PROLOGUE

That the first index of *JTW* authors and articles appears in this the seventh issue is, I suppose, some kind of milestone, or anniversary, or simply a prophetic sign that the *Journal* has thus far both survived and prospered. That sixty-nine essays written by seventy different writers and teachers over a three-year period have been published is, I suppose, evidence that a journal devoted solely to writing pedagogy will not wither away in embarrassment and ignominy. That *JTW's* circulation continues to be fairly well balanced among readers from all curricular levels is, I suppose, proof that at least some of the barriers separating those in our profession have been broken down and that the volume of manuscripts received and the increase in *JTW's* national and international circulation are so overwhelming is, I suppose, testimony to much: the growing professionalism of our discipline; the renewed commitment to that which we teach; the awareness of the extreme importance of research in our field and necessarily the equal importance of the translation of that research into classroom application; the accepted de-centrist stance of the *Journal* and so on. I feel as if the Index and this issue signal both closure *and potential.* Three years is *not* much of an anniversary, but it feels ceremonial. The three years, three volumes, six issues, and eight hundred or so pages (and the release of a fourth volume) have greatly refined, or at least sharpened, this editor's vision. One of my colleagues, Marie Cahill, and I worked very hard on getting the index to volumes 1-3 ready for publication. We first tried to arrange it according to subject matter — invention, revision, evaluation, theory, grammar, miscellaneous, and the like. It didn't work. The rather arbitrary decisions relegating an essay only to one category became suspect quite early. We then attempted to arrange the essays according to curricular appeal and discovered a couple of things we should have already known: almost all the essays were global, cutting across curricular boundaries; and even trying to do such a classification was contrary to the very premises and philosophy from which *JTW* evolved, not to mention the explicit reasons for accepting an essay in the first place. After a week or so, we decided the traditional author and title indexes worked best. Without fully realizing it, the

Journal had taken shape in three years, had defined itself through its essays, and had been surprisingly true to its original purpose.

To be sure, trying to classify and re-read all the articles brought me closer, I think, to being able to articulate what the essay on teaching writing really is. Patterns, tensions, and foci, not subjects or categories in their linear sense, began to appear during the retrospective. In an earlier "Prologue," I stated the ideal article that would almost always find its way into *JTW's* pages moved gracefully from the generalities of theory and research to the specifics of application. Certainly that remains true, but it's not very concrete, not overly helpful.

What was discovered and what might be of interest and heuristical value to readers and to authors of future manuscripts were at least five foci that may well give definition to the essay on teaching writing: the instructor, the student, the methodology or theory of instruction, the text, and the assignment.

Granted, at first these reductive classifications may seem no more concrete than the previous description of the general to specific rhythm. Nevertheless, the important relationships among and between each, the emphasis of one or two foci to the downplay or exclusion of the other three, and the pedagogical tension from, let's say, instructor and class assignment or student and methodology give a discernible life to the essay, become the essay itself.

To clarify this notion of a pentad, I point to the essays in this issue. In the Lampert, Comprone and Ronald, and Kearns articles, the focus is on instructor and methodology. The instructor brings to the classroom her considerable knowledge of reader response theory, cognitive development, and discourse theory. A quick glance at the authors' Works Cited pages shows almost a common departure point: research by and theory from Bruce Petersen, Mariolina Salvatori, Donald Murray, David Bleich, Flower and Hayes, Peter Parisi, and others motivate each of the authors to suggest methodology for the writing classroom. Although there is evidence of shared knowledge on the part of the authors, each packages that knowledge in different methodologies. While the assignment, students, and texts from the students are given explicit attention at times, the authors' essays actually materialize from the relationship of instructor and methodology, from a

concern with understanding and interpreting theory *and* then grounding it in classroom activity.

The Robert Root article is, I submit, quite different but equally valuable as an essay on teaching writing. Its focus is more readily on the student and the student's text, or more exact, the writing processes and cognitive abilities that may explain why our students write the way they do. While Root as instructor brings a considerable research base to the essay as do the others, his essay concerns most our understanding of students and their texts. In fact, he reduces himself to student and inexperienced writer in order to test his hypothesis: "Like a student writer tentatively offering an assignment to a teacher, I was able to say what I knew about the subject, but only my editor could tell me for certain if I actually had very reliable knowledge. . . . Both of us were experienced writers, and both had had difficulty at the associative and communicative levels because of unfamiliarity with both the subject and the task."

The Benesch and Sommers essays involve still a third relationship, that of instructor-student interaction and, secondarily, the kind of text that comes from this interaction. Both of these essays concern evaluation of student papers and the decipherment and intelligibility of peer and teacher commentary. Although Benesch's modeling of appropriate evaluative responses is an extension of the collaborative learning methodology and Sommers' teacher-student memo may be taken literally as assignment, the intent of each essay is more productive communication between writing teacher and student. The text, assignment, and methodology are there in the essays, but the tension that holds the essays together comes from the teacher-student relationship. In addition, the delightful enigmatic dialogue between writing instructor and student in Rubinstein and Weaver's "Talk To Me" may even better describe what I mean by the instructor-student-based essay: an essay that clears up miscommunication, misdirection, and misperceived pedagogy.

Jeanette Harris' essay, on the other hand, *is* the assignment, the exercise. By borrowing a concept from reading process theory and applying it to the writing classroom, she centers her essay on the relationship between assignment and student in order to help students "understand more fully their own reading process and to attend more consciously to the text." Likewise, the Fischers' essay on text processing and computer assisted instruction is (I'm hesitant here) about stu-

dents and their texts. Like the Root essay, it gives general attention to the ways students compose and the ways teachers can help students understand the complex activities of the writing process. One essay moves through developmental and cognitive models to reach conclusion, the other through electronic application.

The focus and tension of the Porter-Farnsworth review essay are the most obvious: the relationship between writing instructor and text (this time as in textbook). By rethinking traditional assumptions and discounting past relationships such as textbooks must always be selected with the student in mind, the authors discover a focus that allows the review essay to be much more than a review; it becomes a true essay on teaching writing that happens to review a textbook along the way.

And finally, what about the "scandalous" (as one of our readers called it) article by Virginia White Oram? Obviously it focuses on instructor and text too; only this time the text is the kind produced by teachers themselves, the kind, Oram says, that is destined to sink in the bathtub. The cutting sarcasm of the article arises from unsettling involvement of teacher and her own text, and the teacher here becomes both writer and reader, producer and evaluator of text. Read it with a smile; if nothing else, it will keep us honest.

Think, then, of these foci as a kind of generative pentad to be used to discover, to order and arrange, and to synthesize. By perhaps exploring each of the twenty possible combinations, authors may well find the control they need to shape their writing. I am almost convinced after reading a few hundred manuscripts submitted to *JTW* the last three years that the instructor-student-text-methodology-assignment foci are ways to write about and discuss the teaching of writing.

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