INTRODUCTION
Postmodernity and Writing Programs

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> *At worst, postmodernism appears to be a mysterious, if ubiquitous, ingredient—like raspberry vinegar, which instantly turns any recipe into nouvelle cuisine.*
>
> —Ihab Hassan

CONTENDING WITH THE POSTMODERN

A cliché in academe generally and English departments particularly, postmodernism has come to characterize nearly every facet of contemporary life from **A**rchitecture, art, and film to feminism, music, lifestyles, photography, and popular culture. One day soon, we suspect, we might even find that someone has constructed a **Z**oo labeled "postmodern." Given such a ubiquitous term, we need to clarify exactly what parts of the term "postmodern" we focus on in this collection and explain why we use the term in conjunction with the work of Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) today.

Ihab Hassan jokes above about what overusing the term "postmodernism," at worst, can come to. Postmodernism, by its very nature, defies easy description. Hassan, however, tries to pin down some of its characteristics when he says that "postmodernism . . . remains, at best, an equivocal concept, a disjunctive category, doubly modified by the impetus of the phenomenon itself and by the shifting perceptions of its critics" (1987, 173). He constructs a two-column chart juxtaposing postmodernism and modernism, the movement it reacts against (see appendix). This schema has helped composition scholars like Lester Faigley to envision their field in relation to the two movements.[1] Faigley argues that composition studies itself sides more with modernism than postmodernism in the ways that most writing instructors have conceived of "good" student texts. He draws on Hassan's list of modern and postmodern oppositions to illustrate his point that modernist qualities such as "romanticism, form (conjunctive, closed), purpose, design, hierarchy,

mastery/logos, and art object/finished work" have traditionally been rewarded by composition teachers (Faigley 1992, 14).

Postmodernism's elusiveness and its focus on cultural contexts has also provided the focus for an entire collection of essays (Harkin and Schilb 1991), each exploring or problematizing different aspects of post-modern thought such as feminism, Marxism, dialogism, and ideology in relation to composition studies as a field.

On the whole, however, postmodernism's questioning of hierarchy, its recognition of paratactic associations, and its rejection of grand nar-ratives, among other characteristics, has yet to be explored in depth in relation to the work of Writing Program Administrators. Their work places WPAs in spaces outside of the microcosmic individual classroom where they must assume overarching responsibility for a program, a curriculum, a group of instructors with varying pedagogies and tech-nological expertise, the program in relation to a university with its own particular mission, and to a state with its view of accountability and assessment. If we shift our focus from the field of composition studies as a whole to the typical writing program, then, we actually find that the other column of Hassan's list, the one itemizing postmodern qualities, aptly characterizes the world in which WPAs must function everyday: "antiform (disjunctive, open), chance, anarchy, exhaustion/silence, process, participation, dispersal, rhetoric, parataxis, metonymy, anti-narrative" (Hassan 1987, 91). One problem of being a WPA might be exactly this disjunction between modernism and postmodernism: while composition studies still might side more with modernism, the WPA's job in reality must grapple with postmodern habits of thought and ways of being. This struggle may or may not mean that WPAs adopt a post-modern stance; it does mean, however, that the being a WPA requires dealing with postmodern fallout. Discord, anyone?

The argument behind this collection of essays is that the cultural and intellectual legacies of postmodernism affect the world of WPAs daily as they work to direct their composition programs and tackle the unend-ing numbers of problems that invariably arise. Postmodernism, further-more, offers a useful lens through which to view the work of WPAs and to examine those various cultural and institutional issues that shape their work. As Stuart Sim posits:

> In a general sense . . . postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been struc-tured over the last couple of centuries. . . . [P]ostmodernists are invariably

> critical of universalizing theories, . . . as well as being anti-authoritarian in their outlook. To move from the modern to the postmodern is to embrace scepticism about what our culture stands for and strives for. (Sim 2001, vii)

For the individual WPA, Sim's particular notion of postmodernism is useful. Because WPA scholarship has begun to theorize what it means to *be* a WPA and work as a WPA, we can see postmodernity in action: the tensions of bureaucratic power wielding and the deconstruction of that notion, and the WPA as a collaborative, decentered facilitator depending on participatory processes that make writing programs open, fluid associations rather than closed, rigid hierarchies (see for example Dickson 1993; Gunner 1994; Goodburn and Leverenz 1998; Mirtz and Cullen 2002; Gunner 2002). WPAs are, as Sim suggests, criticizing universalizing theories, examining alternatives to authoritative positions, and doing so with savvy coupled with constructive skepticism.

