process model of writing instruction works toward encouraging the student to examine and ultimately transform the social structures, "including the social structure of schooling" (Ward 95), that are oppressive in enforcing conformity and hegemony.

Irene Ward states that the expressivist, social-epistemic, and liberatory perspectives "often assume varying and sometimes contradictory notions," yet "all of these perspectives are considered part of composition's 'process' paradigm" (129).

Recently, reevaluations of the "process paradigm" have been undertaken by theorists seeking to understand and evaluate the legacy of this influential concept. Charles Bazerman questions whether the process movement was ever truly successful in addressing the ontological question of how process differs from product. As he states, "The distinction and/or relation between process and content of writing is as slippery and dangerous as that other ancient binary chestnut of the arts of representation: form and content" (140). Gregory Ulmer, William A. Covino, and Thomas Kent have applied poststructuralist and deconstructionist ideas to composition pedagogy "to devise a postprocess, postmodern theory for composition studies" (Ward 130). The effort is to redefine earlier models of epistemology, language, and communication in light of poststructuralist theories. Kent, for example, argues that "many of our most influential theories of discourse production and analysis can explain satisfactorily neither the nature of language nor how the effects of language are produced" (505). Lad Tobin contends that the process movement opened up for investigation and critique many of the concepts central to poststructural theorists in the 1990s. Without the process movement, issues of the decentering of teacher authority, the hegemony of social conventions, and the social aims of discourse would not be as accessible to contemporary theorists. In recontextualizing process within the poststructural 1990s, when "the writing process movement has begun to get squeezed by the past and the future, by the right and the left" (5), Tobin considers its legacy an essential defining element within newer theories of the postmodern era. In a practical vein, Tobin argues, too, that many of the fundamental beliefs of the writing process movement—"that writing should be taught as a process, that writing can generate as well as record thought, that students write best when they care about and choose their topics, that good writing is strongly voiced, that a premature emphasis on correctness can be counterproductive"—"continue to hold power for most writing teachers and students" (7). The result is "an odd though not unusual discontinuity between theory and practice" in which "the writing process movement, and particularly its emphasis in expressivism, is frequently dismissed in contemporary scholarly books, journal articles, and conference papers, while it is still embraced by huge numbers of classroom teachers" (7).

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arise. The chief spokesman for this perspective is Donald M. Murray, who has long contended that writing is a process "of discovery through language" (79), an "exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know" (80). Twenty-five years ago, Walker Gibson argued that these familiar metaphors construe composing as the process of "map-making," as the act of observing, recording, and accurately "reflecting the actual landscape" one is discovering and exploring (255). It would be better, he suggests "to think of composing as pot-making rather than as map-making." In this way, he says, we would understand composing as "forming a man-made structure" rather than as "copying down the solid shorelines of the universe," and thus better appreciate composing as joyful play and pleasure (258).

The most recent evolution in the construction of composing as a process can be generally described as an emphasis on writing as a social process. In 1986, Marilyn M. Cooper argued that writing is an activity through which writers engage with and locate themselves within a mesh of socially constituted systems of ideas, purposes, interpersonal interactions, cultural norms, and textual forms. Two years later, Geoffrey Chase first commended the field's increasing understanding of writing as a social activity, "as a form of cultural production linked to the processes of self and social empowerment" (13), and then elaborated his understanding of composing as the political act of accommodating, opposing, or resisting the dominant verbal-ideological scheme. An understanding of writing as a sociopolitical act undergirds Min-zhan Lu's portrayal of writing as a struggle—a struggle to move from silence to words, a struggle to re-position oneself among verbal-ideological worlds. Furthermore, writing as a social process is the basis for the common trope of composing as conversation (writing as the entering into and engaging in a given disciplinary conversation) as well as the springboard for a variety of poststructuralist views of writing as the social (de)construction of reality, truth, and knowledge, or as James S. Baumlin and Jim W. Corder put it, writing as "the always unstable, always unfinished, always contingent . . . active construction of self and world" (18).

