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PART III: COMPOSITION AT THE CROSSROADS

Introduction
COMPOSITION IN THE AGE OF AUSTERITY

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AFTER SYRACUSE

In August 2013 President Barack Obama brought to Syracuse, New York, his plan for the future of US higher education. The choice of Syracuse was strategic: a once bustling economic hub, Syracuse has yet to recover from its loss of manufacturing jobs; close to half its children and teens live below the poverty line. The venue—a public city high school—was a smart choice, too: the hot auditorium was packed with children, parents, and teachers in a city whose schools have struggled as the city's tax base has declined. After recognizing that the country—and this audience—had seen tough times, Obama described a recovery that is now fully underway thanks to the "resilience of the American people" and the ability of his administration to "clear away the rubble from the financial crisis and start laying the foundation for a better economy" (Obama 2013). He also understood that for this Syracuse audience, "We've still got more work to do," and he openly acknowledged that over the past decade "we've seen growing inequality in our society and less upward mobility in our society." He even asserted, "[W]e've got to reverse these trends" and return to a time when "we put these ladders of opportunity [up] for people." But then, rather than announce a twenty-first-century version of the opportunity programs of generations past—such as the GI Bill or the Higher Education Act of 1965—President Obama moved from the metaphor of *ladders* to *pathways*: proposing the solution of "more pathways" for "people to succeed as long as they're willing to work hard" with government stepping in to assist not with stepped-up funding but with new measures of accountability.

Enter the College Scorecard—what one might think of as No Child Left Behind for higher education, except that instead of measuring and valuing math and reading to the near exclusion of all other subjects, the

DOI: 10.7330/9781607324454.c000

scorecard uses metrics like speed to degree completion, loan default rates, and post-graduation earnings. For an audience largely priced out of higher education, left behind not only by the most recent economic recovery but all the proclaimed recoveries of the past twenty years, and further ravaged by racism in an ostensible post-racial era, such a speech touted *access*, *opportunity*, and *hope*. It did so, however, through *austerity*. Through rhetorics of austerity, institutions of higher education are admonished to make themselves more efficient and affordable amid deep funding cuts, and would-be students are counseled to be wise consumers and keep their personal debt levels down by seeking the cheapest, fastest route to a degree. Acknowledging that his Syracuse audience had been devastated by the neoliberal leave-it-to-the-market policies of the past forty years, Obama unveiled as the solution to this crisis the accelerated marketization of higher education. The speech he delivered provided a textbook example of how the neoliberal economic and social policies that have driven what is now a multi-generational trend toward ever-increasing inequality can be packaged and applauded as common-sense populism.

We start the introduction to this volume with President Obama's Syracuse speech because we imagine an audience for *Composition in the Age of Austerity* that shares the sense of urgency and (increasingly dashed) expectation that brought teens, teachers, and parents to that high school gym on a sweltering August day. Composition as a contemporary discipline has been sponsored by the ladders of opportunity of earlier eras, fostering access to and support in higher education for working-class, minority, and international students; connecting campuses and communities in public rhetorical works programs; and promoting critical and creative literacy education K through college with the National Writing Project. Even as the always tenuous rungs of these ladders are gradually removed—the rungs of long-term and secure faculty positions, of funding for writing programs, and of access and affordability for students—the expectation of opportunity and service provided by the field remains. Many of us—including adjunct faculty teaching without healthcare coverage and without assurance of continuing work beyond the next sixteen weeks, including directors charged with meeting new mandates on a downsized or eliminated budget—are also struggling to figure out where we can find a toehold and for how long. This collection responds to a felt sense of crisis among those who teach and do research in postsecondary writing education that is wrought by the intensifying sway of neoliberal logics in US higher education, compounded by stepped-up austerity measures in the wake of the 2008–2009 economic crisis.

