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*How Writing Faculty Write: Strategies for Process, Product,
and Productivity* by Christine E. Tulley (review)

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their publishing house; and include perspectives from and about sensitivity readers who review manuscripts for problematic representation and cultural appropriation.

What Editors Do would be at home on the shelves of both institutional and public libraries. It could easily be used in classes within publishing programmes or any class that introduces editorial work and best practices. For those pursuing academic degrees and interested in learning about alternative career paths, the book is organized and written accessibly for undergraduate or graduate students. With quick-paced chapters from the editorial heavy hitters you might expect along with some fresh voices, an extensive glossary, a helpful list of further publishing resources, and an index, this collection is an essential resource for people aspiring to enter the book publishing industry, early career publishing professionals, current editors who want to hone their craft, or authors and other stakeholders in the publishing industry.

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Christine E. Tulley. *How Writing Faculty Write: Strategies for Process, Product, and Productivity*.

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Reviewed by STEVEN E. GUMP

If you could ask just one group of faculty for advice on writing for publication, you might (cleverly) choose the ‘prolific’ ones—or perhaps the ‘stylish’ ones, those whose writing you admire. But if you had to choose faculty from a single discipline, what then? Would you choose faculty in your own field or sub-field, knowing how widely conventions and expectations vary across subjects? Or might you select faculty whose very research and teaching centre on writing: faculty in rhetoric and composition and, more specifically, writing studies?

If the latter would be your choice, thank Christine Tulley for her recent offering through Utah State University Press: *How Writing Faculty Write: Strategies for Process, Product, and Productivity*. Inspired by author interviews published regularly in the *Paris Review* since 1953, Tulley interviewed fifteen ‘productive, prolific scholars’: those ‘with significant publications or growing influence in the field’ of writing studies (8). Framed by a substantial introduction and a briefer concluding chapter, transcripts of these interviews—all conducted by Tulley in person or via Skype between May 2013 and February 2014—form the heart of the work. By featuring ‘the secret writing lives’ of professors of writing and rhetoric (29), Tulley has generated a writing studies-focused volume similar to the excellent works by Eileen Carnell et al. (offering analysis and transcripts of interviews with 18 scholars in educational and social research at the University of London) and Helen Sword (offering analysis and quotations from interviews with 100 scholars across a range of disciplines and continents).¹ Although Tulley is a professor of rhetoric and writing at the University of Findlay (Ohio), a private institution, all of her interviewees are affiliated with (or recently retired from) public institutions in the United States, primarily research universities: a testament to the intellectual nodes where writing studies flourishes as a field. (One interviewee, Howard Tinberg, is a professor of English at Bristol Community College in Massachusetts; the exploration of writing for publication in the context of a community college offers an unexpected, and all too infrequently explored, treat.)

In the introduction, Tulley argues that even though professors of writing and rhetoric conduct research and write about the writing practices of others, surprisingly little is known about their own writing practices. She prepares readers for the subsequent transcripts by identifying ‘patterns’ that pertain to the interviewees’ attitudes toward and techniques for writing. *Relief* best describes what I felt upon reading this thematic, contextualizing material. (Imagine asking a conclave of priests to confess their true beliefs: What sorts of surprises do you really want to hear? That professors of writing and rhetoric claim to follow the advice they likely give to students is, fundamentally, a sign of faith.) In terms of attitudes, the scholars portrayed in this volume view the writing process as messy and difficult, yet they know to persist. And they enjoy both the process and product of writing. With respect to techniques, Tulley identifies three that address the process, product, and productivity in her subtitle. First, through a process-oriented technique Tulley dubs ‘thinking rhetorically’

(20), writing faculty imagine the audience, genre, and intended outcome of a writing project from its conception. Second, they emphasize structure and organization, even if the form of a project evolves organically and iteratively. Third, they focus quickly and write in the interstices of their days—neither necessarily every day nor at the same time or times each day. This final strategy represents a certain maturity and awareness of what Joli Jensen refers to as the “cleared-deck” fantasy’: writers who wait for everything else to be just so or even reasonably under control won’t get much, if any, writing done.² It corroborates, as well, Sword’s finding that successful, productive writers discern what works for themselves in terms of timing, duration, location, and motivation, using that self-knowledge to their advantage. Such writers, in short, ‘take a more individualistic approach to their writing routine’³—but the key to productivity, as the professors in this volume attest, lies in the term *routine*. As interviewee Duane Roen of Arizona State University puts it, ‘you don’t have to be brilliant to be a productive writer, but you do have to have . . . good work habits’ (106).

The fifteen interview transcripts average just seven-and-a-half pages. Each opens, à la the *Paris Review* interviews, with a brief CV of the interviewee that highlights positions held, research areas, principal publications, journal or series editorships, notable grants and awards, and service and leadership roles within the key conferences and associations. Readers from the field of writing studies will recognize the participants—Joe Harris (Delaware), Jackie Royster (Georgia Tech), Cindy Selfe (Ohio State), and Kathi Yancey (Florida State) among them—and their activities. Readers from other fields, though, will likely be unfamiliar with the individuals and scholarly activities profiled. Supporting Tony Becher and Paul Trowler’s theory of the social nature of knowledge communities,⁴ the transcripts display something of an inner dialogue that may best be understood by co-conspirators. Verily, when you talk about a field—particularly a relatively young one such as writing studies—you inevitably end up talking about the people in it. To her credit, Tulley contextualizes any writing-studies jargon that surfaces and spells out discipline-specific acronyms in bracketed insertions, but her interviewees cannot avoid referencing other scholars in the background of the conversation.⁵

These insider references, however, do not hinder understanding. In the *Paris Review* interviews, appearances by other authors—be they identified as inspirations or antagonists—also demonstrate the social, influential,

reciprocal nature of writing. In the acknowledgements, Tulley notes that the book reveals that 'writing faculty never write alone' (xi).⁶ As the transcripts exhibit, few interviewees describe writing as a solitary act, even though the stereotype has been normalized in the academy.