WPAs, then, may assume a postmodern stance in relation to hierarchies surrounding their programs. But they may also be the targets of postmodern skepticism themselves as they attempt to direct university programs that are some of the most complex of all on campus. In fact, few university programs see the entire (or almost entire) entering and transfer-student population during the year, yet writing programs are expected to hone these students' academic literacy, polish their grammar and syntax problems, and send them off into their "real" courses free of comma splices. WPAs often find themselves negotiating with local hierarchies—that is, university administrators—as they develop, change, enhance, and staff their writing programs. All WPAs, likewise, are trying to create or struggling to maintain a writing program that is a site of plenty—plenty of resources, staff, and budgets—where robust, well-developed, and innovative writing courses thrive to meet the needs of students, the academy, the workplace, and society, a site where student learning and literacy occupy the core of all decision making.

Considering the postmodern legacy in relation to WPA work can help us understand our situations so that we may then act, fully realizing that any act will always be fraught with discord; while grand writing program narratives are no longer possible in our time, reflections within the context of specific programs can help us all understand the multiple philosophical and ideological forces that constantly press on any WPA. Like Weiser and Rose, we take issue with Stanley Fish's dismissal of post-structural theory as it relates to administration, or at least, writing program administration.

> According to Fish, theory, or at least poststructural theory, "can't tell you what to do or what not to do" (Fish 2000, 16); so it's of no consequence to an administrator whose job it is to act—or to decide not to act. We want to argue that theory should not be judged by whether it tells us how to solve our administrative problems; instead, we should look to theory for its explanatory power—its power to help us understand the problem, situations, and contexts of our work, thus positioning us to make decisions and take actions based on a richer understanding of their implications. (Weiser and Rose 2002, 189)

Postmodern theory can move us from discord to direction, if even (and always) only momentarily.

"POSTMODERNISM ONCE MORE—THAT BREACH HAS BEGUN TO YAWN!" —IHAB HASSAN

As we mentioned above, Faigley refers to select characteristics of modernism as schematized by Hassan. We are using the antitheses of these terms plus a few others to explore how postmodernism affects the WPA. Hassan is useful because in developing his schema, he "draws on ideas in many fields—rhetoric, linguistics, literary theory, philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, political science, even theology—and draws on many authors—European and American—aligned with diverse movements, groups, and views" (Hassan 1987, 92). The chart, then (see p. 17), represents the essence of many thinkers' ideas about postmodernism—not just one's or not just Hassan's.

Antiform (disjunctive/open)

The writing programs that WPAs guide are much farther from being reified structures than we might like to think, much closer instead to the disjunctive, open antiform that Hassan posits as a postmodern quality. The comings and goings of part-timers, faculty, students, and staff all mark a writing program as porous on at least the level of personnel. On the level of placement, curricula, and pedagogy as well, a writing program bears disjunctive and open characteristics. Many placement procedures may not measure what writing faculty want to know before placing students in different writing classes; placement tests used may be antiquated or adopted for financial reasons, and university administrators may even have decided on placement procedures without consulting the WPA. Students in various classes come to the university with different skills and training from various high schools and colleges.

Some are basic writers; some are honors students. Some may never even have written expository essays, attaining their placement in first-semester composition merely by taking the requisite number of literature and speech classes before arriving on the university campus. We can never count on a given level of knowledge when we begin teaching any class. So a writing program's curriculum must be open enough to account for all this variance.

Chance

Along with being structurally open, a writing program is subject to chance as far as its teaching personnel and the administrators to whom a WPA must report. WPAs must often rely in large part on graduate teaching assistants and part-time faculty, getting to choose only among students who apply for particular programs and part-time faculty who live in the immediate area. These teaching assistants may or may not arrive with prior teaching experience; part-timers may or may not be familiar with a program's goals and outcomes. Sometimes in emergencies, teaching assistants (TAs) or part-timers may even be hired without input from the WPA, yet the WPA must work with these teaching staff members.

