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## Review Essay

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Rhetorics of Critical Writing: Implications for Graduate Writing Instruction

***Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation***

*Irene L. Clark*

Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007. 212 pp.

***Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts***

*Joseph Harris*

Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006. 139 pp.

***The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals***

*Elizabeth Rankin*

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. 122 pp.

Joseph Harris explains in *Rewriting* that when working with others' texts, academic writers must come to terms with the overall projects these texts embody. "A *project*," he writes, "is usually something far more complex than a main idea, since it refers not to a single concept but to a plan of work, to a set of ideas and questions that a writer 'throws forward'" (17). A project concerns the function of writing—what it accomplishes—and while academic writers must develop the critical acumen to recognize the broad scope implied by a writer's project, we must also ground that recognition in more localized gestures, moving "from projects to phrasings, from talking about a text as a whole to noticing moments of particular interest in it," as Harris explains (19). This

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essay uses Harris's understanding of projects and phrasings to highlight what the texts under review accomplish within writing studies. In the final section, I contend that these books facilitate new lines of inquiry about writing instruction at the graduate level, not a stated goal for the authors but a suggestive implication that emerges when their books are read alongside one another.

The three authors—Irene Clark, Joseph Harris, and Elizabeth Rankin—are experienced administrators who have worked in interdisciplinary writing settings: Clark as writing center director in an interdisciplinary context; Rankin as leader of faculty writing seminars and workshops; and Harris as director of a multidisciplinary writing program. These experiences seem to inform each author's flexible constructs of writing expressed through an accessible vocabulary and a broadly conceived context, allowing their insights to obtain across a variety of settings. "Writing" is not a synonym for first-year writing or composition; for each author, the starting point for academic writing is engagement with other texts, and the approach to writing is informed more by rhetorical moves and genre conventions than by specific tasks or assignment types. Thus, according to the authors, writing is not best characterized as a process, though process theory is relevant to each author's emphasis on feedback and revision, nor is it a compilation of static skills (develop a thesis, support it, form an argument, address counter-claims, etc.). Writing is instead a dynamic operation, a social act that *does* something within a community of writers and readers, and a material practice embedded in a complex web of relationships among readers, writers, other texts, and sets of experience.

Individually, these books address the graduate student writer working toward completion of a culminating project in the humanities (Clark), the undergraduate writer writing with, to, and against a broad set of texts (Harris), and professional and academic writers working in writing groups to help one another craft successful documents, ranging from a journal article to a curriculum plan (Rankin). While Rankin's *The Work of Writing* is less recent than the others, it is no less relevant, primarily because it provides a unique view of writers across the disciplines working together in the high-stakes environment of the academy. Collectively, this trio offers powerful practical strategies and conceptual insights for a wide swatch of readers and writers.

Implied in these books is the idea that writing about writing is well suited to a hybrid genre combining practical advice, pedagogical insight, rhetorical theory, excerpts from published and unpublished writers, teacher research, and experiential narratives, making the ubiquitous writing textbooks, even the more adventurous ones that integrate visual elements or reject modal writ-

ing in favor of rhetorically based assignments, seem like anxious strivings toward comprehensiveness at the expense of more modest, selective goals. As Harris notes, there is an unmistakable banality to writing textbooks, many of which “tend to alternate between offering advice that is specific but trivial—about proofreading or copyediting, for instance—and exhortations that are as earnest as they are vague. Or at least I have never felt sure that I knew what I was actually being asked to do when called upon to ‘think critically’ or to ‘take risks’ or to ‘approach revision as re-vision’” (3). These and other familiar injunctions are mercifully absent from the three books under review.

### **Graduate Student Writing Practices**

In *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*, Irene Clark draws on theories of genre and process in order to clarify “what a successful thesis or dissertation is intended to *do*” and “how its various components enable it to fulfill its purpose” (xxi). The motivation for her book derives from two assumptions that she wants to counter: first, that graduate seminars prepare students to write a thesis or dissertation, and, second, that students are already competent writers and so do not need explicit instruction in writing these longer works—a belief that she attributes to “entrenched elitism” and “unrealistic expectations for originality” (3). She intends her book to address the writing realities of graduate students across the disciplines, and she largely succeeds on this score, offering a genre analysis of the thesis and dissertation (though, curiously enough, she never articulates the differences between these two forms) and detailing practical strategies aimed at specific writing tasks. The ten chapters of the book cover preliminary thinking and writing about the dissertation or thesis, strategies for writing a proposal, tools for tracking the interactive relationship between reading and writing, negotiating the adviser-student relationship, and accomplishing practical tasks (including a terrific discussion of how to write an abstract, along with a handful of useful samples). While the organization maps a definite process for completing a culminating work, the book does not demand to be read or applied in a linear fashion. It can be approached as a resource text, inviting selective readings and applications; obviously, the benefit of reading it from start to finish is that one develops an overview of the whole process—and as Clark acknowledges, that process will vary according to writer, program, and discipline.

