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1

SITUATING SCHOLARLY WRITING PROCESSES ACROSS LIFE CONTEXTS

Kim Hensley Owens and Derek Van Ittersum

Scholarly writing can be a scattered process, with research and composing time eked out in fits and starts. Teaching, administrative, and family responsibilities can overwhelm even the most dedicated scholars' best intentions for scheduled writing time. Writing and research processes also change over time as circumstances change—as graduate student life morphs into tenure-track or adjunct life; as single life morphs into partnered life, or vice versa; as faculty have children who require different intensities of attention at different stages; as bodies are or become differently dis/abled; and/or as administrative roles replace writing time with back-to-back meetings. The field of writing studies has a long history of looking into the details of how people write, from work that focuses on the cognitive through think-aloud protocols (e.g., Flower and Hayes), to work devoted to freewriting and expressivism (e.g., Elbow), to work theorizing distinctions between different understandings of and approaches to process (e.g., Faigley), to work carefully examining the choices of writers who draft and revise versus those who perfect prose before they set it to paper (e.g., Harris), to more recent work examining how particularly productive faculty members write (Tulley). This collection continues in those traditions, seeing faculty's ways of writing as a form of flexible, evolving knowledge. We seek to examine, explain, and even exult in how writing processes change over time. By exhibiting what is lost and gained through successive rounds of transformation and adaptation over time, we hope to move ourselves and others to a sustainable understanding and practice of process—one that moves us beyond productivity as the primary measure of success.

While we maintain that all writers' scholarly writing practices metamorphose over time as circumstances change, the arrival of the global Coronavirus pandemic resulted in restrictions that challenged even the most flexible scholarly writers, in part by fully eliminating many familiar

writing contexts. Schools, libraries, coffee shops, and other spaces were closed, while home working environments now included more people than usual, including, for many, children who needed care and attention and no longer had schools or playdates to attend. In some ways these disruptions were more of the same, as disruptions to scholarly writing plans are nothing new. As various researchers have demonstrated, including Robert Boice with faculty across disciplines and Christine Tulley with faculty in rhetoric and composition, completing scholarly writing when focus and time are fragmented is possible. For some scholars, writing happened somehow, especially when spurred by tenure demands, and for others, making it through the serial crises was sufficient. The challenges of this particular time opened up questions for us about writing processes because we were ourselves wondering how to build more resilient writing habits, how to write with the emotions of the moment rather than in spite of them, how to judge what was enough and when it was acceptable to rest. These questions were in part set in motion by the pandemic but grounded in research and arguments about process that have driven our scholarship for many years.

Trying to write in the midst of the pandemic was particularly incapacitating, as many of us shared with colleagues in private conversations and social media posts. Boice recommends that faculty writers ensure their writing success in part by arranging “external situations to ensure regular writing productivity” (2) (Where was Boice, I [Kim] wonder, when I was trying to write with two kids in separate remote school bands, with clarinet and trombone battling it out simultaneously upstairs?) Boice’s advice articulates well with the “environmental-selecting and -structuring practices (ESSPs)” Paul Prior and Jody Shipka describe in their study of scholarly writers’ processes. For many writers, the pandemic restrictions eliminated the infrastructure within which we were able to arrange any writing sites outside our homes; we were also unable to arrange “external situations” within those home sites. Tulley details how many of the scholars featured in her book write successfully within small chunks of time, yet pandemic restrictions highlighted the important differences between, for example, writing in between loads of laundry or meetings and trying to write in between helping children with remote school activities or while learning how to safely accomplish everyday tasks—like purchasing food—that had suddenly become potentially dangerous.

While pandemic restrictions are easing as we write this introduction in the early summer of 2021 (and continuing to be perplexing and ever-changing as we revise again in fall of 2022), it seems unlikely that previous contexts will return exactly as they were. We have learned,

collectively and individually, about the vulnerabilities of our infrastructures. Even eradicating the Coronavirus wouldn't repair those weaknesses. And so, we are (all) faced with writing within unstable contexts and precarious structures, as in fact many writers had been doing prior to the pandemic or all along. As writers, how can we negotiate these instabilities in ways that are generative and meaningful as well as sustainable and reasonable? In some cases, this negotiation requires learning strategies for working in differently fragmented ways, finding ways to push along a project in less than ideal or even far from ideal conditions. In others, it may mean changing goals or projects altogether.

As we consider how to keep going when it's (beyond) hard, though, we also want to ask if and when we should. We want to interrogate how we can resist the tendencies that push us to meet neoliberal demands of limitlessly increasing personal productivity. When can/should we relax the pressure to write, to constantly *produce*? The neoliberal expectation that we each take total responsibility for our personal efficiency as individuals became even more clear and more starkly absurd in 2020, an absurdity that shows no signs of diminishing in 2022. As writing researchers and as writers, we are called to grapple with these expectations and pressures and consider together what alternatives we might work toward—what might exist beyond productivity.

