expectations for academic writing overall, and that the level of agreement diminishes as writing recedes deeper into each discipline and department.

While it might seem as though that is a criticism of Thaiss and Zawacki’s work, it is not. To the contrary, the authors finally offer the field of composition some substantive and detailed explication and synthesis of the nature of academic discourse, how it is valued and taught outside composition programs, how students perceive and achieve successful academic writing, and what we can do individually and programmatically to forward written academic discourse. The fact that their study affirms what many of us might have suspected removes the need for guesswork and instead empowers compositionists to approach our campuses and writing within the disciplines with knowledge about what is taking place and how to improve on it.

I hope that the depth of their multi-modal approach will inspire future longitudinal studies of the same nature. Thaiss and Zawacki incorporate faculty interviews, student interviews, analyses of writing samples, focus groups, and surveys, all toward a comprehensive view of what is transpiring with writing in higher education. Clearly, the implications of their work are yet to be realized but it should inform writing programs in higher education for some time to come.

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*Reviewed by Kyle Jensen, Illinois State University*

Over the past decade, the concept “post-process” has developed a rather notorious reputation in composition studies. Considered by many to advocate a high brow, anti-pedagogical stance that strays from the traditional goals of our field’s research (to say the least), it has met considerable resistance from a host of well-respected scholars such as Susan Miller, Nancy Welch, and Lisa Ede (to name a few). It is with some curiosity, then, that the recently published *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Instructors* identifies itself as a “postprocess” anthology that attempts to calibrate new composition instructors to the emerging conversations in our field. Rather than take aim at the limitations of the process model, however, the editors claim to move “beyond process” by collecting some of the past and recent scholarship that theorizes writing as a complex social phenomenon. Drawing upon three new
categorical terms to arrange the essays, this collection explores how accounting for social relations, geographical locations, and subject positions expands our understanding of the activity of writing.

It should be noted from the outset that this anthology adopts a decidedly pedagogical stance that is most clearly articulated in the brief reflective essays that close each section. These supplemental essays, written by experienced composition instructors, offer strategies for extending the theories that comprise a majority of the text. As a result, they help to solidify key concepts such as “genre” or “thirstspace” that are discussed in a predominantly abstract sense and begin to answer the practical questions of “how” that so often preoccupy new instructors.

I want to spend a majority of this review highlighting the strengths of Relations, Locations, Positions because it is, in my view, a well-crafted anthology that will be extremely useful to its target audience. At the same time, I want to pose some questions and offer several critiques to illustrate where its arguments might have been advanced further. As I hope will become clear, the term “postprocess” still requires discipline-wide attention, especially when scholars use it to describe the current trajectories in composition research. In order to arrive at this point with any clarity, however, a brief summary of the text’s three main sections is necessary.

The first four essays that open Relations explore how traditional methods of literacy instruction explicitly resist any deviation from the authorized norm. In doing so, they illustrate how learning to write is not a simple matter of acquiring the proper skill set, but rather a process of negotiating the nexus of institutional pressures that attempt to invent writers in a certain way. Tracing the ideological implications of these normalizing methods, the authors call for more ethical approaches to literacy instruction. Brian Street (in “What’s New in New Literacy Studies”), for example, encourages his readers to include alternative literacy practices that challenge dominant epistemologies. Similarly, Patricia Bizzell (in “The Intellectual Work of Mixed Forms of Academic Discourse”) advocates an open-stance toward mixed-genre texts that disrupt the formal logic of academic discourse. What becomes clear in the sequencing of these essays is that they establish a strong background for the subsequent essays that advance a rhetorical theory of genre. Amy Devitt’s “Generalizing About Genre” provides an especially useful introduction to these discussions by illustrating how the concept can function as more than a categorical device. As she explains, genres can be understood as typified patterns of social practice that establish the conditions for purposeful action; in this sense, genres are “both the product and the process that creates” forms of social interaction and can thereby be studied to explain how normative practices maintain uneven relations of power (94). The two essays that follow, Anis Bawarshi’s “Sites of Invention” and Anthony Paré’s “Genre and Identity,” examine precisely this issue by analyzing how textual
artifacts such as syllabi, writing prompts, and record keeping documents structure perception in order to delimit action. As both essays clearly convey, “genre” is a powerful tool for helping students identify and subsequently social critique structures that maintain the status quo. To be sure, this section is foundational reading for instructors who want to help students think through the social networks that discipline how we write.