Of course, austerity and a low-frequency sense of crisis are nothing new to this field. The professional lives of compositionists—whether as contingent teachers or administrators in chronically underfunded introductory writing programs, as faculty on the margins of English departments, or as staff for extra-departmental entities—have long been characterized by making do in institutional borderlands. Professional work in composition means arguing for more resources, continually recalibrating to make do with less, and pursuing a scholarly legitimacy that perpetually seems just over the next hill. Yet this new felt sense of crisis is different—in part because of the scale and pace of the changes and in part because it has become clear that these changes are not temporary but permanent, composition having served as canary in the coalmine for a wide-scale restructuring of higher education as a whole. *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy* (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University* (Tuchman 2009), *University, Inc.* (Washburn 2005), *How the University Works* (Bousquet 2008), *The Unmaking of the Public University* (Newfield 2008): such are the titles of just a handful of academic bestsellers chronicling the shifting sands beneath the feet of *all* academic workers as state legislatures cut funding and impose curricular and accountability mandates; as tenure and professional agency erode with power and resources shifting to administrators and governing boards; and as an increasingly part-time and precarious faculty are saddled with new efficiency imperatives and admonishments to make up for depleted budgets through entrepreneurial schemes, industry partnerships, and the repackaging of programs as revenue-generating streams. The task of coming to terms with the broad scope of these changes, what they mean for the present and future of composition, and how writing educators and researchers might respond to them can easily seem overwhelming.

Those of us who work in composition struggled with these issues long before many of our institutional colleagues in other fields. The large-scale operation of composition teaching has historically been delivered by mostly marginalized and exploited teachers. This is a condition to which composition studies has been normed, if sometimes with objections and unease, the field's scholars finding ways not institutionally granted to carry on research and advance discussions about rhetoric, literacy, pedagogy, public writing, service-learning, research methods, and more. Some of these scholars have contributed to a long-running conversation about the problem of "adjunctification" that defined composition long before departments of history, political science, and geography woke up to the news that more than 75 percent of US college

and university instructional faculty do not have access to tenure (Curtis and Thornton 2013, 8). Yet such important work as Schell and Lambert Stock's (2001) *Moving a Mountain: Transforming the Role of Contingent Faculty in Composition and Higher Education* and Marc Bousquet et al.'s (2004) *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers*, along with *College Composition and Communication*'s occasional stand-alone section devoted to contingent faculty issues, sits alongside—distinct from and largely unremarked upon by—work that celebrates composition's public and service-learning initiatives, explores new media ecologies, and chronicles the pragmatic negotiations of writing program administrators. As the neoliberal reordering of higher education deepens and widens, composition still lacks a developed understanding of how labor conditions shape pedagogy, scholarship, and the production of literacy and students' writing.

In the age of corporatization and austerity, we now face the consequences of a field that has never established a scholarly habit of positioning composition scholarship in relation to the powerful political economic factors and trends that shape composition work. Lacking such a critical purchase, the field—long prone to proceeding from what Donna Strickland (2011) terms a "managerial unconscious"—is poised to celebrate the pedagogical "innovations" that come under the gun of cost-cutting and to embrace neoliberalism's privatizing and commodifying market pursuits as somehow compatible with the field's public ethos and mission. Our concern is not that composition is trying out new instructional configurations; it is that, with scant discussion, both the Margaret Thatcher mantra of "There is no alternative" and the opportunism that characterizes "Shock Doctrine" disaster capitalism are becoming the taken-for-granted center of what we are—of how we think and act as writing professionals.

Through the chapters collected here and the discussion we hope this collection will initiate, *Composition in the Age of Austerity* seeks to create space and impetus for coming to terms with and critiquing the impact of neoliberal economics and austerity regimes on composition scholarship and practices. The collection is informed by the broader critique of, and calls for resistance to, higher-education restructuring, but we keep our focus on composition programs, which have been on the leading edge of both democratizing and corporatizing trends in US higher education and whose instructors have served as the advance guard of professorial labor casualization. Uniting the essays in this collection are two goals:

- To document the full and far-reaching implications of higher education defunding and restructuring of the work and mission of

composition through understanding composition work within political economic frames.