Our book is situated in what Laura Micciche describes in *Acknowledging Writing Partners* as “cultural time” (74). The specific context of the pandemic and its aftermath is omnipresent and oppressive, but also occasionally generative. It leaves us with some new answers to old questions about how scholars write, and it leaves us with new questions, too, about why they write and when they maybe shouldn't. The disruptions to our infrastructures made visible what we took for granted in terms of time and space (both physical and mental) to write, but also forced us to pause and (re)consider what we had normalized in terms of productivity and pressure. This collection offers personal and scholarly investigations into process and productivity: We want to be sure that the questions the pandemic threw into sharp relief are not forgotten, not allowed to retreat into the background once this moment in cultural time finally passes, but instead faced and answered.

Drawing inspiration from Jessica Restaino's pledge to “determine anew [her] use value” (137) as a scholar after a devastating personal loss, this collection seeks to determine anew the use value of scholarly writing and the processes that produce it, both within and beyond the context of losses, constraints, and adaptations associated with COVID-19. This collection explores how scholars have navigated various workflow changes

throughout various phases of their lives and careers. The pandemic context has provided an opportunity to examine how writing processes can be adapted and to examine whether and how writing might be made more precious when it is slowed and fragmented by circumstances wildly beyond our individual control.

In what follows, we first share snapshots of our own recent process disruptions and discoveries, linking our personal experiences with one another's and with the overarching themes of this collection. Then we examine how extant scholarship speaks to issues of process and productivity before previewing the thirteen chapters of the book and its seven intertwining themes—adaptability, collaboration, critique, embodiment, identity, productivity, and technology—reveal about how scholarly writers meet new demands, respond to unstable conditions, and draw on various resources to function in ever-shifting scholarly writing contexts.

A GLIMPSE INTO KIM'S PROCESS

I produce acres of text before I find the square inch of valuable real estate I want to build on. I generally think my writing process is too scattered, too fragmented, too messy—and did long before COVID-19 shrunk my workworld, my husband's workworld, and my son's and daughter's schoolworlds into one shared homeworld for a solid year. I tend to assume as a writer that I'm doing it wrong—that if I could just be more linear, more planful, and have the perfect setup, guarantee X minutes with zero interruptions, I could write quickly, write painlessly, write more that's worth keeping, and no longer “waste” time reorganizing and reframing and rewording. In short, I assume that everything I know about writing—that it evolves over time, that it is thinking, that it is recursive and not linear, that it includes and evolves through activities that are “not writing” (Prior and Shipka), that it almost always benefits from other readers and from revision—does not, or at least should not, in this imagined ideal situation, apply to mine.

As a writing studies scholar, I really know better, but somehow I still don't. And that awareness of what I know but don't know, or know but don't always apply to myself, informs some of the questions that animate this collection. Derek and I and the authors of these chapters are curious about how we and other scholars inquire into their own processes, how we and others in and beyond our field internalize and apply scholarly knowledge about writing processes, how we and they adapt to different constraints of and across time, as careers and complications ebb and flow. It is through individual stories and investigations that we come

to better understand how scholarly writing actually works—not just for those who are at the pinnacle of prolific academic publishing success, as Tulley has illustrated, but for all of us who research and write across different institutional types and in different academic roles and paths.

While my writing process was never evenly sustainable, the pandemic definitely broke the process I had come to rely upon over the previous several years. In a very busy administrative role requiring me to spend my workweek in an office, which, as Michael Faris aptly notes, is for “office things” (22), I was not even able to write in the small snatches that had previously worked for me. I had settled into scheduling a single meeting-free morning most weeks, during which I would write at a coffee shop, where (presumably) no one could find me and where I wasn’t, as I am in my office, six feet from the copy machine shared by the sixty teachers I supervise. While that schedule was never perfect, never what I would have preferred, it had been (sort of) working.

The pandemic broke that process in every way: location, time, schedule, caffeinated beverage options, people—every aspect was upended—and at first that break(ing) meant a total cessation of writing. And to be clear, as a tenured, promoted professor, I had the privilege to just stop for a while, although that isn’t to say stopping felt good or even okay. I was wracked with writer’s guilt. And it wasn’t just that I didn’t have time to write, or couldn’t focus when I tried, although both statements would be accurate—I didn’t try. I didn’t want to. I could not see the point.

Slowly, though, the break(ing) shifted into a remaking. Writing itself always involves transformation—a shift from a whole to parts to a different whole. The process is similar to what Robin Kimmerer describes in the context of a woven basket as a marvel of “transformation, its journey [taking it] from wholeness as a living plant to fragmented strands and back to wholeness again as a basket” (311). The disruptions, time shifts, spatial challenges, and other constraints the pandemic brought also resulted in opportunities for an evolved writing process. While I had many more scheduled (Zoom) meetings, logistical problems, and staffing emergencies to deal with during the pandemic, and while I also had two children remote-schooling from home who needed regular help with everything from math to Zoom to setting up counseling sessions, other constraints all but disappeared. I went from having an almost constant flow of office-related questions, student issues, and coworker drop-ins a day to a trickle of unscheduled calls. While I could no longer slip away to write alone for a full morning with coffee shop treats, I eventually had more small pockets of available time each day than I’d had in years. It took time to relearn how to use such pockets for writing (and to even want to), but I did.