The administrators with whom WPAs work are also left to chance, at least as far as input from WPAs is concerned when these administrators are hired, promoted, or elected. Occasionally we do have sympathetic provosts or deans who support our programs and understand the myriad pressures competing for a WPA's attention. We can never be certain, however, when these supportive administrators will move on to other positions, especially in today's economy, and those administrators' exact opposites will take over. Department heads also rotate, and may or may not be sympathetic to writing studies, may or may not have even taught composition, may or may not consider the WPA's work legitimate and administrative.

And again, WPAs are left open to legislative chance, state budgets, and the ways higher education and accreditation are viewed by elected officials and their appointed boards, who also go and come and go, usually misapprehending the implications of their acts and the effects of these acts as they work their ways through university systems. As Stanley Fish so cheerfully and bluntly puts it:

> In the past few months I have been saying nasty things . . . about members of Congress, Illinois state representatives and senators, the governor of Illinois, the governor's budget director, and the governor-appointed Illinois Board of

> Higher Education (IBHE). I have called these people ignorant, misinformed, demagogic, dishonest, slipshod, and have repeatedly suggested that when it comes to colleges and universities either they don't know what they're talking about or (and this is worse) they do know and are deliberately setting out to destroy public higher education. (Fish 2004, C1)

If WPAs' programs exist in anything but a vacuum, well, then, we are subject to some board somewhere, and we definitely occupy prime real estate at the foot of Chance, aka the goddess Fortuna.

Anarchy

While Hassan offers the term "anarchy" as a condition of postmodernism, we prefer the less warlike term "resistance" to articulate the tensions that exist throughout writing programs. From the students in our classes to our TAs, our instructors, and even ourselves, the potential for resistance exists throughout a writing program. Students in our first- and second-semester classes often question their need to take them since they have already had four years of high school English. The lack of student motivation to write or participate in writing classes is the least confrontational form of resistance. Resistance, then, can show up in a variety of actions—from passive lack of participation to outright hostility. And students, of course, are not the only ones who can balk. TAs, part-timers, and tenured faculty can resist changes to the writing curriculum or not buy into the pedagogy and theory behind a writing program. The tension between academic freedom and program continuity, outcomes, and the mission statements of both the university and program may be the source of outright refusal to teach classes within the program's broad outlines. TAs may have had different pedagogical experiences, causing a disjunction between what they've experienced and what they are learning about teaching writing. Or resistance may come from meager working conditions often faced by adjunct faculty: no office + no benefits = no cooperation. Whatever the reasons, postmodern WPAs realize that because resistance can often be fruitful instead of destructive, they seek to engage it.

Even WPAs themselves are sometimes the source of resistance. For example, we may often tend to come into a program and make what we think are much-needed changes to that program. Such a well-intentioned effort, however, invariably causes an upheaval—a type of anarchy—because few people, particularly academics, embrace sweeping reform. Rather, these changes may cause hurt feelings, resistance, and

isolation. In addition to being the source of discomfort, furthermore, WPAs may be *seen* by others as anarchists if they try to break down or gain access to institutional hierarchies that do not recognize their positions as legitimate administrators.

Exhaustion/silence

Exhaustion and silence can often overcome anyone running a writing program. In February 2000, a post entitled "Thinkin' about quittin'" on the WPA listserv resulted in a lengthy and impassioned thread in which WPAs across the country reflected on the toll exhaustion and silence can take on them.[2]

Sometimes exhaustion and silence go hand in hand, but not necessarily. Exhaustion may begin with the investment that directors make in their own writing programs: having seen what works in other programs and being theoretically and pedagogically grounded, WPAs want their writing programs to be strong, vibrant sites of student and faculty engagement with writing. Sometimes a department or university, however, understands neither the WPA's professionalization nor investment in the program. Directors may have attended the WPA workshop, taken a graduate course in writing program administration, or served as an assistant WPA during graduate school. They are likely members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators and its listserv, and attend WPA sessions at the Conference on College Composition and Communication or the annual WPA conference. Unfortunately a collective departmental attitude that "any warm body can teach composition," and more so that "any warm body can serve as a WPA," wears on those possessing the skills and qualifications needed for running a writing program.

A WPA's exhaustion can be both mental and physical, and it can be triggered from both inside and outside the department. A few representative types of scenarios that cause exhaustion:

- WPAs without tenure invest half of their time administering a writing program, and the other half performing the activities acceptable for tenure. These activities would normally constitute a faculty member's full responsibility, but untenured WPAs often find themselves acting as two—both the administrator and the tenure-seeking assistant professor.
- A postmodern WPA may also feel the tension caused by an administrator's typical position at the top of a hierarchy and a postmodernist's resistance to this position while simultaneously trying to foster a collaborative program.