- To examine how our cherished rhetorical ideals—favoring bridge-building, mediation, and problem-solving by the wily, can-do WPA—and increasingly disembodied and dematerialized critical theories leave the field insufficiently prepared to respond to austerity measures and vulnerable to new entrepreneurial schemes that threaten to dissolve existing connections between scholarly research and pedagogy.

Although this collection does not offer quick fixes or guarantees, we also have in mind a third goal: to explore rhetorics and strategies of resistance. Especially by offering critical frames for understanding the terms and direction of our work, *Composition in the Age of Austerity* aims to provide points of departure from which we may develop reflexive, collective strategies for response.

CRITICAL VOCABULARY BUILDING: NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalization is a way to describe the changes we are seeing in higher education that have had their analogues in virtually every sector of society, especially in the public and governmental sector. From schools to garbage pickup to prisons, we have seen over the past forty years a sea change toward privatization and the economization of public services, and this change is often called neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, Welch writes in *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*, "is, in part, a reassertion of classical economic liberalism's central tenet that major political and social decisions are best decided by the market" (Welch 2008, 7). But obscured by this "leave-it-to-the-market" rhetoric is the powerful role neoliberalism assigns to the state in assisting in the conversion of public resources and institutions—including institutions of education—into private hands. While neoliberalism was devised as a solution to the economic crises that spelled the end of the long post–World War II boom, "it has proceeded since the mid-1970s, with accelerating speed and whether in moments of economic boom or bust, to roll back a century's worth of public programs and social rights" (8). Similarly, David Harvey chronicles the changing role of the state under neoliberalism from underwriting and supporting social welfare programs to creating and maintaining "a good business climate" (Harvey 2006, 25). Neoliberalism is rife with paradoxes, but among them is the perpetuation of the theory that government best achieves the greater public good by serving private interests and privatizing government functions. "Neoliberalism," writes

sociologist William Davies, "might therefore be defined as the elevation of market-based principles and techniques of evaluation to the level of state-endorsed norms" (Davies 2013, 37).

Davies calls the neoliberal transformation of liberal democracies "the pursuit of disenchantment of politics by economics" because the neoliberal state assumes that when human relations are marketized, the best ideas and courses of action become self-evident (Davies 2014, 4). Indeed, by feigning to represent a non-ideological pragmatism—a politics that is apolitical—and promising to resolve the challenges of public life through the indifferent application of market-based principles rather than through messy democratic processes, neoliberalism gains its authority (21). This claim to authority is therefore operational rather than moral or philosophical; techniques once reserved for economic analysis appear to be a common sense that can be spread across all sectors of societies. Even when areas of public life such as public education are not placed entirely under the control of private entities, they are managed according to market logics that assume that "rational" methods can be fruitfully applied to any area of society and desirable outcomes can be quantified and compared. Disagreements concerning methods and goals, along with the existence of qualitative factors that aren't subject to quantification, are ignored or dismissed as irrelevant.

The disenchantment of politics by economics explains much that has happened in the scene of composition studies that chapters in this collection will chronicle: the managerialism that insists upon quantification while ignoring or denying the qualitative consequences for learning and the profession; the use of assessment to create more scalable curriculums or bypass the need for direct writing instruction altogether; and scholarship claiming to be "post-hegemonic" and even "post-critical" that cedes composition teaching to the realm of market algorithms and efficiency imperatives as it imagines a scholarly future for rhetoric blissfully detached from responsibility for and ideological struggle over writing education.

CRITICAL VOCABULARY BUILDING: AUSTERITY

An important aspect of neoliberalism is its reliance on crisis as a catalyst for its transformations. In *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein (2007) describes how crises have presented a strategic opportunity—termed "shock therapy"—for the neoliberalization of governments and economies throughout the world. As Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman (1962) explained in his classic blueprint for neoliberal

economics, *Capitalism and Freedom*, "[O]nly a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change" as ideas that had been "politically impossible" (think here of the dismantling of welfare, cuts to Social Security, the elimination of collective bargaining rights, the privatization of urban public schools) become "politically inevitable" (Friedman qtd. in Klein 2007, 7). In the wake of a shock, austerity programs are rapidly imposed on populations, even when it means widespread hardship and requires a radical restructuring of political frameworks. The point is to move quickly and with great force to minimize organized resistance or even full public consciousness of what is happening at the broad level of strategy and structure.