Clark includes a variety of worksheets, really more like writing heuristics, useful both to those writing a dissertation or thesis and to teachers of writing and reading at any level. For example, in her chapter “Mapping Texts,” Clark

details a method to help readers when they encounter an unfamiliar or dense text. One of the steps in her method borrows from John Swales's work on genre analysis, specifically, his emphasis on rhetorical moves. She explains, "when you focus on how [a] text works to develop its ideas . . . you will gain familiarity with typical text patterns that you can adapt for your own purposes" (66). Clark then provides an example text and maps the strategies it employs, following this up with two other sample texts for practice. Graduate students in my current writing workshop are reading this chapter, and I can well envision assigning it in an undergraduate advanced composition class too, for the emphasis on rhetorical moves (as well as intertextuality, disciplinary context, and reader-constructed signposts) is valuable for all writers and readers. Another excellent heuristic is Clark's "Interacting with Text-Partners" form, in which "text-partners" constitute those "texts to which your thesis or dissertation is responding" (24). The form is a simple one that asks readers to identify the thesis of an article, the most interesting ideas in it and what makes them interesting, aspects of the topic that get overlooked, what the reader might say to the writer, and a potential use of the article in one's thesis or dissertation. This cataloging of one's reading experiences, while commonsensical and admittedly not new, strikes me as a productive, smart resource for advisers and teachers working with students on extensive research projects.

Likewise, Clark's "Function Outline Worksheet," a version of Peter Elbow's descriptive outline assignment, breaks no new ground but reminds us of how powerful a well-conceived heuristic can be. The goal of this worksheet is for writers to describe the function of each section in one of their own chapters, focusing "attention on the structure and coherence of the chapter" in order to revise strategically (96). These worksheets are easily adaptable to varying contexts; teachers, advisers, and students are likely to find much of use here regarding how to approach and sustain a large writing project.

Clark also includes samples of thesis and dissertation proposals and abstracts. I wish I had had such samples when I was working on my dissertation, as I definitely found the genre elusive. My approach was to write a lit review at the beginning of each chapter and then apply ideas from that work to my object of study. As a result, my text is formulaic and burdened with other voices, an aspect of the dissertation that, for some reason, I assumed was integral to the genre. Thus, I appreciate Clark's chapter devoted to lit reviews and the work they do. And, no less important, the work they do not do: "[A lit review] is not a list that describes or summarizes one text after another, and it is usually

not a good sign if you find yourself beginning each paragraph with the name of the author or title of the work” (112). Yet, Clark’s description does not say quite as much as I hoped it would. For example, she writes that the purpose of the lit review “is to demonstrate that the *writer* has insightfully and critically surveyed relevant literature on his or her topic in order to convince an intended *audience* that this *topic* is worth addressing” (105; emphasis in original). In another instance, she asks writers to consider how “reviewing the literature [will] justify the topic” (111). Clark’s framing of the lit review as a device that justifies one’s project or convinces an audience of the writer’s worth seems to me too narrow. I think readers would want to learn what work the lit review should accomplish, and what characterizes the relationship between the lit review and the claim one wants to make. These are the kinds of writerly negotiations that are difficult to navigate but are crucial aspects of a thesis and dissertation.

Elizabeth Rankin’s comments about the lit review in *The Work of Writing* are useful here. Despite the name—lit review—Rankin says that reviewing the professional literature is not the goal. “Instead,” she writes, “what the lit review should do is to sketch out for the reader the intellectual path that the writer has followed in order that readers may follow it as well” (42). She identifies the function of lit reviews as “establishing the writer’s credibility [one of Clark’s points], meeting the readers’ needs, and clarifying the theoretical framework of the work at hand” (42). If I had understood the lit review as a means for sketching out my “intellectual path” when writing my dissertation, I think I would have developed more purposeful reviews that read less like dutiful lists and more like dynamic points of influence and contact.