- A WPA's exhaustion can also arise from trying to meet the expectations that stakeholders across and outside of the university have about student writing ability and program consistency across multiple sections of first-year writing classes.
- A WPA's routine can cause physical exhaustion: listening to student complaints and problems, facilitating solutions between multiple parties, mentoring adjunct faculty and TAs, and completing bureaucratic paper-work. The physical exhaustion can vary depending upon how much (if any) help the WPA receives from a sympathetic administration and any funding available for an associate director, assistant director, secretary, and student workers.

WPAs without tenure or job security often work to the point of exhaustion while their precarious positions may also force them into silence either to keep their jobs or receive tenure. In addition, silence can affect WPAs when they feel as if their expert opinions are under-valued by the department or unit or when upper administrators make budget, curricular, or class-load decisions without WPA input. Finally, students themselves may in effect silence a WPA when they assume that the director, by virtue of being part of a hierarchy, will automatically overlook their concerns.

Process

A writing program always exists in process, never achieving the fin-ished state of a final product. A writing program is always in the middle of staffing courses, revising curriculum, and meeting departmental, university, or even legislative mandates, so no part of it can ever be complete. For the WPA, a job that is never finished and always in flux can be incredibly frustrating. On the other hand, by recognizing that we are not striving for the "well-wrought urn," as formalist literary theorists would call it, can be liberating. A writing program, unlike a piece of art, cannot exist apart from its historical, social, and politi-cal contexts. Even conditions far removed from its local contexts can affect the writing program, necessitating changes in curriculum. For example, political upheaval in eastern Europe during the past decade caused many to flee and immigrate to the United States. Suddenly, colleges and universities on the West Coast faced an influx of entirely new students in writing classes; to meet these students' needs, changes in writing programs were necessary—both in training faculty how to teach this unfamiliar, non-native, English-speaking population and in revising curriculum.

Participation

Modernist notions of administration rely on hierarchical structures. Postmodern notions of administration, on the other hand, deconstruct hierarchies, opening spaces for alternative visions of administration built on collaboration and community. Quite a few writing programs fit a modernist scenario so those that do could benefit from a postmodern examination, especially in regard to participation. Fostering participation among faculty, administration, and graduate students keeps the WPA from being an administrator in the modernist sense—a hierarchical dogmatist—instead becoming a postmodern facilitator who clears space for and values the input of others. Having other perspectives involved in shaping a writing program gives rise to ideas and perspectives that no one person could have thought about alone. Furthermore, participation allows people to claim ownership of or investment in the program. Rather than having decisions made unilaterally for them, they make decisions collaboratively.[3]

Dispersal

In Hassan's schema, centering lies in opposition to dispersal; the notion of centering that we are working with is embodied in the phrase "the ivory tower." Some years ago, and perhaps still even today, many writing programs viewed expository writing classes from the perspective of English studies or as a way to prepare students to become English majors—very much an ivory tower approach to composition. Viewed through a postmodern lens, however, first-year composition should not strictly fall under the purview of the English department or the writing program; it is an investment made by the university to hone students' writing abilities so that—regardless of their majors—they can move through the academy as well as into the workplace and the community. Postmodern theories of composition deconstruct the notion that the only way to write is to write like English professors. Students who come through the writing program are literally dispersed throughout the university, so the job of the writing program is not to indoctrinate or conscript them into one notion of writing. Our job is to provide them with the heuristics needed to meet the demanding writing challenges they face as students, workers, and citizens.

Rhetoric

As Ed White says, rhetoric lies at the heart of writing programs (1995, 133). While this may not be the case for all writing programs,

for postmodernists it should be. In Hassan's schema, rhetoric sits across from semantics. As opposed concepts, rhetoric suggests contextualized meanings full of possibilities while semantics suggests decontextualized meanings that bring closure. In "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," Jim Corder argues "Language is closure, but the generative ethos I am trying to identify uses language to shove back the restraints of closure, to make a commodious universe, to stretch words out beyond our private universe" (1985, 31). The rhetorical form of language then embodies postmodernism's workings: rhetoric strives to include, defying the modernist tendency to exclude. Being rhetorical means that we consider audience, even though this consideration can bring about either harmony or discord.