From this angle, then, we can understand austerity as the following:

- a set of policies enacted by governments and institutions, including institutions of higher education, to reduce budget deficits and cut programs, especially social programs, during the shock of especially bad economic times
- an opportunistic ideological strategy
- the initiation of funding cuts in the public sector that then becomes the new normal in policy over time

In the perennial declarations of financial crisis on US college and university campuses, and in the repeated calls for faculty and staff to join in "shared sacrifice," we can see how austerity measures—wage freezes, staff cuts, program retrenchment, class size increases—are at once an opportunistic response to specific instances of declared crisis and part of a widespread, long-term national (and, though this is beyond our book's scope, global) agenda to fundamentally restructure postsecondary education.

Although austerity represents a long-term policy, it also describes the shock-therapy intensification taking hold with the global economic crisis that reached its zenith in late 2008. Coming on the heels of more than a decade in higher education funding cuts, that crisis led—or created the opportunity for—near-catastrophic reductions in state budgets for public colleges and universities at the same time that sources for federal grant support were drying up. Austerity is not only about defunding, however. It is also about cost-shifting: in this case the intensifying cost-shift from public to private, with student debt by 2014 surpassing the $1 trillion mark. The financial press's heralds of economic recovery notwithstanding, higher education has not returned to pre-crisis levels of funding. Funding declines in some states even accelerated after the stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ran out in 2012 (State Higher Education Executive Officers 2013, 7). In

constant dollars, state appropriations per FTE were lower in 2012 than in any year since 1980 (19).

CRITICAL VOCABULARY BUILDING: ACCOUNTABILITY

Accelerating too is the zeal for accountability "reforms"—the economic crisis having provided a political opportunity for furthering the reach of the market into education, a political opportunity seized by the Obama Department of Education. In other words, the global economic crisis of 2008–2009 has not only provided states with the opportunity to further divest themselves of financial responsibility for public education; from Washington the crisis has also presented the opportunity to insist on reforming institutions of higher education. In a single breath US colleges and universities are cast rhetorically as both a means of fostering economic mobility and as antiquated, wasteful, and unresponsive to the needs of students or the public more broadly. Through reforms promoted by a combination of government officials, quasi-nonprofit foundations, policy think tanks, and corporations seeking to cash in on the growing education market, US colleges and universities are also being reoriented and retooled to be responsive to private (including and especially private-profit) interests and needs (see, for example, Newfield 2008; Tuchman 2009; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004).

How do the stepped-up calls for accountability serve this project to bring higher education to market? Consider: the neoliberal state's calls for stepped-up accountability represent a remarkable sleight of hand, one masking how neoliberalism always presents *more defunding* as the solution to the problems of defunding. Stumping for his College Scorecard, for instance, President Barack Obama presented the problem (students priced out of college) and a key contributing factor (state funding cuts) but then swapped out the evident solution (restore public funding) for *accountability*. Here, the solution to the *economic* gap is not *economic* restructuring (i.e., restored funding) but instead *educational* restructuring through accountability and efficiency mandates that push foundational changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and—by tying the "value" of a college degree to the speed of its completion and the earnings of its recipient—what a college degree signifies.