Oddly enough, almost no one has examined students' constructions of composing. Thankfully, however, Lad Tobin has carefully explicated how his own image of composing as "always a voluntary and purposeful journey" (445) clashed with his students' portrayals. His students represented writing as a dissatisfying, frustrating, aimless activity, as wasted motion without intention or intensity, as a journey without purpose and without end, "as an impossible puzzle they must solve, a maze or imprisonment from which they must escape" (448), as a force over which they have no control, as something separate from them which they need to fight off, and "as superficial, cosmetic, and ultimately external" (449). These students portrayed "writing as something they hated . . . because it is good for them," writing "as an activity that parents and teachers force on students for their physical, psychological, and spiritual health" (450), "writing as a trip to the dentist" (446).

In sum, the tremendous range of definitions within these keywords gives some indication of just how complex composing/writing is and, moreover, emphasizes just how central the contests over the meanings of these terms are to the debates that animate the field.

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Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* seems to be at the fulcrum of contested contemporary perceptions of *error*. Shaughnessy notes that the perception of *error* as an occurrence in written discourse that calls attention to itself due to its lying outside the bounds of acceptability has no doubt been common among compositionists (12). But "the guiding metaphor of error was transformed" by her work as scholars began to deal more fully with the political issues of student diversity and open admissions (Laurence 21). Before her book, *error* was used primarily, if not exclusively, in a pejorative sense. Errors were to be avoided, and the teaching of writing was shaped by the intent to eradicate such errors. Shaughnessy, however, advocated exploring student errors, making them the subject of inquiry "in order to determine at what point or points along the developmental path error should or can become the subject of instruction" (13). While she defines errors as anomalies (12), Shaughnessy delves into a course of action centered around the reasons for those errors. This perception of error, referred to as error-analysis, reflects Piaget's view that learning spawns a system of errors or "signals of the learner's way of coping with new challenges" (Foster 39).

Barry M. Kroll and John C. Schafer extend the perception of *error* as a point of inquiry, and their definition is fused with their attitude towards errors. In an effort to dispel the myth of the "composition teacher as revenge-thirsty monster wielding pen and red ink," they delineate a shift from product-oriented to process-oriented remedies. The latter approach, which is informed by cognitivist theory and views errors as "windows into the mind" of the writer, calls for treating each type of error as a useful starting point in discovering which linguistic strategies led to the error. But the former approach, grounded in behaviorist learning theory, involves identifying those types of errors, labeling them "bad," and promoting habits of accepted discourse (242–243).

Some scholars have attempted to delineate among kinds or degrees of error. Sidney Greenbaum and John Taylor, for example, offer a scheme in which errors fall into three categories: "clearly unacceptable," "divided usage," and "clearly acceptable" (169–170). In like manner, Muriel Harris and Tony Silva distinguish between global errors—surface features that interfere with the intended audience's reading of a text—and local errors—surface features that do not interfere even though they defy convention (526).

Other compositionists emphasize that error is better understood as a manifestation of a rhetorical intention. David Bartholomae argues, for instance, that "[a]n error (and I would include errors beyond those in decoding and encoding sentences) can only be understood as evidence of intention" and, thus, an indication of control (25). Gary Sloan likewise acknowledges error as a matter of intention and rhetorical choice: the "gap between prescription and practice make the word 'error' something of a misnomer. A number of the 'errors' ... are perhaps better viewed as manifestations of rhetorical choice" (306).

Joseph M. Williams correlates the dissonance created by errors of grammar and usage with that of social errors. He suggests "[turning] our attention from error as a discrete entity, frozen at the moment of its commission, to error as part of a flawed transaction" (153). Williams notes the great diversity in definitions of error and a similar diversity in the feelings associated with particular categories of error: "The categories of error all seem like [sic] they should be yes-no, but the feelings associated with the categories seem much more complex" (155). Thus, he defines error as occurring in the interaction of the writer, the reader, and the formulators of handbooks (159). Connors and Lunsford (1988) likewise locate error in the interaction between writer and reader (396), an interaction that changes according to its historical context. In emphasizing "features of writing styles which are commonly displaced to the realm of 'error' and thus viewed as peripheral to college English teaching" (448), Min-zhan Lu likewise accentuates the social epistemic quality of error. She concludes that writing conventions are not essentially prescribed and constant through the ages; students must be taught how to operate within these conventions in order to succeed in their particular writing situations (457–458; see also Lazere 12; Owens 227–231).

Since conventions do not remain rigid over time or across different writing situations, error is an inherently relative and localized phenomenon. It is, nonetheless, one that is consistently construed as an artifact on the page or a product of the interaction among reader, writer, and rulebook.