WPAs are in some ways preoccupied with questions of audience, or if not, they should be. James Porter argues that audience is a complex consideration for the rhetorician: "The question rhetoric theory asks is, Where is the audience located? In the text? Outside the text? Or somewhere in between? The answer is all of the above and, at the same time, none of the above" (1992, x). Not caring about who your audience is (at one extreme) or misjudging your audience (at the other)—there's the conflict.[4] Direction can take place when WPAs rethink their audiences.

Parataxis

While parataxis may initially seem an odd way to characterize writing programs, it does describe, structurally, how parts of a writing program relate to each other and how a WPA relates to the university community. Rhetorically, parataxis is the technique of placing clauses one after the other without using transitions to indicate whether the clauses relate to each other as coordinates or whether clauses occupy subordinate positions in relation to one main clause. Thinking of parataxis as a federation or association of clauses or ideas (or in the case of a writing program and its university, as a multi-vocal or collaborative venture) might help to visualize the more horizontal grouping implied by paratactic junctions. Writing programs, indeed, work best when many voices work together rather than following one giving orders at the top of a hierarchy.[5] Multiple-author papers and coedited collections, another way to view parataxis, also characterize the scholarly work of composition studies as a discipline.

Parts of a writing program such as the first-year writing component, advanced composition, technical and business writing, and writing across the curriculum may all exist within the writing program without

any one part taking precedence. And the WPA, too, must view the job of WPA as one devoted to forming alliances with other departments and with administrators, rather than considering the writing program superior to other disciplines on the subject of expertise in writing. In order to accomplish the task of making good writing a priority on campus, a WPA must think paratactically, that is, associatively.

Metonymy

Like parataxis, metonymy as a figure of speech is associative. It refers to using an object closely related to another as a stand-in or substitute for that other. Metonymy functions by contiguity; close proximity or association triggers the replacement. Understanding a metonymic figure thus entails grasping the association between the two objects in order to understand how and why the substitution was made. The standard example of metonymy given in poetry and grammar handbooks is something like "The White House decided to raise taxes." We understand the association between the president, the Senate, the Congress, *and* the White House and thus accept the contiguous relationship as the reason for substituting the house for the people who occupy it.

WPAs and their writing programs also work metonymically. The WPA comes, in the mind of some, to stand for the writing program and vice versa. The WPA also becomes a substitute for the curriculum and the pedagogy of that program.

Anti-narrative

And so, as we have worked our way through these notions of postmodernism, we can see that writing programs have no grand narratives, no monolithic construction. Each writing program, situated within its unique historical, social, and political frame, faces its own distinct set of circumstances, discord, and direction. There are no generalizations, only petite narratives specific to each locale.

DISCORD TO DIRECTION OR DIRECTION TO DISCORD

> [P]ostmodernism is useful precisely because it breaks down given relationships and hierarchies. But just as importantly . . . that breakdown in itself is always undertaken (or ought to be undertaken) as part of a continual process of rebuilding.
>
> —Johndan Johnson-Eilola

Administering a writing program, then, in this time of postmodern influences, might seem to range in description from discordant at the

best to absurd at the worst, from barely controlled chaos at one moment to utter pandemonium if we stopped to list each and every aspect of our work that can never be absolutely controlled. But the breakdowns we experience are, as Johndan Johnson-Eilola says above, "part of a continual process of rebuilding" (2002, 434). Each chapter in this collection tackles a problem local to its author's writing program or experience as a WPA, and each responds to existing discord in creative ways that move toward rebuilding and redirection. The first four, while sometimes drawing on specific programs for illustrative points, are more global in their approaches.

Opening the discussion is Deborah Holdstein, who addresses the hopelessness and powerlessness that inevitably occur for WPAs at some point. To help them overcome these debilitating inevitabilities and think in terms of possibilities, she argues that outside evaluations can provide leverage and assist the WPA in moving beyond discord on the departmental, collegiate, and university levels. Holdstein notes that because discord usually prompts consultant-evaluator visits it can be productive, rather than paralyzing, thus leading to rebuilding. Consultant-evaluator visits help break down the modernist hierarchy and give WPAs access to external leverage that may lead to productive action.