Unfortunately, I have to mention a major problem with Clark’s book: the poor editing and proofreading that has left the text marked by typos, clumsy writing, incorrect citations, and a major typesetting error (two pages in chapter 2 are erroneously repeated after the end of the chapter). A book about writing should pay special attention to its own writing; indeed, because the subject is writing, the errors are especially conspicuous. Whether this problem is attributable to the author, the publisher, or some combination thereof, there’s no escaping the impression that the book was rushed to press. This is unfortunate, and while such errors do not obscure the valuable aspects of *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*, they do raise discomfiting questions about why, given the book’s subject and purpose, its materiality was not better attended to by the press or the author.

## Writing as Intellectual Work

Joseph Harris, in *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*, treats academic writing as intellectual work that involves “the chance to engage with and rewrite the work of other thinkers” (2). In his very readable, very teachable text, Harris foregrounds “rewriting” as the central action of this kind of writing—which he also refers to as critical writing, as I will here. He tells readers to “imagine yourself as rewriting—as drawing from, commenting on, adding to—the work of others” (2). Thus, the recirculation of texts is key to the kind of writing he advocates; in this circulation lies both critical and creative possibilities, for we must be faithful to the ideas from which we are drawing and inventive enough to work them in our own way. To make explicit what it means to recirculate texts, Harris introduces readers to writing moves—“a set of strategies that intellectuals put to use in working with texts” (3).

Harris identifies five interconnected moves central to critical writing and organizes his chapters around them: “coming to terms” (translating a text into your own words by explaining what it says and identifying the lens through which you’re interpreting it), “forwarding” (applying ideas or concepts from one context to another), “countering” (identifying the limits of other texts in order to generate new lines of inquiry), “taking an approach” (working in another writer’s mode to make new knowledge), and “revising” (returning to your writing in order to refine your thinking). Each chapter explains the conceptual work achieved by these moves, provides examples of published writing to demonstrate the moves in action, and invites students, through inset “Project” boxes, to practice, or identify, these moves in their own and others’ texts. Harris also includes boxes called “Intertexts” throughout each chapter. As the name implies, these boxes reference both the texts cited in his book and those that have influenced his thinking. Thus, in both form and content, *Rewriting* foregrounds the interactive relationship between writers and texts. Harris construes his audience broadly to include students in text-based writing courses and writing teachers, as is clear in his afterword, which addresses how to develop a pedagogy of rewriting. My view is that the book has much to offer undergraduate student writers (particularly sophomores and above), graduate students, and faculty.

As the subtitle indicates, *Rewriting* takes as a point of departure J. L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*, particularly Austin’s claim that language is performative—it *does something* through the act of expression. Harris works with this idea by developing a vocabulary for writing based on “action,

gesture, and response” (4). Interestingly, his theory of writing as performative coincides with Clark’s focus on rhetorical moves, detailed above. This more than coincidental convergence around writerly moves, together with insights from genre theory that posit genres as “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (Miller 159), suggests an emerging trend in how we talk about writing, one that develops an intriguing and flexible vocabulary for describing the cognitive and intellectual work of writing within differing communities.

In addition to the meta-contribution that *Rewriting* makes to writing studies, the book also addresses writing basics in a refreshing way. For example, in chapter 1, Harris discusses reasons for quoting from a text, noting at one point that writers work with other texts “to draw [readers’] attention not to the texts you’re quoting but to the work you’re doing *with* those texts” (20; emphasis in original). Elsewhere he asks writers to think about “how much you want to emphasize the *otherness* of the texts you quote” (28–29). Most writing texts, he rightly points out, advise us “to downplay this sense of otherness, to quote in ways that work toward the illusion of a seamless text, incorporating the words of others as much as you can within your own sentences” (29). His advice is to “develop a flexible repertoire of forms of quotation” (29), a goal he supports by discussing the function of block quotes, in-text quotes, scare quotes, epigraphs, and allusions. This focus on how to do things with others’ texts is complemented by suggestions for what to do with one’s own texts-in-progress. Toward this end, Harris suggests that writers develop abstracts of their own work, generate an exploratory draft, produce a revision plan, and construct a sentence outline (like Clark, Harris borrows from Elbow’s descriptive outline assignment).