Write first, goes the mantra, *and it's easier to come back to*. While I have never been and will never be the kind of writer who starts at 5:00 a.m. or writes before the family is up for the day, I settled into a routine of writing as soon as the kids were settled into their Zoom classrooms. On the two to three days a week when I managed to do that for part of an hour first instead of immediately falling into the email sinkhole or answering a probably not critical phone call, I wrote then and often again the same day. This new schedule resulted, eventually, and quite unexpectedly, in a bit more writing time each week than I'd had before.

Among the (re)discoveries of writing at home again, or seeing “how writing emerges through the cracks of living” (Rule 5), was: while at the coffee shop, I would of course need to unpack my materials to begin and repack them to end, and I similarly set up and closed up shop at home. To start writing I would first clear and prepare my physical space. I'd get the right drink, open the right tabs, stack the right resources—rituals like these can impede writing if taken to extremes, but for me they prepare the path. As I write, even if it's for a short time, Post-it Notes accumulate, notebooks pile up, pens proliferate. At home, instead of tuning in and out on ambient coffee shop sounds like strangers clinking dishes and snippets of conversations, I had interruptions requiring my full attention—pets throwing up or children asking if they could watch a show, having been released from online school ten minutes into a supposedly ninety-minute class. At the end of a writing session, I clear the space—recycle and move Post-its, put away pens, close notebooks, restack books, close tabs, minimize documents. I also clean up the document, tying up loose ends as best I can; ensuring I've cited sources, changing the color or writing a note-to-self where I'm leaving off, etc. My stopping process, then, is something of a ritualized literal and metaphorical cleaning—although it is not typically as peaceful as that sounds.

Two books I encountered during this time affected how I thought about my changing writing process: a memoir called *Wintering*, by Katherine May, and Robin Kimmerer's wonderful *Braiding Sweetgrass*. May describes a Japanese ritual called *Hari Kuyo*, the Festival of Broken Needles, in which seamstresses and artisans solemnly thank sewing accessories that have outlived their use by placing items like broken needles in tofu. While to a Western ear that ceremonial process may sound odd, anyone familiar with Marie Kondo's bestselling *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* will recall her recommendation to thank items such as old clothes for their service before neatly folding and discarding or donating them. May quotes her friend saying, “The needle breaks the fabric in order to repair it. You can't have one without the other.” This image of

breaking to remake is one that lingers for me in terms of writing and writing process. Additions sometimes destroy, and removals sometimes repair. I ruin the pristine whiteness of the page or screen to make my mark(s) on it; I deplete resources of energy, lead, and ink to create sentences; I unmake sentences to remake them—to make them prettier or smarter.

Thinking of writing tools as valuable elements of creative processes highlights the value of both the tools and the processes. Reading about Kimmerer's theory of reciprocity alongside May's book, while considering my writing tools in this new way, led me to think about how I interact with those tools. Kimmerer describes the reciprocal relationship Native peoples have with land, with nature, as one in which people give to and receive from nature *and vice versa*. She writes that "nature asks us to give back, in reciprocity, for what we have been given . . . through gratitude, through ceremony, through land stewardship, science, art, and *in every-day acts of practical reverence*" (190; my emphasis). I started to think about how I could add "everyday acts of practical reverence" to my writing life by including a gratitude practice toward my writing tools and spaces into my wrapping-up stage.

Instead of hurriedly gathering up the Post-its and pitching them into the recycling bin, I started to build a moment of gratitude into my process. Instead of allowing negative self-talk about the quality or progress of my writing to simmer while I clear my space, and instead of cursing various technologies—a habit I can too easily fall into—I started to spend just a few seconds focusing on the value of each physical or technological tool. Giving each notebook, each pen (today it's a blue Uni-Ball Jetstream, medium point; yesterday it was a pink Pilot Razor Point, extra fine point), each Word document, Google Doc, or Zotero file its due for the work it supported and enabled that session proved calming, and perhaps that sense of calm helps me return to write another day.

One of the questions we asked in our call for papers was whether the constraints of writing—shoved into the forefront for many due to pandemic-related restrictions and life changes, but which persist across all contexts in various shapes and sizes—could, counterintuitively, make us more curious about writing, help us deepen our understandings of our writing processes, and make our writing activity more precious. It did for me. In addition to finding ways to use the time and space available to us, thanking writing tools might be one way toward that latter outcome. Below, Derek's process snapshot also focuses on tools, although in somewhat different ways—his is a tinkering-with-tools process. While our methods of meander differ, we share the underlying notes of self-judgment, of discomfort with or embarrassment about

what our processes actually look like. We both seem to keep trying to “perfect” our processes, trying to unlock the secret to whatever holds us back or propels us forward.