For Jeanne Gunner, postmodern discord arises when a writing program's narrative ossifies and smothers any dialectic. At this point, a writing program sees itself, like the pastoral genre, as being untroubled, isolated from the cultural milieu and its conflicts. Drawing upon pastoral theory, Gunner shows how change to the writing program is seen not only as disruptive but morally transgressive. She uses this theory to urge WPAs to avoid metonymizing pragmatic local changes as shifts in larger ideological systems, perpetuating the writing program as an untroubled, pastoral product.

Using metaphors drawn from judicial relations work to counteract the "religious" orientation governing the training of writing teachers in this country, Christy Desmet sees judicial notions of equity, as developed in critical legal studies and feminist jurisprudence, as an *institutional* way of negotiating the tension between sameness and difference that defines any community of teachers. She argues that the concept of equivalence—an alternative to both the fetishization of individuality and the insistence on legislated "community"—is key to negotiating that postmodern tension on a programmatic level. Desmet further describes transitions from one teaching culture to another in order to offer a theoretical description of the ways in which judicial principles might

guide a composition curriculum and teacher training program based on a commitment to equity and equivalence and remain perpetually *in medias res.*

Especially when they conceive of the university as a hierarchy, WPAs can often feel that disappointment and dissatisfaction permeate their identities: to view the institution as such a vertical structure allows for only one point of access—the bottom. Sharon James McGee uses postmodern mapping to help WPAs visualize both the role of the writing program and the WPA's situation within an institutional structure that is more like a web with multiple points of access. By examining the loci of power within an institution, WPAs can both forge strategic alliances within what they can now recognize as a webbed confederation as well as engage in institutional critique. As a tool that breaks down the notion of hierarchy, a postmodern map predicated on process and change offers a more fluid than static representation of institutions at particular moments and from particular angles, rather than depicting them as reified, oppressive monoliths.

The next two chapters examine basic writing as a part of university writing programs. Anthony Edgington, Marcy Tucker, Karen Ware, and Brian Huot discuss the discord that arises when a WPA misjudges an audience and the motivation of different levels of administration. For these coauthors, mainstreaming within the field of composition studies connotes attention to political, pedagogical, and theoretical concerns about labeling students, teaching them differently, keeping class size small, and providing basic writing students with equal access to the university. For the dean and provost, however, leaving basic writing in place was costly in terms of economics and prestige, and to this audience accepting mainstreaming meant finances rather than ethics: their priority was "the bottom line" and their motivation was eventually to "get out of the remedial business." Although no redirection can take place for these coauthors, they offer their cautionary tale to help us realize that the concept of mainstreaming for a WPA must transcend semantics and include contextualized implications.

As Edgington et al. point out, basic writing is one of the few courses in the university in which so many people believe that they have a stake and that they can decide what is best for the students, the course, and the university. Keith Rhodes sees pragmaticism as an alternative way for WPAs to view writing program administration, in particular directing basic writing programs. To embrace pragmaticist thinking helps WPAs see choices that can move a program closer to what it would choose

ethically, realizing that to evolve means to relinquish a rigid notion of commitment to a singular ideal. Pragmaticist administrators find value in a variety of possibilities and choose the option that comes closest to bettering the program.

In the twenty-first century WPAs must consider technology's place and power within their programs, and the next two chapters focus on the possibility of technology improving pedagogy. Mike Palmquist discusses the dissonance that he feels as both a scholar of computers and writing and a former WPA: the superficiality of using computers as an application to composition rather than having technology interwoven inextricably into the pedagogy. This felt difficulty leads him to critique the tendency to keep technology on the surface of our pedagogy rather than making it deeply rooted in our practice.

Fred Kemp's chapter is one possible resolution to the felt difficulty of technology's still superficial place in many writing programs' praxis, but more importantly to the disjunction between composition theory, teaching practices, and administrative accountability we find in large writing programs staffed primarily by graduate students and part-timers. Kemp argues for a paradigm shift in the way that technology is integrated into the writing classroom and the opportunities for alternative pedagogy that result. This shift, pregnant with possibilities for radically changing the way that writing is taught, learned, and administered, decenters the teacher's identity by proposing a split between a teacher in the classroom and a teacher to provide feedback on writing. A romantic notion of teaching identity thus becomes replaced by a postmodern solution separating the roles into the advocate for students and the commentator on and grader of students' papers. This split is founded on students' using technology to submit papers and receive anonymous comments. Further, Kemp challenges the grand notion of what a writing classroom should be like, one teacher and twenty-plus students who learn at the feet of the master—even if the teacher subscribes to a student-centered classroom—without trying to create an alternative grand narrative. Perhaps many WPAs will find this piece aggravating because it calls for such a disjunction between theory and lived reality, between classroom performance and assessing student work, and gives the illusion that instructors lose personal control of their classrooms and that the curriculum becomes systematized.