I have taught Harris’s book a number of times now and can report that undergraduate and graduate student writers largely embrace his vocabulary, describing it as plainspoken, intuitive, and immediately accessible. Harris’s terminology is indeed one of the major strengths of the book, for, as noted above, it emphasizes the *actions* involved in critical writing. Rather than relying on terms that communicate static fixtures to students—*thesis*, *evidence*, *example*—Harris focuses us on the work accomplished by writing, treating writing as in motion, an approach that I find invigorating as a writing teacher. While my students have noted, and sometimes complained, that the move of “forwarding,” to take one example, is hard to distinguish from “taking an approach,” I see this blurring as an inevitable and productive consequence of

writing, Harris does too; he states a number of times that the moves he describes are not discrete parts of a “fixed sequence” (4). Together, these moves sketch an ethics of critical writing—a code of conduct to guide what we do with words. The ethical component, for Harris, is based on the idea that “intellectual work both starts and ends in acknowledging the strengths of other perspectives” (5). In chapter 3, he goes into more detail about his view, outlining what form “the art of honest yet civil disagreement” might take (68). In his discussion about resisting the attribution of intent to writers, Harris writes, “Assume that other writers say what they have to say not out of an overweening desire for status or power, or because their thinking has been molded by their profession or class or gender, but because they genuinely find certain ideas compelling and useful. And then explain why you don’t” (69). He ends by remarking that “what most often sparks anger is the questioning not of ideas but of motives” (69).

Harris explicitly addresses civility and ethics and implicitly sketches an affect of critical writing. He advises that an even tone—perhaps what we might characterize as a *reasonable* tone, one that does not rush to judgment or operate in fits of emotion—is most desired because it keeps us focused on what we’re doing rather than on what others get wrong. He is careful to note that the even-handedness he promotes is not a call for “tepid or bland prose” but instead encourages us to “approach writing with an active mix of skepticism and generosity—both to look for gaps or difficulties in perspectives you admire and also to try to understand the strengths of those you don’t” (27). On the one hand, this sounds like good advice; on the other, it raises questions about “deviant” affects. That is, when anger, outrage, fear, joy, or pleasure surrounds one’s relation to a text, must these be balanced by more measured responses? What place does unbalanced feeling have in critical writing, if any? Is it ever acceptable to read and write aggressively, to seek to undo a paradigm or line of inquiry? To subvert dominant discourses through affective disruption?

Harris’s advocacy of a moderate affect makes me wonder what he would make of writing that emerges from strong feeling. Must one respond to sexism, let’s say, with civil consideration of a text’s limits and possibilities? Does feminist, anti-racist, or queer scholarship build new lines of inquiry that bracket strong feeling, including righteous anger and fierce truth-to-power tactics? I understand that Harris seeks to offer students a model for doing critical work that, among other things, complicates too simple approaches to analysis and argumentation, but I also believe that students need to know how writing can



and sometimes should be a form of engaged, even raucous dissent. And they should know that criticism and affective extremes often get muddled together, sometimes motivating why we turn to other texts in the first place, why developing new lines of inquiry matters, why the limits and possibilities of texts become sites for doing scholarship. *Rewriting* does not forbid these questions; in fact, one of the reasons why I find the book so teachable and important is that it invites us to think more deeply than we might otherwise about what we want our writing to do and how we intend to make that happen.

### **Writing with and for Others**

Elizabeth Rankin's *The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals* might deceive upon first glance. It's a thin book, just under one hundred pages before the appendixes. The book's cover is generic, featuring a blurred image of pages against a yellow background. Praise from no less than Peter Elbow, Barbara Walvoord, and Joseph Williams, however, begins to indicate, and I think rightly so, that this book will be read and, no less important, *used* by many writers and teachers of writing. Varied, spirited *use* seems to me a fitting tribute to Rankin, who died far too young at age fifty-nine in January 2007, and to the work she accomplished at the University of North Dakota, where she cultivated a lively writing and teaching community that spanned the disciplines.

The premise of *The Work of Writing* is simple: Rankin's experiences in cross-disciplinary faculty writing groups taught her that "all writers face similar challenges" (xii), so she wrote this book of advice to writers, complemented by narratives of writing scenarios culled from her group experiences and focused on specific writing tasks and problems. The narratives ground and contextualize her discussion of the work of writing, which involves "the thinking, strategizing, and decision making that academic and professional writers do" (xi). Like Harris, she says that academic writing entails working with the words of others and coming to terms with one's own project. Rankin approaches writing as a social activity shaped by feedback and marked by differences, avoiding advice based on a linear process model.

