A BRIEF PLEA FOR A PARADIGM AND FOR KINNEAVY AS PARADIGM

Timothy W. Crusius
Texas A&M University

My basic position can be stated with an almost syllogistic concision:

i) As teachers of discourse, we must work from a theory of discourse—or else resign ourselves to ad-hoc measures and admit that we have no systematic justification for doing anything.

ii) While there are no complete or adequate theories of discourse at present, Kinneavy's is the fullest developed.

iii) Therefore, we should adopt Kinneavy's theory as the paradigm for our field, thinking with his concepts, developing his categories, extending his system in principled ways, until it either becomes adequate and complete or reveals innate shortcomings that call for a new, differently conceived set of ideas.

Let me emphasize that I do not think that Kinneavy's theory is either complete or adequate. It is not complete because the second volume on discourse modes has yet to appear, though the basic principles of the second volume are presented in Kinneavy's text, co-authored with Cope and Campbell, Writing — Basic Modes of Organization. It is not adequate for more complex reasons which I will eventually discuss — mainly because his theory lacks a well-developed dynamic dimension.

I know that many teachers of rhetoric will not grant my first premise — the need for system, for a guiding theory or paradigm. They fall into two groups: one faction, by far the larger, will claim that they care only for what works in improving student writing; the other, distinct if overlapping with the first, will claim to distrust system-making per se. Both groups have a distinguished heritage. The first will find their spiritual ancestors among the ancient sophists, while the second could cite Nietzsche, who felt that anyone going in for systems has to be stupid, dishonest or both. The pragmatic group asks for results; the other demands that we confront complexity without the simplifying blinders of theory, that we open our small minds, too frightened by the hobgoblin of consistency, to the rich disorder of language use.

I have more sympathy for the anti-anti-systematic than my opening syllogism would suggest. I am certainly a sophist, one who feels that his job is done when he gets results, who subscribes, in other words, to the bottom line. Most of us are itinerant composition teachers, trying to help our students get on in the world, differing from the ancient sophists mainly in lacking charisma and wealth. I will concede to the anti-systematic side the likelihood that discourse will forever elude paradigmatic treatment in Thomas Kuhn's sense of "paradigm." Rhetoric is an art, not a science. An art can never be—not even "in theory"—exhaustively described and explained, and hence no theory of discourse can aspire to the status of a scientific paradigm. Language use, in Wittgenstein's metaphor, is a game. New games and twists on old ones can and will be invented ad infinitum. Hence, the impossibility of an exhaustive treatment of discourse.

Why, then, should we, as sophists struggling with an art rather than a science, work within a theory of discourse? There are really two basic questions here: Why traffic in theory at all? and Why a theory rather than several?

First, we must take up the challenge of a perpetual quest for an adequate theory of discourse because not to do so amounts to an evasion of our intellectual responsibilities. We do something in a writing class and then justify it by saying "it works." But what do we mean by "works"? Works in what way exactly? With what? With whom? To what degree? Why? For how long? We have said nothing until we answer these questions, and we cannot answer these questions without theorizing. Our duty is to reason about discourse, about the acts of reading and writing, to construct arguments that can have public currency. The alternative is a sophistic cult of personality, a "trust me" attitude that will forever deny our field philosophical standing.

Second, rhetoric without theory reduces the whole field to a knock, rather than an art. Early in the Rhetoric, Aristotle pointed out that some people acquire a facility at persuasive speaking without formal, conscious attention to precept. They just "pick it up" somehow through exposure, by experience. Rhetorical ability acquired in this way amounts to a knock, and many human activities requiring skill never progress far beyond the knock stage. But because of Aristotle and his tradition, rhetoric was conceptualized, made an object of thought describable in and by principle. It became, that is, an art in Aristotle's sense, a form of human action systematic enough to engage philosophical scrutiny. Because it is an art, rhetoric can be thought about and taught, as well as practiced; because it is an art, its precepts can be recorded, transmitted, criticized, developed, just as any other field of scholarly interest.

In brief, the rhoter's pursuit demands theory; theory-making follows from rhetoric's standing as an art.

But why a theory rather than several? Why a single and adequate—if not exhaustive—paradigm for modern rhetoric? Why not a pluralism, such as Wayne Booth has recently described for literary criticism?

I have no quarrel with pluralism. My own loyalties are to Kenneth Burke's Dramatism, clearly pluralistic. Yet, I think we ought to work with one discourse theory.