The next three chapters analyze how local problems have been addressed in creative ways at particular institutions, and while the solutions remain site-specific the way of solving these problems gives

us pause for reflection. Like Fred Kemp, Richard Miller and Michael Cripps are questioning long-held beliefs about teaching writing, but in their case they ask whether it belongs only to those in English departments. A confluence of events—enrollment growth, union stipulations about faculty teaching loads, and the university's wise decision to reduce TA loads from three courses a year to two—precipitated a need for creative problem solving in order to staff over 150 sections of first-year writing. "The Rutgers Solution" was a postmodern one, breaking the traditional disciplinary boundaries to train and mentor TAs both in and outside of English. As a result of this solution, the teaching of writing is now dispersed throughout the university community and its graduate students rather than being centered in the English department or the writing program.

Although program assessment is becoming more important in academia, many academics resist or at least dislike it because internal administrators and external agencies usually mandate it. Academics sometimes consider assessment as an anti-intellectual waste of their energy, believing that it forces labeling and pigeonholing. Susanmarie Harrington discusses the notion of communal assessment where value is constructed by the community—in other words, what do we value, why do we value it, and what can we learn from it? She argues that reconceptualizing program assessment can change the way WPAs do their jobs for the better. Using her campus's recent experience with the Consultant-Evaluator Service of the Council of Writing Program Administrators as a touchstone, Harrington develops principles to guide administrative efforts with program assessment into the daily work of a program by seeing assessment as constructed within the community and as a source for reflection rather than an imposition from higher-level administrators.

Andrew Billings, Teddi Fishman, Morgan Gresham, Angie Justice, Michael Neal, Barbara Ramirez, Summer Smith Taylor, Melissa Tidwell Powell, Donna Winchell, Kathleen Blake Yancey, and Art Young describe the struggles and successes of one project in Clemson University's Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) effort: Poetry Across the Curriculum (PAC). This project's paratactic activities constitute one way to address the problem of "follow up" after faculty development workshops. Instead of attending isolated workshops on various topics, faculty now meet regularly as teachers to share experiences using this teaching strategy, to generate collaborative scholarship on teaching and learning, to become sustaining members of an interdisciplinary academic community, and to open up themselves and their students to

"thinking outside the box." The CAC effort emphasizes multiple modes and media, partners with a wide variety of groups, embodies the postmodern concept of physical and virtual space, and embraces an open and malleable philosophy for sustainable program development.

The final chapter uses a local problem of metonymic reduction and resistance to analyze the effects of visual misperception on a writing program's instructors. Carolyn Handa asks what happens when power and language come together in the space of an online document attempting to convey a sense of identity. She answers this question by arguing that when the visual portrayal of identity comes to be misperceived as an exercise of one person's power rather than an interactive construction of programmatic strengths, discord results. She argues that a collaboratively constructed group identity may be nearly impossible to convey in a social context where members, unaccustomed to positive characterization and a democratic construction process, have been constantly faced with an organizational emphasis on hierarchy and a culture of pointing out faults.

A POSTMODERN ENDING

> The fate of an epoch that has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must . . . recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge, and that the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us.
>
> —Max Weber (quoted by Giddens)

Appendix

SCHEMATIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

↕	↔
Modernism	***Postmodernism***
Romanticism/Symbolism	Pataphysics/Dadaism
Form (conjunctive, closed)	Antiform (disjunctive, open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Mastery/Logos	Exhaustion/Silence
Art Object/Finished Work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation
Creation/Totalization	Decreation/Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Intertext
Semantics	Rhetoric
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination
Root/Depth	Rhizome/Surface
Interpretation/Reading	Against Interpretation/Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (Readerly)	*Scriptible* (Writerly)
Narrative/*Grande Histoire*	Anti-narrative/*Petite Histoire*
Master Code	Idiolect
Symptom	Desire
Type	Mutant
Genital/Phallic	Polymorphous/Androgynous
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Origin/Cause	Difference-Differance/Trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
Metaphysics	Irony
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence

—Ihab Hassan 1987, 91–92