Like the other books reviewed here, Rankin's offers practical advice without prescriptive imperatives. She draws on her experiences in faculty writing groups as well as her disciplinary knowledge in rhetoric and composition studies as she speaks to both academics and professionals. The narratives address a diverse range of writing issues, including those related to writing a journal

article, a grant proposal, a curriculum revision plan, or an executive summary, as well as scenarios that address audience, voice, and style concerns. In addition, Rankin includes details about her own composing process throughout the text, nicely demonstrating that a book is a made object despite its seemingly “natural” status when we hold it in our hands. *The Work of Writing* is organized around common themes that emerged during Rankin’s faculty writing groups, forming five chapters: “The Work of Writing,” “Contributing to the Professional Conversation,” “Meeting Readers’ Needs and Expectations,” “Finding Your Professional Voice,” and “Seeing the Project Through.” An afterword and three appendixes round out the book, creating a taut yet layered, far-reaching focus. The narratives have a lot to do with this, as they add texture and complexity to Rankin’s discussion of writing. Following each narrative, Rankin includes sections called “Getting Feedback from Others,” for those who work in writing groups, and “Writing on Your Own,” for those writers working individually. Whereas the narratives re-create scenarios that arose in a group context, Rankin recognizes that potential readers may work differently; thus, she addresses both groups and individuals in the activity sections.

I found myself wishing I were a part of the interdisciplinary writing groups that Rankin describes. Seeming to anticipate this response, Rankin includes information in an appendix about how to form faculty or graduate student writing groups. She describes the structure, membership, meeting times, leadership roles, and routines that organized hers. In addition, she includes excellent guidelines on writers’ and readers’ responsibilities in group settings that I find useful for conducting writing workshops in any writing classroom. For example, in her discussion of readers’ responsibilities, Rankin explains that the group begins with a “clarification round,” during which readers focus on general questions before discussing particular issues. This is followed by the “positive comment round,” about which she writes, “Because it’s so easy to feel defensive about work we’ve invested a lot of time and energy in, we always begin by asking each person to comment specifically on one thing they liked or admired about the piece” (98). The final round focuses on “the writer’s questions.” Rankin’s guidelines for writers’ responsibilities also clearly articulate expectations for how the group will function: “When you prepare your draft, be sure to attach a cover sheet in which you explain what the piece of writing is, what audience it is intended for, what your format constraints are, what draft stage it’s in, and what *particular questions* you would like us to address” (97; emphasis in original). These rituals around how to discuss and present a draft are constructive ways to get a group, especially an interdisciplinary one,

on task, create a point of orientation, and encourage attentive readings and discussions.

Rankin expresses a strong preference for clear writing that avoids jargon and the “show what you know” mentality. She assumes her preference is our preference:

As readers *we are well aware* of the kind of writing that floods our professional publications—writing that is dull and lifeless, overly long and boring, poorly organized and jargon ridden. Too often when we begin to write and publish in academic and professional settings, we mindlessly replicate such writing, never stopping to ask ourselves how we might make it clearer, more engaging, more reader friendly. (3; my emphasis)

For Rankin, junk writing is a byproduct of graduate school. In a chapter on voice, she includes a scenario entitled “Exorcising the Grad Student Within” (59) that calls our attention to bad habits gleaned in graduate school. The scenario in this section features a writer who brings to the group a draft in which, among other things, she “spends two full pages saying what the approach is *not*: not anti-empirical, not radically political, not interested in trivia at the expense of the big picture” (60). The group finds her writing defensive and, via the belabored theoretical justification following the “not” section, subservient to established scholars. Rankin calls the voice and ethos problem in this draft an outgrowth of the “dissertation stance,” which is “[c]autious, risk-averse, and ever attuned to status in the established hierarchy” (61).

I want to comment briefly on Rankin’s view of jargon-heavy and graduate student writing, as separate but related problem styles. First, I would have appreciated more nuance in Rankin’s discussion of jargon-laden, boring writing. What looks to one like jargon looks to another like enabling, meaningful terminology. Basically, I found this swipe too easy, too much a clichéd response to writing that operates on principles other than clarity. “Mindless replication” may actually be attentive mimicry, which is to say that assuming motive behind the writing can reproduce a default dismissal that fails to engage the work of writing, precisely Rankin’s focus. Second, Rankin’s assessment of writing habits nurtured in graduate school casts a light on a problem all too common in graduate education: writing instruction continues to be shamefully absent from many graduate programs. Despite all that faculty know about the problems their students encounter as writers, we remain perplexed by the “cautious, risk-averse” writing that students produce. We can and should do better, a point I return to in my conclusion.