The interviews in this volume are not as riveting as *Paris Review* interviews, but that is no fault of the subjects: artists simply project auras that academics typically do not. For the *Paris Review*, the varied interviewers—never quite as high profile as the interviewees—take the back seat; but Tulley has crafted her interviews to read more like discussions between peers. That apparent egalitarianism serves a subtle purpose: it grounds the scholars profiled, keeping their ideas, strategies, and approaches within reasonable reach for the readers. Educators, after all, are in the business of *revealing* 'secrets,' not concealing them.⁷ But perhaps because Tulley studs the thorough introduction to her volume with juicy excerpts from the transcripts, the déjà vu felt upon encountering the original quotations *in situ* reduces the joy of discovery that feeds narrative excitement.

Permit me an additional comment or two about methods and presentation.⁸ Tulley does not share the average length (in time) of the interviews—though three apparently transpired on one particularly productive day—but she explains that the transcriptions, completed by pairs of graduate students, were 'cut to length' (10). She also considers her interviews 'unstructured,' although the interview protocol included in an appendix suggests that her guided interviews were closer to semi-structured. (Carnell et al. and Sword employed semi-structured interviews for their studies; they also detail their methods more thoroughly. The difference between journalism and scholarship hangs in the balance.) Given the import that writing faculty ascribe to structure and organization, I am uncertain how the interviews were ordered (neither alphabetically nor chronologically nor geographically nor by years of experience); Tulley notes they may be read in any order, suggesting I seek an absent logic. And I wonder why the free-standing introduction is not mirrored by a free-standing conclusion: the book includes fifteen interview transcripts but sixteen numbered chapters. (Chapter 16, throwing off the balance, serves as the conclusion.) Readers will also notice a very spare—well-nigh Spartan—hyphenation style for compounds; I noted at least fifty instances where even *The Chicago Manual of Style* would have deemed comprehension-enhancing hyphens helpful. In its favour, the book exhibits a snazzy design, particularly the exterior.

Tulley mentions, in the acknowledgements, that the finished product differs from what she had initially imagined. Were I to interview her for my own *Paris Review*-style exercise, I would ask about her original vision for this book. Tulley ultimately delivers a valuable resource, but the biggest thrill will surely come from readers in writing and rhetoric who recognize, as subjects, their peers and professional role models. After all, the *Paris Review* interviews I most relish involve writers with whose works I am familiar and enjoy. Awareness and affinity create a context for authority; knowing and liking someone's work kindles a natural interest in the processes that brought such work to life. In a revealing afterword to *How Writing Faculty Write*, Tulley details how and where this book was written, thus offering a fitting and fascinating meta-commentary on how one writing faculty member wrote about how writing faculty write. I wish more scholarship on writing were as reflexive and, to quote novelist Haruki Murakami in his 2004 *Paris Review* interview, as 'wide open to all the possibilities in the world.'⁹

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NOTES

1. See Eileen Carnell, Jacqui MacDonald, Bet McCallum, and Mary Scott, *Passion and Politics: Academics Reflect on Writing for Publication* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2008); Helen Sword, *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).
2. Joli Jensen, *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 56.
3. Sword, *Air & Light & Time & Space*, 19.
4. Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1989).
5. Cameos include those by Gail Hawisher (a professor of mine from graduate school and the other half of the writing dyad with Cindy Selfe, profiled herein); Jim Purdy (a graduate school colleague); and Laura Micciche (whose most recent book—*Acknowledging Writing Partners*—I reviewed for the October 2018 *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*). I may be an atypical reader in that I recognize many of the other writing studies scholars named but do not belong to any of the categories of readers Tulley has envisioned: graduate students, new faculty members, mid-career or senior scholars looking for strategies for mentoring or deepening their productivity, and writing researchers.

6. Compare with the following from Anthony Lane: 'Writing, like dying, is one of those things that should be done alone or not at all. In each case, loved ones may hover around and tender their support, but, in the end, it's up to you.' Anthony Lane, 'High Crimes,' *The New Yorker*, June 18, 2018, 64–69, 64.
7. To quote Elizabeth Schneider: 'There are few "trade secrets" among those who do their jobs well. The most committed and often most celebrated . . . want to share what they know; they do not hide it.' See Elizabeth Schneider, *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini: The Essential Reference* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 2.
8. After all, I must do my job. But Haruki Murakami, in a 2004 interview published in the *Paris Review*, shuns the critic's role: 'I think that my job is to observe people and the world, and not to judge them. I always hope to position myself away from so-called conclusions.' See John Wray, 'Haruki Murakami: The Art of Fiction CLXXXII,' *Paris Review* 170 (Summer 2004): 115–51, 125.
9. Wray, 'Haruki Murakami,' 125.