A GLIMPSE INTO DEREK’S PROCESS

While I have never found myself in conditions that have seemed ideal for writing, I often project out to a future when such conditions will exist and imagine how the words will flow easily and how much I will enjoy it. When I can focus on one project at a time, when I have time for multiple writing sessions in a day, when my wrists and hands don’t hurt, when I won’t have to spend prime morning writing hours doing childcare. These conditions are unlikely to change for years, if ever, and so I turn my attention to perfecting my “environment-selecting and -structuring practices [ESSPs]” (Prior and Shipka) so that at least I can craft some small container in which the ideal conditions for writing might exist for forty-five minutes or so.

I tend to need time to warm up to writing; that is, it’s common for me to sit and stare at the screen for a while, to write and delete a few words for a half hour or so before I can start to generate sentences and paragraphs. It feels a bit like needing to load up all the trains of thought for the project back into my working memory. Because my writing sessions rarely last longer than an hour, I have tried various ways to reduce this warm-up time. Using a Mac app called Tinderbox, I created a visual map of notes (sort of like a mind map but not hierarchically arranged) with common ideas grouped together and other notes linked together with arcing lines showing the connections across the map. Looking at this map, which I had built over months and continued to add to here and there while working on a book project, seemed to help me keep the ideas in mind and reduce the warm-up time somewhat. Crafting this digital environment was an ESSP that has been effective.

And yet it’s also kind of embarrassing. Like Kim, I imagine that this process is wrong, that I am wrong somehow for needing it. I spent many hours developing the map with all of the notes, and I wish I could just graduate to writing without needing such a lengthy planning activity. If I didn’t need these other tools and what feel like roundabout processes, I could just write.

As useful as these planning tools can be, I also use them as distractions. Tinderbox affords much more than just visually laying out notes (it is almost like a rich programming environment) and I find myself crafting elaborate project-management solutions or time-tracking dashboards

with it. This experience with the application pays off in some respects, as I can use it for qualitative data analysis, for example, but there's a fuzzy zone separating valuable tinkering from avoiding work. It's easy for me to be seduced into playing with the tools, getting the system organized just right. I find it satisfying because when it works, the results are obvious. The project-management notes in Tinderbox can be displayed in the timeline view according to their date data but also can be manipulated in the map view for more free-form arrangement—it works! With writing, it's never clear to me if it works or not until I get feedback, and wrestling with that uncertainty can be unsatisfying, especially when my attention is scattered across different demands during the day.

I feel guilty about tinkering with these systems and like I'm not productive enough, but they do benefit my work and my ability to work. The note mind map I made in Tinderbox was a space I returned to again and again while drafting and revising my book—it helped me draw connections, it helped me build a comprehensive description of the theoretical apparatus. And earlier in the process it helped me organize my thinking and it gave me a place to write when work on the book was stalled, frustrating, or too overwhelming. As research on ESSPs shows, valuable mind states can be generated and/or recalled through these kinds of writing process arrangements.

As Tim Lockridge and I have argued, affect matters for writers' workflows. Writers may write more or less depending on their affective relationship with their tools, their practices, their physical embodiment. While no notebook or pen will "make" anyone write that novel they've been dreaming about or get started on their scholarly article earlier, tuning in to the enjoyment of the materials may create a virtuous circle that builds positive associations with writing. Tinkering with Tinderbox is enjoyable for me, and spending time in the app increases my comfort and expertise with it, which seems to have a positive impact on my use of it for writing projects. With my own case, and as Kim describes her packing and unpacking rituals and her affective relationships with pens, Post-its, and word-processor documents, I wonder how we can take these affective elements into account as writers, writing teachers, and writing researchers. I find myself too easily spinning between extremes: wanting first to show how optimizing for positive affect really will increase productivity and then recoiling and wanting next to say that orienting toward affect, toward ways of writing that are meaningful and pleasurable, is its own end, regardless of how much useful text is produced.

There are no final answers here, no perfect ways of resolving tensions between different orientations toward writing, toward work,

toward our fickle or fragmented selves. Personal stories, like those animating the chapters in this book, offer a way to share local, situated knowledge about how writers are negotiating these tensions and how they have solved them “for now” or are living with the tensions or how they have used the (often painful) energy of the tensions to transform. These stories can prompt writers to reflect on their own practices and consider what changes (personal, collective, infrastructural) might lead toward the affective experiences they desire. Furthermore, research with experimental designs investigating the ways tools and practices shape writers’ experiences can help writers grapple with the possibility that their affective sense may limit their view of what’s possible and effective. While such research could present a risk if the results were interpreted as prescriptive determinations about which tools or practices are universally best for all writers or all contexts, we hope to show through the chapters of this book the many varieties of tools and practices different writers adopt to meet the needs of their different embodied, situated contexts.

STUDYING HOW SCHOLARS WRITE

Christine Tulley’s compelling arguments in the first few pages of *How Writing Faculty Write* offer clear reasons why we should be studying how writing faculty write. She suggests that readers can learn from productive writing faculty’s writing processes, that anyone in the field can extrapolate lessons from those successful writers to incorporate useful pieces into their own processes. Tulley explains that these scholars know writing research and that when they make known precisely how they follow the paths laid out by the field’s scholarship, others can, too. But while Tulley’s book provides important information about writing processes, there is much more to examine in this area. She acknowledges that the book is focused on famous people in the field, as were the *Paris Review* interviews with famous fiction writers that inspired her work. Such studies focused on exemplars have value, but we want to hear and learn more from those with very different lives and processes. We need more accounts from more writers in our field, with differing career paths across different types of institutions, and we need to learn not just how they achieve their writing goals but how they think about and negotiate what productivity means for them and what tradeoffs are required.

