concepts not wholly comprehensible within the dominant lexicon. It must be possible—and I hope it will prove to have been—to demand rigor and exactitude of such thinkers without pulling their ideas back toward the status quo.

And, of course, I hope that we may find ways to value alternate ways of thinking, even if they do not present obvious or direct pedagogical applications at first glance.

Third, I hope we may attend to how phenomena appear at differing levels of scale and from different perspectives. Sometimes it's more productive to flatten distinctions and demonstrate similarity; sometimes the opposite is true. Postprocess scholarship was commonly faulted for claiming to diverge from Process scholarship while still resembling it in certain respects. The same, I suspect, will be true of whatever comes next. In some ways it will seem to resemble some strands of Process (if not the whole thing) and some strands of postprocess (if not the whole thing) and perhaps even some strands of current-traditionalism (though probably not the whole thing, one hopes). One will be able to frame the new as, in some sense, an extension of the old; in some sense, a break from the old; in some sense, an intensification of the old; and so forth down the line. Indeed, it's likely that all will be true—in some sense, of course.

Each of the various histories of whatever comes next will be what George Pullman has called a "rhetorical narrative": "a motivated selection and sequencing of events that sacrifices one truth in order to more clearly represent another" ("Stepping" 16). As Pullman carefully demonstrates, though, "Rhetorical narrative is not bad historiography; it is the inevitable result of the search for coherence and unity among disparate texts and practices—the inevitable oversimplification that language always performs on experience" (21-22). Historians, then, might offer different critiques of those with whom they disagree. To say that an argument is over-simplified is to say nothing much at all. One would be better served to explain why the over-simplification that one wishes to present is better than the over-simplification presented by another—on what basis, for what reasons. Even among rhetorical narratives, some claims are better than others, and

we can help subsequent scholars along by explaining the criteria for judgment that we have applied.

As a corollary, any account of a multiplicity or multitude will likely require criteria for assessing the commonality of certain premises and/or principles and/or practices. In terms of accounting for historical change, in particular, one needs some basis for saying: things generally used to be (done) one way; now they're generally (done) some other way; therefore, it's safe to say that we have moved from one period/vocabulary/viewpoint to another. One of the best ways of doing so, I think, is to focus less on what a given period/vocabulary/viewpoint values or validates and more on what it excludes or treats as anomalous. To be sure, though, these conventions are just as likely to be *unformulated* or tacit as they are to be *formulated* or explicit. I have previously noted, for example, that Process-era, internalist visions of *invention* often blinded scholars to the relevant, related properties of externalist approaches. Those conventions were largely unformulated, but they still produced real effects. Indeed, because the connection between internalism and invention was so fundamental, some externalist approaches were even treated as "challenge[s] [to] invention" (Atwill, "Introduction" xvi).

I have also suggested that postprocess theories, on the whole, show much greater concern for situatedness, materiality, and the role of writing ecologies in textual production than did their Process predecessors. Though she has established herself as a sensible and well-versed critic of postprocess elsewhere ("Writing"), Laura R. Micciche provides some useful examples for proving my point about historical transformation. In *Acknowledging Writing Partners*, Micciche notes (rightly though sadly) that "male theorists appear with regularity" in the discourses of "object-oriented ontology, actor-network and post-process theories as well as theories of materialism more generally in composition studies," whereas female scholars remain under-cited in these domains, despite their considerable contributions (30-31). She then turns to the scholarship of some authors closely associated with the Process movement, including Mina Shaughnessy and Janet Emig, as well as a few that I would personally categorize as postprocess or proto-postprocess, most notably Ann Berthoff, Marilyn Cooper, Linda Brodkey, and Margaret Syverson. Those scholars, she shows, were notably "sensitive to small moments, idiosyncrasies, and the flotsam of writing." However, as she also concedes, they tended to treat these things as the "marginalia of composing," oddities and quirks, rather than considering how they might be foregrounded or centered in conceptions of text production (25).

To admit as much is not to fault them. It is instead to suggest that their work strained against the pressure of "dominant ideologies of authorship" that discounted their insights about material, affective, and embodied states as anom-

alous or "small and inconsequential" (37, 30). According to the logic I have applied in writing this book, then, it's reasonable to assume that those earlier scholars worked during a period (whatever one wants to call it) in which writing was presumed primarily to arise via conscious, individualized, internalist cognition. In contrast, Micciche, who can affirm that writing is "curatorial, distributed, and immersive" without feeling any compulsion to justify her position, presently works in another (41).

Finally, as I conclude my own contribution to this conversation, I want to affirm my desire for more analysis, more engagement on the topics I have explored here. At the start of this book, I acknowledged the complementary roles that generalized and localized histories can play. I have attempted to write a general account here that might still attend to localized specifics, as much as possible, given my constraints. I acknowledge that alternate accounts of the period I have surveyed may add nuance and complexity and depth to the stories I have told. I hope they will.

At its close, then, I want to leave this text open.

I hope that mine won't be the last voice on the subjects I've considered.

I hope that someone will take up the strands I've left frayed here and tie some of them together.

Someone else may find holes in the fabric I've woven and attempt to patch them.

Another may tear the whole thing apart.

Another may pick up the scraps and quilt them together with some seemingly mis-matched pieces.

Still others may arise—of whom this tattered metaphor offers no account.

Who's to say?

We can't know.

In any case, I leave this text open, and I welcome others to engage it and refine it and expand it and even, where it's wrong, to rebuke it.

We don't yet know enough about how our discipline's thinking has evolved over the last thirty or so years. We don't agree about enough, and we haven't yet publicly disagreed about enough.

There is more to be written.

I leave it for others to write.