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essay

For writing teachers (and students), the word rolls off the tongue as easily as any, and why not: essays, it seems to go without saying, are those works of nonfiction prose students try to write, often by reading other published essays. But this accommodating word, used interchangeably by teachers with terms like "paper," "composition," "project," and "exercise," is as ambiguous as it is adaptable. Consequently, researchers have tried to "explain" the rhetoric of the essay from a variety of angles. One researcher classifies essays as texts with abstract, philosophical, and multisyllabic vocabularies, distinguishing them from "literary discourse" (Stotsky). Another defines the essay as a single "macroparagraph," the test of its worth found somehow in the way its paragraphs hang together (D'Angelo). Elsewhere, one contends that the essay is not at all the hierarchical presentation of information according to conventional outlines but rather a horizontal progression of meaning in stages (Larson). And both vertical and horizontal renderings of "compositional unfolding," argues another, are equally at home in this discursive space best understood as something comparable to a musical composition (Hesse).

Interestingly, Montaigne, the "creator" of the medium, is frequently invoked to promote conflicting definitions of the essay. In one case Montaigne's writings are used as support for the idea of the essay as a laboratory for testing but not proving ideas (Zeiger). Some see in Montaigne a kindred spirit whose private ruminations take on potentially universal implications, the true mark of an essay (Atkins). These privilegings of the private-made-public, sometimes unapologetically "romantic" (Elbow 1995, 82), "egocentric" and "self-indulgent" (Atkins 637), are definitions fashioned partly in opposition to the "academic essay," a mode of discourse many consider tainted by dishonest objectification. These definitions are in turn challenged by those who applaud Montaigne's dispassionate attempts to unveil the truth through clear and independent thinking but adamantly reject proponents of the "personal" or "familiar" essay as succumbing to "misplaced passion, sentimentality, and even dishonesty" (Marius 40). And there are those who, less

Gilligan reports the results of three interview studies based on questions "about conceptions of self and morality, about experiences of conflict and choice." Gilligan is careful in her Introduction to make explicit the metaphorical use of voice to stand for the phrase "mode of thought," and she disavows any effort to generalize about "either sex," claiming that "the different voice . . . is characterized not by gender but theme" (2). In examining the interview data, however, Gilligan determined that "women's voices sounded distinct" (1). And it is through the lens of gendered difference rather than thematic difference that Gilligan's work continues to be read. Voice, for Olivia Frey, equates with a "feminine epistemic authority," a quality she locates in an essay by Jane Tompkins. "Me and My Shadow" is, Frey suggests, a

> brave experiment in writing literary criticism in her own personal voice . . .
> a new feminist language that is not derivative of male language, a new
> language that is accessible, concrete, real, an embodiment of the femi-
> nine. (507)

Her use of the term as both a representation of the personal and as a "language" notwithstanding, by characterizing Tompkins' achievement of voice as "a struggling to find," Frey uses the term as a sign of empowerment, a privileged position in a pattern of epistemological growth.

No text has been more influential in advancing this sense of voice than *Women's Ways of Knowing*. In "in-depth" interviews with 135 women, Belenky *et al.* "found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined" (18). Elizabeth Flynn assents on both counts; suggesting that selflessness and voicelessness are isomorphic, Flynn articulates a writing pedagogy in which women students move "toward the development of an authentic voice and a way of knowing that integrates intuition with authoritative knowledge" (429). bell hooks—although warning against what she calls the "static notion" of authenticity and the "cliched . . . insistence that women share a common speech" (52–53)—uses voice in this developmental sense. "[C]oming to voice is an act of resistance," she writes. The evolution, for hooks, is from "object to subject"; "the liberatory voice" is "that way of speaking that is no longer determined by one's status as object—as oppressed being" (55).

It seems clear that one cannot employ the term *voice* without inviting controversy; when used in discussions about writing it is perhaps a too obvious trope, one that is often charged with invoking *dissimilarities* before it can achieve explanatory power. And use of the term quickly draws one into oppositional debates about self/community, orality/literacy. Yet judging by recent publications, voice shows no signs of falling out of the professional conversation any time soon. Essay collections edited by Peter Elbow—who promotes voice as a "practical critical tool" (*Voice and Writing* xlvii)—and Kathleen Yancy are recommended as entry points into the "discussion" about voice.

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