This book works to create a fuller picture of scholarly writing processes in the field by collecting a broad range of stories focused on process. Like many in the field (Takayoshi; Rule; Prior and Shipka;

Shipka; Prior), we see writing as an activity that greatly exceeds any particular moment of inscription. The accounts in this book continue to expand our pictures of what ways of being in the world (Prior and Shipka) writing can take on, what kinds of differences might be behind our colleagues' and our students' most recent writings, and what we can theorize about how writing works from these nuanced accounts.

Writing "is a matter always of its *conditions*—its places, tools, technologies, movements; how it is inhabited by bodies, by others present and by others who aren't yet there (those future readers in future contexts often unknown)" (Rule 5). Our field still has relatively few accounts from writing practitioners that consider these conditions or focus on helping other scholarly writers understand them. We are working here to continue expanding our field's understanding of these conditions. Laura Micciche argues that "the conditions of academic writing surface through isolated examples rather than overarching narrative" (*Acknowledging* 30), a point our book seeks to underline by providing thirteen detailed examinations of various scholars' academic writing processes, relying on a wide variety of methodologies and scholarly or personal emphases. By gaining further insight into how writers at various career stages have adjusted their processes, their workflows, their arrangements of time and tools, the field stands to learn more about scholarly writing, about ourselves as writers, and about how to best help others—from students to junior colleagues to co-authors—shape and refine their processes. The contributors to this collection explicitly voice the subtle feeling so many academic writers have: We're each doing it wrong somehow. By bringing such self-recriminations into the light and openly acknowledging these fears, we hope to help writers move beyond them.

Our interest in and emphasis on individual processes may seem to ignore, rather than respond to, the broader pandemic and institutional contexts we all find ourselves in and may, in that sense, seem to be subject to individualist criticisms like those levied against institutions that focus on individuals' responsibilities to steward their own "self-care" instead of acknowledging or adjusting damaging work contexts or expectations (Kar Tang and Andriamanalina). But we want to keep the focus simultaneously on individual processes and the contexts they are rooted in to look at the micro as a window into the macro. Rule argues that writing's "situatedness is a continuum, not a choice" between the micro and the macro, between a writer's individual process and the "larger forces" always at play (53). The COVID-19 pandemic is one such larger force, but only one—various broader contexts and systemic and intersectional issues are always in the mix as well.

The accounts in this book help us understand that there is no “normal,” so we can learn to appreciate and work with our idiosyncrasies rather than feel embarrassed by them. As Rule has argued, when we see processes as fixed, as a set of steps that can be prearranged or are idealized in some fashion, we frame writing as somehow able to be controlled or existing outside the local specific conditions in which we find ourselves. Drawing on “crip time”¹ and postprocess theories, Rule suggests that “(process) time cannot and should not be systematized or codified in advance” (81). Further, Micciche reminds readers “that writing takes time and is propelled by not knowing, dead ends, and wrong turns” (*Acknowledging* 68). She explains that these detours and screw-ups are “arguably part of the deep structure of academic writing permitted in acknowledgments and other marginal texts but rarely foregrounded in current scholarship on writing pedagogy and theory” (68). This collection seeks, in part, to bring those hiccups and challenges into the light beyond the acknowledgments sections.

This collection provides accounts of writers “taking an inquiry posture” (Rule 109) toward their writing, toward the disrupted situations in which they find themselves, toward the constraints that seem to make writing unlikely or impossible, toward processes that frequently feel off kilter, out of sync, incorrect. Sometimes we can get fixated on attempting to control external conditions to provide the structure we are used to or think we “should” have, but this inquiry posture provides another way, a way of revealing the act of being curious about how our writing is going or what we are experiencing. Further, an inquiry posture can be a productive defense against a tendency to become mired in comparisons, feeling like one’s process doesn’t meet some idealized standard(s). As we get curious about what conditions we find ourselves in, what happens when we write, we can find ourselves appreciating the fragmented evolutions and start to see our writing as being precious without being perfect.