Like Clark and Harris, Rankin outlines writing activities useful to a range of writers. For instance, she encourages writers to think “in terms of a proposal” when beginning a project (reminding me of Harris’s advice to write an abstract of an essay in progress). To make genre expectations clear for members of the writing group she facilitated, Rankin asked that members “bring to the first meeting a copy of the journal in which they want to publish, a book by the publisher they are hoping to interest, or an RFP (request for proposals) for the grant they are starting to write” (33). Elsewhere, she cautions writers against importing material from one context to another because “differences between the original rhetorical situation and the new one” can confound efforts to rework writing, often revealing how beholden we are to our original formulation despite a shift in project (48). In chapter 5, “Seeing the Project Through,” Rankin offers excellent advice for completing writing projects and sending them out for review. In fact, I wanted to photocopy and distribute the scenario “Getting It in the Mail” for some of my perfectionist friends who just can’t seem to let go of a piece of writing. Rankin reminds such writers that many published essays have gone through a revise and resubmit process, thus, “no matter how perfectly you polish your writing, the editor is probably going to want you to change things. The less you obsess at this point, the less disappointed you’ll be when you see what you’re asked to change” (90).

Whether or not one is involved in a writing group, *The Work of Writing* is an excellent companion for writers engaged in a significant project as well as a noteworthy resource for writing teachers. The narratives woven throughout the text capture familiar scenarios, and while they are often a bit too tidy, they represent practical ways to think through writing problems. The scenarios are instructive not so much for the details they foreground as for the broader issues toward which they gesture.

### **Centering Writing in the Graduate Curriculum**

Taken together, Clark, Rankin, and Harris develop an account of our field as centered on *writing* studies rather than *composition* studies. Their books can be read as source texts for extending the work of writing instruction to include graduate-level instruction, not as a service curriculum to the university (though I recognize the need for interdisciplinary writing instruction at the graduate level) but as a means for front-loading conceptions of writing crucial to graduate study. Critical writing is shrouded in mystery, certainly more than creative writing, despite the latter’s longstanding association with inspiration

and genius in the popular and academic imagination. The writer in the garret is these days the writer of critical, intellectual texts, not the poet, novelist, or memoirist. Writing specialists are best positioned to relocate critical writing. Whereas students' lack of preparation may be and often is chalked up to a natural part of the learning curve in graduate education, faculty would do well to think more seriously about our obligations to graduate students and our responsibilities as writing teachers. We can insert writing into graduate education in meaningful ways; the books reviewed here provide entry points and urgencies for doing so.

Patricia Sullivan argues for reconceptualizing the "role of writing in the graduate curriculum" in her 1991 essay, "Writing in the Graduate Curriculum" (285). Seventeen years after her essay appeared in *JAC*, Sullivan's call still reads like a voice in the darkness, as explicit instruction for graduate students remains a rarity. Sullivan explains that the bracketing of writing from the graduate curriculum is partly due to graduate programs that conceptualize rhetoric "as a 'science,' a method of analyzing the art of discourse rather than the practice of this 'art' in its own right" (285). In addition, faculty assume that graduate students already know how to write—a misperception that Clark counters in her book. This is more than a little odd considering that, as Sullivan notes, "it is writing that ultimately defines graduate students' work and role in the academy" (297). Writing is crucial to student success; it is the coin of the realm, yet rarely does it become a pedagogical site at the graduate level.

Changing this will require a shift in how we conceptualize "advanced" writing. For one thing, because we do tend to think that graduate students already know how to write extended critical essays—as a result of what I call the "osmosis effect"—some might perceive a graduate writing workshop as remedial (though this would likely not occur to us in relation to creative writing workshops). To be clear, then, I am not talking about a remedial course, one that gets under-prepared students up-to-speed. Nor am I describing a cross-disciplinary service course that prepares students to do graduate-level writing. Though such a course—or series of workshops, most ideally—would surely benefit students, especially those whose first language is not English—that's not what I have in mind. I am talking about a course for English graduate students with a dual focus: on the one hand, advanced study of how writers make meaning, forward and test new ideas, contribute to ongoing conversations, and interrupt or disrupt knowledge practices and paradigms; on the other, ample opportunity to draft, give and get feedback, and redraft within the con-

text of a motivated group of writers. By situating our work in the broad field of writing studies, as do the three books reviewed here, we construct a strong foundation for doing this kind of work as well as for extending the reach of writing pedagogy and theory beyond the first-year curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Ideas in this last section formed the basis of my 2008 CCCC roundtable presentation.

### Works Cited

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