Whereas Relations examines the ideological implications of traditional approaches to literacy instruction, Locations investigates the interconnections between discourse and geographical space. In opening with the germinal essays “The Ecology of Writing” and “Composition’s Imagined Geographies,” the editors provide a strong context for understanding the subsequent essays on eco-composition, biorhetoric, and boundary studies. In my view, the most compelling feature of this sequence is the tropological analysis that many of the authors extend to justify a shift toward inquiries that focus on location. For instance, Nedra Reynolds analyzes how the metaphors “composition-as-city/community” and “cyberspace-as-frontier” carry political implications that affect how we interpret and thereby interact in these spaces. In addition, Johnathon Mauk’s “Location, Location, Location” utilizes the metaphor “student-as-nomad” to theorize how the increasing absence of a traditional academic space affects how students experience their education. As each author in this section argues, students must learn to examine how they and others embody material spaces if we hope to help them use their literacy education to enact social change. Although each essay offers an exemplary introduction to location-based research, I might have included Julie Lindquist’s “Class Ethos and the Politics of Inquiry” because it so clearly illustrates how material spaces affect the rhetorical strategies of its inhabitants.

The essays in the final section, Positions, examine how factors of race, class, sexuality, and ability shape the discursive practices of writers in our culture. In doing so, they explore a range of topics such as African-American historiography, disability studies, the problematics of “authentic” Chineseness, working-class student narratives, and the transformative potential of critiquing whiteness, to illustrate how students might encounter the complexities of “difference” more responsibly. As several of the authors point out, dominant literacy practices have made such explorations difficult because they gloss over the crucial differences that distinguish alternative perspectives. For example, Peter Vandenberg (in “Taming Multiculturalism”) illustrates how thematic readers who gather “multicultural” texts tend to assimilate differences under one heading so that they can be managed and taught more efficiently. Of course, such moves not only strip the political potential from these readings, but also perpetuate the belief that the experiences of historically marginalized people are essentially the same. Thus, in an effort to disrupt the momentum of these dangerous practices, the authors call for a more care-full disposition toward the
study of difference so that both instructors and students may learn to account for the complexities in identity that normalizing logics often overlook.

I have resisted the impulse to explain how the term “postprocess” factors in the essays above so that I may ask a potentially impertinent question: will the audience gain a better purchase on their arguments by reading them in the context of this term? If the answer is yes, it is because using this term requires the editors to account for past approaches to composition instruction/research that situate the essays within a larger disciplinary history—a strategy that has obvious benefits. I am concerned, however, that attaching “postprocess” to all of these essays not only offers little to their arguments, but also neutralizes the term by making it too inclusive and too coherent. Although I like how the term forges new connections that may not have otherwise been made, I wonder how Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie would respond to the argument that they are “postprocess” theorists because they coauthored an essay on the politics of location (4). I also wonder why the more radically theoretical approaches to post-process theory, which are less easily categorized into the three terms that guide this anthology, aren’t discussed at all. I am surprised, for example, that Thomas Kent’s work on paralogy is not mentioned, and think that D. Diane Davis’ “Finitude’s Clamor” would provide a useful complication of both Kent’s work and some of the other essays in this collection. Of course, the common complaint is that editors always leave out something that they should have included in the final cut, and perhaps these essays were considered and ruled out because they are too specialized for the target audience, but that is not really my point. My point is that when editors use a deliberately contentious term such as “postprocess” to arrange a group of essays together, but do not discuss the term’s history of contention, they fall prey to the same neutralizing imperatives that their anthology critiques throughout. I do not think that this absence represents a failure of the text; I am just concerned that this version of “postprocess” loses some of the edge that I find extremely valuable: an edge that forces a continuous reconsideration of the possible and impossible relations between theory and practice, an edge that motivates travels to unexpected locations to push the boundaries of our common assumptions, and an edge that encourages us to assume positions that purposefully disrupt the central concepts that have led us into the present moment.

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Works Cited