One element that emerges from this curiosity about our writing is emotions. Alice G. Brand has described an “inexorable intertwining of writing and emotion” (290) in her research on student writers, professional writers, and prospective English teachers. While the field has examined the emotional dimensions of students writing (e.g., Brand and Powell); of teaching (e.g., Micciche, *Doing*; Worsham); and of working as a writing program administrator (e.g., Davies; Wooten, et al.), there has been little focus on emotional components of writing among faculty writers. Zachary C. Beare and Shari J. Stenberg, noting this gap, find in their *College English* study of emotions related to writing toward publication (among faculty at research-intensive institutions) that across career

stages, emotions matter. Beare and Stenberg identify four categories of focus for where writers fall in terms of their “emotional habitus related to publishing”: “faculty career stage, area of scholarly focus . . . ; preparation in graduate school for publication . . . ; and negative experiences with failure” (107). Their study offers significant insight into emotions about the process of writing for publication among faculty at research-intensive institutions. While their study, like Tulley’s, is delimited by a focus on high-achieving writers at institutions where such achievement is demanded, some of the emotions they identify track across institution types and with many writers in our collection. One of Beare and Stenberg’s study participants, for example, describes her writing anxiety in terms of a “‘cult of productivity’ and ‘accountability’” (109), which aligns with what some writers in this collection describe.

Wrestling with emotions while writing may feel like proof that we’re dysfunctional in some way, yet scholarship in this area suggests that emotion is an unavoidable aspect of writing; emotion is not something one matures beyond or something that needs to be eradicated. A key emotion that faculty writers especially grapple with is guilt—primarily productivity guilt, a sense that one should be working all the time and should always be perfectly able to balance all the spinning plates of research, mentoring, teaching, administration, family life, and self-care and constantly produce publications. To some extent, such guilt results from norms of idealized bodies and idealized schedules that can dramatically differ from individual writers’ bodies, needs, and schedules—challenges contributors in this volume openly address.

Dana Lynn Driscoll, S. Rebecca Leigh, and Nadia Zamin surveyed faculty and doctoral students and found that over half regularly felt academic guilt. They suggest one way to overcome that guilt is to “fram[e] self-care as professionalism,” which they argue “gives us the opportunity to deepen our own work and create better work lives. It creates space for us to stop normalizing burnout and academic guilt and to start building a culture where we cultivate spaces to do the best labor that we are capable of doing” (476). Their emphasis on reshaping practices to alleviate impossible tensions and work demands that lead to omnipresent guilt, and explicitly working to reclaim the self as something beyond a producer-of-academic-work, resonates with our goals for this collection. We see these arguments as aligned, if not in total agreement, with those who argue against self-care as a solution to systemic problems. Jasmine Kar Tang and Noro Andriamanalina, for example, present an analysis of cross-disciplinary BIPOC/international dissertation writers that discusses the challenges of institutions focusing on encouraging individual

wellbeing (self-care) rather than promoting structural changes that will specifically benefit BIPOC/international students/scholars. We agree that self-care is a problem when it is offered as a solution in a tone-deaf or even disingenuous manner to suggest that individuals must work harder to avoid letting institutions crush them. Yet we also see self-care as a necessary element of any person's life, professional or not, and hope to work to normalize the many ways life events and cycles will shape how writing happens, instead of letting life result in lifelong academic guilt.

Kar Tang and Andriamanalina also describe guilt's sister emotion, shame, with a specific focus on feedback dissertation advisors give to BIPOC/international student-scholars. They describe shame emanating from feedback about their language choices and about their attempts to "bring in the personal." They decry, too, the opposite: praise that overly focuses on sections where such students did bring in the personal or write in a nonstandard dialect. Micciche also brings up shame. She reveals that some writers, such as C. H. Knoblauch and Elspech Probyn, find shame and the anxiety of producing inadequate or inaccurate prose generative, while others, like Mike Rose, find shame a source of writer's block (*Acknowledging*, 48–49). Shame can keep writers from sharing their work, from completing work that didn't get the proverbial gold star on a first draft, from continuing to try to write in less-than-ideal circumstances. One value of the personal stories in this collection is that they reveal how authors feel and sit with senses of shame associated with writing—this exposure helps those authors name, face, and overcome such shame, and helps readers recognize how they might as well.

Beyond guilt and shame, what other emotions do faculty writers wrestle with? The field has little data on this. Kristine Johnson's study of faculty writing advice manuals suggests that most prominent discourse on faculty writing—which is written by people outside our field but promoted within the field on our listservs, our social media spaces where work and social connections blur, and in other professional spaces—takes a behaviorist approach, suggesting that doing the writing for fifteen minutes a day (or whatever set time) is what matters, regardless of whatever emotions one may be feeling or other difficulties one may be experiencing. Johnson describes this advice as "epistemologically current-traditional" (read: outdated) and argues for rhet-comp professionals to add our expertise to this conversation (62). While our discipline may still be grappling with the implications of process, post-process, and more recent approaches to writing, disciplinarity, and invention, the field has acknowledged the serious limits of current-traditional approaches.

This collection shares accounts from writers in the field from a variety of career stages and institutions about their writing processes to continue peeling back the onion. The stories in this collection examine and push back against emotions like guilt and shame; the stories in this collection demonstrate various embodied, emplaced, and seemingly impossible conditions for writing; the stories in this collection pull on the threads of extant scholarship on writing, seeking to weave new tapestries of understanding. We mean understanding here in all senses—foremost, in terms of understanding how scholars write, but also in terms of understanding one another as human beings so we can better advocate for understanding across our collective systems. Ultimately, we see the value of this book not only in its call for the field to (continue to) pay attention to process, but in its call to change what’s harmful in the status quo and find a sustainable path forward.