A closer look at the College Scorecard and other reforms reveals the handmaiden role accountability plays in the corporate restructuring of US higher education. Along with window-dressing proposals that purport to compel colleges to admit and support students with less advantaged

backgrounds, the initiative proposes changes in funding, delivery, and requirements for degrees. Recommendations include the following:

- Developing a Department of Education–maintained system to rate colleges according to their value. What constitutes "value" remains frighteningly undefined, but among the factors to be considered are the earnings of graduates and the number of years students take to finish their degrees. The goal is to tie federal funding, including Pell Grants and college loans, to the rating system by 2018. Those institutions that don't hit the prescribed benchmarks will receive less federal funding for their students' tuition. The College Scorecard is thus No Child Left Behind for higher education. (Though most recently the Obama administration has backed down from its plan to tie funding to the rating system, many colleges and universities have already embraced the rating system itself, internalizing and policing its narrow and market-minded ideas of "value.")
- Changing the standards by which degrees are conferred from credit hours to what is being called "competency-based learning" (CBE)—or learning that is verified primarily by assessments rather than classes successfully completed. The initiative calls this a system of credentialing based on "learning, not seat time." Touted as a positive example is Western Governors University, which claims to offer its online competency-based degree with "an average time to a bachelor's degree of only 30 months" (The White House 2013).
- Promoting online learning, championed as a means to improve efficiency and help students to achieve learning outcomes more cheaply and in less time.

Essentially, for working-class and many middle-class students across the country and the public colleges and universities that have served them, this is access and hope through austerity.

The College Scorecard, like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, does not promote itself as downsizing and outsourcing education, of course. Rather it is promoted through the common-sense appeal of such a neoliberal phrase as "learning, not seat time" and bolstered by pseudo-scientific measures that conflate learning "outcomes" with cost "reductions" and replace a word like "teachers" with "technology." Take this passage from the Obama administration:

> The National Center for Academic Transformation has shown the effectiveness of the thoughtful use of technology across a wide range of academic disciplines, improving learning outcomes for students while reducing costs by nearly 40 percent on average . . . Arizona State University's interactive algebra lessons helped students perform 10 percent better, despite meeting half as often, and at a lower cost. The University of Maryland redesigned an introductory psychology course, reducing costs by 70 percent while raising pass rates. (The White House 2013)

Such rhetoric, and the on-the-ground realities it helps create and naturalize, has plenty of discontents—most visible in waves of student protest against "Corporate U" and being "sentenced to debt" as well as in teacher and faculty strikes, the massive Quebec student strikes since 2012, and the More than a Score and United Opt-Out movements. Davies points to the soft spot of neoliberalism's credibility that these movements and mobilization target when they expose the incompatibility of market valuation with democratic values: "The rendering of economy, state and society as explicit and as quantified as possible is an implicitly moral agenda, which makes certain presuppositions about *how and why and what to value* . . . Hence, efforts to replace politics with economics, judgment with measurement, confront a limit beyond which they themselves collapse" (Davies 2014, 8; emphasis in original).

But even as Davies theorizes and sporadic movements try to bring us to the limits of neoliberalism's transformation of higher education, we are faced here and now with the escalation of corporate audit culture. That audit culture—where everything must be assessed against institutional benchmarks and comparator/competitor schools and measured for its value added—not only adds to administrative bloat (the class of managers to do the weighing, measuring. It also threatens to transform our consciousness—our available vocabulary and our available ideas for talking together about the work that we do. The chapters in this book thus focus on and chronicle how neoliberal political economy shapes not only writing assessments, curricula, and funding but teacher's agency and philosophies of program administration. Chapters focus too on how neoliberal political economy is dictating the direction of scholarship. Here is another core argument of this collection: that the economic and political agenda shaping the terms of work, the methods of delivery, and the ways of valuing and assessing writing *also* shapes the primary concerns and directions of scholarship. If, as Marx held, consciousness does not determine being but rather, being—the conditions we find ourselves laboring and schooled within—determines consciousness, composition as a field needs to grapple with how the material conditions and mandates of neoliberalism and austerity are shaping our scholarly assumptions, commitments, and horizons.

CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

Part 1, Neoliberal De-Forms

Chris Gallagher's "Our Trojan Horse: Outcomes Assessment and the Resurrection of Competency-based Education" starts off this section

on neoliberalism's reform movements with a glimpse of the endgame. Composition's embrace of outcomes assessment, he argues, has opened the door to competency-based education, which reduces writing to a "discreet, commodified vocational skill," writing students to "workers-in-training," and writing teachers to as-needed "success coaches." Compositionists are, nevertheless, hard-pressed to abstain from participating in campus assessment movements, writes Deborah Mutnick in "Confessions of an Assessment Fellow," especially when abstention would result in the work shifting to another colleague and under the threat of lost accreditation. Her chapter is a call for understanding the political economic forces creating assessment and accountability regimes—forces that call for *collective* resistance.

