

## Introduction

*The Kinneavy Papers: Theory and the Study of Discourse* presents the most outstanding scholarly articles published in *JAC* over the last decade: the winners of the James L. Kinneavy Award. Yet, the papers collected here also document an era of dramatic change and growth in the sophistication of scholarship in rhetoric and composition studies. No longer restricted to the narrow confines of a field circumscribed by empirical method or by naive expressivism, composition scholars have developed a theoretical discourse that has truly revolutionized how we view the field, its scholarship, and the teaching of writing. The James L. Kinneavy Award and *JAC* have been instrumental in this change. Over the last two decades, the journal has made a place for rigorous intellectual work in composition studies by publishing scholarship that finds in contemporary theory the language to ask new questions, to reframe existing problems, and to move beyond current impasses in thought and action. As the journal in the discipline of rhetoric and composition most often associated with “theory,” *JAC* has promoted intellectual inquiry that crosses disciplinary boundaries in ways that are productive and useful to composition. The journal has attempted to expand the borders of rhetoric and composition by encouraging scholars to explore intersections of composition theory with theoretical work in other disciplines and fields of study. The result of such encouragement both by *JAC* and by other forums and individuals is that composition scholars now have the opportunity to engage regularly in important intellectual dialogues that take them across many disciplinary borders. The essays in this collection document the kinds of attempts made over the last decade to shift the direction of composition research and to broaden its significance through productive cross-disciplinary dialogue.

Not only does this book recognize the kinds of sophisticated scholarship published over the last decade, it also pays tribute to Jim Kinneavy, who endowed the James L. Kinneavy Award precisely as a way to encourage substantive theoretical scholarship. Jim was always an ardent supporter of *JAC* and of the movement to establish rhetoric and composition as an intellectual discipline. He understood that establishing an award for exemplary scholarship is more than a token recognition of

individual scholarly labors; such an award is also a material way to give presence and prestige to a field and its constituents. Jim's endowment of this award has been a gift to all of us. It is unimpeachable evidence of a spirit of generosity that defined his own scholarship and his devotion to the intellectual enterprise of rhetoric and composition studies. Jim presented the first award to Reed Way Dasenbrock in 1989, and until his death in 1999 he never missed the award ceremony held each year at the annual ATAC meeting at the CCCC Convention. Jim was writing the Foreword to this book when he became ill and passed away on August 10, 1999. *The Kinneavy Papers* not only marks the tenth anniversary of the James L. Kinneavy Award; it also celebrates its founder as one of the discipline's most learned and beloved scholars.

Through the example of his scholarship and teaching, Jim left us more capable of "doing theory," of understanding that the meaning of literacy includes a metalinguistic understanding of the structure and function of discourse—an understanding, in short, that "doing theory" is ultimately a part of "being literate." We, the editors of *JAC* during the now eleven years of the Kinneavy Award's existence, believe therefore that the present moment in the history of the discipline invites this collection of the eleven principal award winners and the six essays that merited honorable mention. The last years of the millennium have been increasingly tough times for theorists, especially in composition studies where a backlash against theory has taken many forms—for example, a reassertion of expressivism and creative writing as the antidote to the difficulties wrought by too much theorizing, and an equally vigorous reassertion of teaching over and against scholarship as the true "mission" of rhetoric and composition studies. We have therefore elected to move against the effort to turn back the clock by opening with the essays in Part One, **Pedagogical Theory**, which investigates ways to theorize the teaching of writing. Richard Miller examines the ways in which a "pedagogy of obedience" has been institutionalized as a dominant form of educational practice. Jasper Neel employs two competing conceptions of writing common in ancient Greece as a framework for juxtaposing the kind of writing done by a technical writer and that done by a literary critic. Patricia Sullivan calls for a reconceptualization of the graduate curriculum in English in which each and every course is seen as "a scene of writing as well as a scene of reading," *not* as separate intellectual activities. Drawing on her experience at the Nebraska Literacy Project, Nancy Welch illustrates how participants created the "voices of critique" that they needed to address both their classrooms and their institutions.

The four essays in Part Two, **Philosophical Issues**, provide a powerful, though implicit, argument for bringing together philosophy and composition theory in significant and consequential ways. Joseph Petraglia provides a thoughtful critique of the central premises of social construction, while Reed Way Dasenbrock draws on Jacques Derrida's "critique of presence" to demonstrate that by overemphasizing the similarities between writing and speaking, compositionists have not always made wise pedagogical choices. David Smit analyzes the scholarly literature on collaborative learning, concluding that it fails to provide a convincing rationale for using collaborative practices in writing classes. Finally, George Pullman attempts to level the hierarchy between writing and interpretation by showing that because invention is part of the way interpretations are performed, literary studies is "epistemologically connected" to rhetorical theory.

In Part Three, **Cultural Studies and Composition**, Michael Murphy argues that composition is not an effective radical discourse because it subscribes to modernist strategies of resistance; his solution is to transform composition into a thoroughly *postmodern* discipline focused especially on cultural studies. Bruce McComiskey proposes a "more complete" social-process approach to composition by presenting a conception of rhetorical inquiry based on "the complete cycle of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption." For John Trimbur, composition studies has paid too little attention to its own "narrativity," and he analyzes Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* as an example of how to gain critical insight into the conjunctures of discourses and practices in composition narratives. Arguing that the liberatory potential of hypertext is limited by the lack of adequate theorizing of the ethical and political issues of identity, Pamela Gilbert considers what kind of reader and reading practices hypertext requires.

The final section, **Special Issues in Composition**, presents five articles on the kinds of social, cultural, and political issues that have been central to the contribution that *JAC* has made to the theoretical enterprise of composition studies. Drawing on students' journals and their comments in a class she observed, Joy Ritchie traces students' exploration of the "contradictory and conflicting social-sexual identities" that members of the class presented during the semester. While David Bleich questions whether compositionists should continue to teach expository prose, the basic skill that underlies academic discourse, Susan Jarratt addresses the problem of speaking for others by looking at how "others" speak. Richard Coe analyzes Kenneth Burke's revision (first published in *JAC*) of his

famous definition of *humanity*—human beings are “wordlings” or “bodies that learn language”—and he shows how this revision provides critical insights for composition instruction. Finally, William Covino discusses how scholarship in the history of rhetoric can help compositionists reconceptualize “advanced” writing pedagogy.

Together these seventeen essays represent the finest interventions in composition theory published over the last decade. Engaging with the critical discourses of philosophers, feminists, literary theorists, postcolonial critics, cultural theorists, and others, these scholars have enriched the discourse of the field with new terms and concepts, broadened our conceptions of the multiple roles and functions of discourse in unanticipated ways, and opened up a seemingly infinite number of questions and new possibilities for composition theory and pedagogy. Jim Kinneavy was proud to support the kind of work represented here, and he was pleased to see the discipline move steadily toward the recognition and respect it deserves. This collection will forever remain a tribute to his desire for a theoretical discourse adequate to the work of wordlings.

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