STORIES ABOUT SCHOLARLY WRITING PROCESSES

In our call for proposals, we sought both personal and scholarly contributions to examine the advantages and possibilities as well as the frustrations concomitant with evolving scholarly writing processes. We invited proposals for chapters that would take up, challenge, or augment questions such as:

- How have you reinvented your writing process(es) at one or more stages of your scholarly career or for different types of projects?
- What resources or tools have you adopted for that reinvention? What was your affective experience before, during, and after?
- How does your personal engagement with writing processes shape your engagement with process scholarship or writing studies writ large, or vice versa?
- How does your teaching of writing shape your own writing processes?
- How does your scholarly writing occur within your home, work, and community context?
- How is your scholarly writing process affected by gendered, raced, and/or classed work-life expectations?
- What are the possibilities and challenges associated with your scholarly writing process?
- How could past examples of ideal and/or problematic scholarly writing processes speak to the present? How do you relate to your past processes?
- What do you see as the challenges of creating or sticking to a productive process, and/or how do you push back against a culture that over-values speed and “productivity”?

The proposals we received and the chapters authors produced show a diverse set of scholars thinking deeply and very differently about their processes and those of others, and across those differences seven themes emerged: adaptability, collaboration, critique, embodiment, identity, productivity, and technology. Each author addresses multiple themes, so rather than organizing our collection by single themes, which would inevitably emphasize one element over other important elements of each chapter, we've chosen an intersectional approach, through which these overlapping themes reverberate as they recur throughout the book.

Our collection opens with Ann N. Amicucci's contribution, "Sand Creeks and Productivity: A Writer's Reckoning of Personal and Academic Selves." Amicucci describes the processes of reanimating her writing with a sense of her true self, giving herself permission not only to "feel [her]self in [her] body" as she is writing but to write about that self as well. She details how specifically **embodied**, emplaced writing disallows the otherwise easy assumption/perception that a writer is an able-bodied, white male. Inviting readers to join her on walks with soundtracks of podcasters, Amicucci **critiques** perceptions that writing in the field must be disembodied and solely data-based. She shares her struggles with choosing to write either as her "creative writing self" or as her "academic self" and uses this essay to both argue against those distinctions and allow her disparate **identities** to blend.

Continuing with a focus on what it means to write as a person with a body, Melanie Kill describes how "**embodied** interactions with writing technologies affect first how and what we write and then, by extension, who can write." Intertwining her experiences with disabilities and her experiences with various writing **technologies** and temporalities, Kill confronts her own internalized sense of ableism. Her essay, "Relearning to Write in Crip Time (on the Tenure Clock)," lays bare the particular and innumerable challenges of repeated **adapting** in order to write with one disability, and in doing so she demonstrates the unjustness of one-size-fits-all publication **productivity** standards.

Revealing that historically her "writing processes have ridden mostly on fear- and anxiety-driven autopilot," Hannah Rule examines what it means to question the value of continuing apace, or continuing at all, after earning tenure during the pandemic. Her chapter, "In Process Not Progress (or, *Not-Progress* is Process): A Narrative Meditation," questions her own expectations for **productivity** and **critiques** the structures that lead writers to the default position of not writing. She asks how we might account not only for published pieces but also for those that never got written in the first place, for whatever reason(s). Exploring how to **adapt**

to these new times and her own shifting perspective, Rule finds that writing processes “are just what happens, where, with what, and how. What it takes to make writing happen changes.”

For Tim Laquintano, what it took to make writing happen on a tight tenure deadline was an unhealthy mix of meatball subs, months of long writing days, and pharmaceuticals. In “When Writing Makes You Sick,” Laquintano calls for a shift in how scholars in the field acknowledge and relate to the psychophysical demands of writing and the negative **embodied** consequences that result. He shares his own story of **adapting** toward healthier ways of living and writing and his explorations of the complicated array of **technologies**, research, and beliefs available in wellness spheres. Rather than calling for more research, Laquintano asks readers to prioritize health over **productivity** in everyday conversations, rolling our eyes at stories of the hours of sleep lost in service of drafting another article instead of straining to stay up later ourselves.

Kate L. Pantelides **critiques** her inherited, learned, problematic work ethic, passed down from her father, a Greek immigrant to the United States. “Speak in the Tongue of Your Father: Disentangling ‘American’ Work Ethic and Professional Curiosity” explores how her father’s love language—a deeply driven work ethic—connects to advice in academia “about how to write effectively,” which she finds “similarly, and problematically, tangled up with American notions of morality, worth, and **productivity**.” Pantelides works in this chapter to distinguish the components of her writing process, work ethic, and **identity** that are “beautiful” from those that are “racist and troublesome,” teasing out a way to **adapt** to a “healthier, more sustainable writing balance” she can **embody** and model for others.