A challenge in coming to terms with and mounting collective response against neoliberal de-formations is recognizing the corporate reform movement's rhetorical sleights of hand. For instance, the push for hybrid or redesigned writing classrooms, observes Emily Isaacs in "First-Year Composition Course Redesigns: Pedagogical Innovation or Solution to the 'Cost Disease'?," appeals to our field's best impulses toward pedagogical and scholarly advancement but with the aim of delivering cost savings through increased adjunctification and even outsourcing writing instruction beyond faculty ranks. Reminding us of the progressive critical and creative literacy pedagogies that reform movements and mandates are pushing aside is Marcelle Haddix and Brandi Williams' "Who's Coming to the Composition Classroom? K–12 Writing in and outside Common Core State Standards." In this chapter Haddix and Williams return us to Syracuse, a site of President Obama's unveiling of his College Scorecard, and the impact of another Obama Department of Education-backed program: the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). CCSS, with its limited aim to judge writers as "competent or incompetent according to the standardized and timed testing measure," displaces diverse, expansive, and fully preparatory literacy practices to the extracurriculum.

Part 2, Composition in an Austere World

As Haddix and Williams describe, programs promoting copious and commodious literacy practices and perspectives are increasingly shifted to the realm of extracurricular, service, or volunteer labor. In "The National Writing Project in the Age of Austerity," Tom Fox and Elyse Eidman-Aadahl chronicle how in an instant this national project serving K–12 teachers lost its $25 million budget; while project sites continue

through the resilience and hard work of faculty and teachers in a decentralized and largely grant-funded network to "be at the side of teachers, especially in the most desperate of situations," Fox and Eidman-Aadahl also warn of the challenges of maintaining the National Writing Project's core identity and principles, particularly in a "federal climate promoting competition over equity." The struggle to carry forward the radical history of basic writing is likewise at the heart of Susan Naomi Bernstein's "Occupy Basic Writing: Pedagogy in the Wake of Austerity." In this chapter she revisits a series of devastating blows, beginning with the decimation of City University of New York's basic writing program and the suicide of a dear friend and colleague, that also propel her to Occupy Wall Street's Zuccotti Park, Occupy Sandy, and beyond—to joining and cultivating spaces in which writing helps writing teachers and students bear witness to dispossession, fostering mutual aid.

Basic Writing and the National Writing Project, as these contributors suggest, have been early casualties of the neoliberal assault on higher education. But perhaps the earliest victim (along with the replacement of welfare-to-college programs with low-wage workfare requirements) is the prison writing program. As Tobi Jacobi points out in "Austerity Behind Bars: The 'Cost' of Prison Writing Programs," President Bill Clinton's 1994 elimination of Pell grant support for prisoners resulted in the free-fall of programs from 350 at the start of the 1990s to fewer than a dozen today. Yet, she argues, even as compositionists struggle to meet writing program obligations on their campuses, the field has a continuing political and ethical responsibility to the men and women behind bars, especially if composition wants to claim a social justice ethos in a nation that leads the world in mass incarceration.

Implicit in this section's chapters is the importance of historical understanding: the political and social commitments upon which and the material conditions in which the National Writing Project, CUNY's SEEK and basic writing program, and prison educational rights movements and offerings were founded. Mary Ann Cain in "Buskerfest: The Struggle for Space in Public Rhetorical Education" foregrounds the importance of historical memory through parallel stories. One story is of doors opening with the founding of Chicago's South Side Community Arts Center in a period of rising labor and Civil Rights struggle and expanded federal funding. The other is of doors closing with the loss of steady funding and a physical space for the Three Rivers Institute of Afrikan Art and Culture, the long-time partner for Cain's community-focused writing class. In an historical period marked by the rollback of Civil Rights gains and the eradication of spaces in which people can

pursue emancipatory visions, Cain concludes, "telling (and writing) these stories to whoever will listen" is crucial lest the memory of what public education and public institutions provide is also erased.

The section ends with an austerity tale from first-year composition: a first-year writing program that was defunded even before it was launched and yet still charged with implementing and assessing a campus-wide foundational writing requirement. In "First-Year Writing and the Angels of Austerity: A Re-Domesticated Drama," Nancy Welch asks us to consider that neoliberalism has brought two forms of privatization to higher education: corporate privatization that moves to the market all commodifiable aspects of university work *and* domestic re-privatization that moves to the realm of unwaged and volunteer labor those social reproductive activities—including the activities of mass literacy instruction—that capitalism requires but cannot make profitable.

Part 3, Composition at the Crossroads

What to do? What to do? As the chapters leading up to this final section suggest, this is an appropriate moment—an *urgent* moment—in which to reprise June Jordan's (1986) question for members of the National Council of Teachers of English, a question which also provided the conclusion to J. Elsbeth Stuckey's (1990) *The Violence of Literacy*. Four decades into the neoliberal reordering that Jordan and Stuckey gave early warning of, Jeanne Gunner examines composition's "collective collaboration with austerity measures" including growing social inequality within writing faculty ranks. In "What Happens When Ideological Narratives Lose Their Force?" Gunner further probes the possibility that such collaboration is not borne of "false consciousness or inevitable interpellation" but fatigue, especially as our usual forms for critique and resistance appear to be no match against powerful and "mega-monied" corporate forces. What to do? Gunner concludes her chapter with a survey and assessment of digital media and posthuman rhetorical theories that (at least in the research universities that austerity's reworking of the higher education landscape seems likely to leave intact) may create a hybrid space between complicity and disruption.

If ideological critique from the halls of composition has thus far proven ineffective, suggests Ann Larson in "Composition's Dead," that may be owed to the field's resistance to shining critical light on its own claims (to being, for instance, higher education's "beacon of democracy") and pursuits (of professional respect and institutional rewards that fall only to a small elite). What to do? A "principled disengagement"

from the field as it is, Larson suggests, "may be the only morally defensible choice"—a choice that frees the "bottom ranks of the education factory" to forge coalitions with low-wage workers across and beyond the academy.

A challenge to mentoring a new generation of teachers for relationships of solidarity and collective action, Shari Stenberg points out, is that students and teachers enter the academy "already fluent in neoliberal values" and already steeped in the belief that there is no alternative to the "'standard' neoliberal subject: one who is rational, competitive, autonomous, neutral, and productive." What to do? "Beyond Marketability: Locating Teacher Agency in the Neoliberal University" details the work of Stenberg and her students in a graduate seminar for new teaching assistants that turns to feminist models for expansive ideas of agency and relationship that counter neoliberalism's restrictive conception of who belongs and how to belong in the university. Paralleling Stenberg's critique of the normative neoliberalism into which our students, and future professoriate, have been inculcated, Tony Scott argues that entrepreneurialism has become "the dominant idiom of higher education" as the austerity-driven "fragmentation and dissolution of composition" clears the way for entrepreneurs to create even more efficiencies through technocratized, scalable pedagogies and teacherless, brand-able writing education. Entrepreneurialism does not promise to revive composition studies but instead "decomposes" it, supplanting a coherent and principled professional culture, field of scholarly praxis, and set of public, democratic commitments with a zombie's "urgent, itchy desire" that is guided by "no memory or distinguishing identity."

Yet Scott also points out in "Animated by the Entrepreneurial Spirit: Austerity, Dispossession and Composition's Last Living Act" that the death of composition and its reanimation in servitude to the market is not inevitable. In the gap between neoliberalism's rhetoric of abundance for all and the visible reality of a growing precariousness and eroded democratic voice, we can find—as Lil Brannon also underscores in her afterword to this collection—many others among the dispossessed who want to reclaim and *write* education's next chapter.

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