Andrew Harnish **critiques** academic **productivity** expectations at the expense of **embodied** realities connected to disability in his chapter, “‘Embodied Action’ as Precarious Process: Writing Productivity at the Intersection of Crip Self-Care and Academic Contingency.” Describing himself as “nourished by the antinormative praxes of queer culture,” Harnish seeks to balance his commitment to opposing neoliberalism with his continued search for stable employment within the academy. After a detailed accounting of the various ways he has **adapted** his life and writing process to manage iatrogenic nerve damage that permanently affects his body’s ability to regulate heat, Harnish explores and connects two approaches to writing, analyzing each for its particular application to embodied realities their audiences experience.

Taking up the mantles of **critique** of the academy, his **identity** as a Burqueño, and of writing as an **embodied** practice he’d like to literally

see in action in seminar, Zakery R. Muñoz offers his story in “Showing Up: Una Manera sobre Writing Process.” Muñoz focuses on his *manera* of writing, blending his past experiences as a student with a history of struggle in Albuquerque with his current experiences as a PhD student in Syracuse. Muñoz makes a pointed and fascinating call for the writers in the field to put their physical writing processes on display. He specifically asks those who teach graduate students to demystify their writing processes by working on their writing-in-progress in real time, with students in seminar watching and working on their own writing simultaneously.

Both Buyserie’s contribution, “Writing Queerly: Honoring Fragmented and Embodied Writing in Composition,” explores her complicated relationship with writing and the “longstanding and deep-seated anxiety and depression around writing” for publication that causes her to hate it. Buyserie questions how someone who loves to teach writing, and loves to teach writing teachers, can have such an imperiled, negatively **embodied** experience with it. Sharing the stories of her path to a tenure-track position alongside her path to a queer **identity** and the lifestyle shifts each necessitated, Buyserie describes her typical writing process as involving “deep sacrifice and many hours of self-doubt, punctuated by fragments and snippets of frantic writing.” Buyserie weaves lessons from counseling with her writing process story to demonstrate how one can help with the other. Counseling helped her change her prevailing internal narrative from a paralyzing fear of academic death to working toward associating writing with joy.

Continuing the theme of **identity** as well as **critique**, Tatiana Benjamin’s chapter, “Transformative Practices: Black Women Exist Beyond Our Ability to Produce,” illuminates her experience as a Black, female scholar to highlight that the personal is (still) political and to link that concept to inflexible productivity expectations in the academy. Benjamin narrates her personal experiences and writing process adaptations within the context of systems of power she views as designed to fail her. The chapter interrogates how interlocking systems of power normalize hyperproductivity; she explores how her labor, given her **embodied identity** as a Black cisgender woman living with chronic illnesses, is deemed disposable. Benjamin examines the various physical, emotional, and mental health disruptions that affect her writing processes and offers specific strategies for resisting “grind culture.”

Kellie Keeling, Emily Pridgen, and J. Michael Rifenburg’s “Undergraduates and Faculty Writing as Partners” also focuses on the roles of professors and students. They describe the trio’s process of writing across roles, with two undergraduate students and one faculty

member working together not only to perform an assessment and course design for their campus but also to follow those activities with **collaboratively** written publications about the outcomes of the partnerships. They liken themselves to a tree, “growing and learning and trying to thrive.” The three examine how they resist neoliberal imperatives of competition and increasing **productivity** in part by “accepting coordination over competition,” as they describe how they worked together, separately, to write this piece. They further detail how their partnership protected students from labor exploitation.

In “The School Bus Never Came: How Crisis Shapes Writing Time,” Melissa Dinsman and Heather Robinson describe how they held onto their **identities** as scholarly writers during the pandemic, when “everyone was home all the time and so work was always around us.” They connect their ways of continuing to write with those of other women writers confronted with crises and disruptions. Yet they also notice a difference, sharing how **collaboration** among women academic writers during the pandemic allowed for continued **productivity** and thus the ability to hang on to the writerly identity when so many challenges threatened to disrupt it.

Steve Lamos and Kevin Roozen, in “(Intra-)Active Notebooking as Textual Assemblage,” share elements of their own long-term **collaboration**: an autoethnographic study of each of their daily writing habits—what they call their “mundane notebooking practices”—to demonstrate the relevance and value of such practices across decades of writing experience. The authors rely on an “intra-view” methodology and connect to Jennifer Sinor’s diary analysis as they work toward a better understanding of both Kevin’s notebooking practices and the broader conditions under and through which people make meaning as writers. They focus, in part, on how writers use mundane practices to both display and forge **identity** through writing.

Finally, drawing on her experiences leading writing workshops for faculty and graduate students, Laura R. Micciche, in “Externalized Process and Writing Tools,” examines the ways writers respond to the high-stakes **productivity** demands of the dissertation and tenure clock and how their processes differ across genres. She details how writers **adapt** specific software **technologies**, typically those designed for other industries, to externalize and shape their writing processes. Micciche also explores how technologies and tools become more visible when they are required for tasks a body can no longer undertake, examining what happens when issues of **embodiment** interrupt what seems “normal.”

NOTE

1. Alison Kafer defines “crip time as being not only an accommodation to those who need ‘more’ time but also, and perhaps especially, a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling. Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” (27).

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