Pluralism is what we have now. We are over our heads, inundated with "isms." Some of us are "current traditionalists," some Rogerians, Burkeans, Vygotzskians, tagmemicists, Brittonites—how far could we extend the list? If every Frenchman has his political party, almost every rhetorician has his "ism." Some would call this lack of a center creative and healthy; if so, it is also chaotic and confusing. Rhetoric may someday need the flexibility, the intellectual heat of many perspectives should our thinking become inert, but at present encouraging pluralism in rhetoric is like pleading for tax breaks for the rich at a Republican fund-raiser.
The difficulty with pluralism—when not managed by a mind like Kenneth Burke’s or Ronald Crane’s—is that it is too easy. Once admit pluralism in a field like rhetoric, and the dialectical resources become so fluid and ingenious that one can let in anything. The struggle to synthesize vanishes. Instead of working in a principled way to extend an existing paradigm as new insights turn up, the tendency is to wheel one’s grocery cart through the warehouse of ideas and pitch in whatever happens to appeal at the time. The result is a jumble. The result is that many of our textbooks read like they were put together by committees, the members of which were not very compatible. Pluralism, in other words, slips into facile eclecticism. And eclecticism has only good will between it and its reductio ad absurdum, the anything-goes, do-what-feels-right, we-are-all-so-wonderful-anyway sort of mentality.

So then, a theory—not to exclude anyone’s insights, but to exert an effective pressure towards integration of both new and old into a coherent view of our subject.

If a theory, why Kinneavy’s? First, because it is specifically a theory of discourse, not of the symbolic act, of the node, or anything else that overlaps with, is a part of, or includes our subject, but is not exactly our subject. We can learn a lot from all sorts of theories, but we require a theory of discourse. Second, Kinneavy’s theory is a general one, meant to encompass the universe of discourse. Such an overall, spacious view is an excellent initial conception, one that will allow for much development and refinement, while retaining a firm outline of the field as a whole. Third, Kinneavy’s theory is not a mere aggregation of received opinion; rather it is grounded philosophically in clear and relatively simple ideas (e.g., “aim” and “mode”) from which his whole conception is generated. Fourth, his theory preserves the historical continuity of discourse studies. For example, instead of discarding Classical rhetoric as I. A. Richards did, Kinneavy has it playing the role for which it was intended—as the basic theory of persuasive discourse. Finally, should anyone doubt the practicality of Kinneavy’s theory, recent texts, such as John Ruszkiewicz’s Well-Founded Words and Janice Lauer’s Four Worlds of Discourse, should prove beyond any reasonable doubt that A Theory of Discourse can be the basis for student-oriented rhetorics at all levels.

No other theory can claim these virtues; taken all in all, Kinneavy has no rival. Hence, my conclusion that his theory should be the paradigm of discourse studies.

But to say it has no rival is not to say it has no liabilities. I would confront the limitations of his theory directly, if only to glimpse how much work remains to be done.

First, virtues have a way of becoming liabilities. On the one hand, it is a strength of Kinneavy’s theory that it is a general theory of discourse. Our basic theory should encompass all discourse. On the other hand, however, as teachers of writing what we require specifically is a theory of written discourse, a fully articulated understanding of exactly how the oral medium differs from the written and from the printed and how they interact, especially in the development of a child’s ability to handle all kinds of discourse. Because of the work of Walter Ong, E. D. Hirsch, and others, we are now aware that writing differs from speech in many crucial ways; for instance, there is a great difference between an audience and a readership, between a context that is present and implicit, as in oral discourse, and one that is explicit, created by the text itself, as in most written discourses. But we are still far from a full understanding of either the oral or the written code, and we have yet to gather in all the diverse insights and spin them into one coherent view. The most important task now facing contemporary rhetoric is to construct an adequate theory of written discourse.

In realizing that end, Kinneavy’s general theory ought to serve us well; his basic categories should only need to be supplemented by the more detailed knowledge of written discourse that will certainly arise when enough attention is focused upon it. Which is to say, a theory of written discourse ought to amount to an internal development of Kinneavy’s theory, since we must assume that a general theory of anything must include in potential all more specific theories.

If we need a theory of written discourse, we also need theories both of the process of writing and the development of writing abilities. We will not find such dynamic conceptions of discourse in Kinneavy. I have heard Kinneavy himself say—at any rate, it is obvious—that his theory is static, not concerned with the many acts that go into producing a work of discourse or the many phases that young writers go through in achieving adult-level competence. Clearly, such concerns are central to composition theory. Evidently, then, we shall have to add a dynamic dimension to Kinneavy’s static theory—or, as some might urge, replace Kinneavy with a theory based in development and process.

Replacing Kinneavy (at this time) would be a mistake in my view. We need a static theory of discourse just as linguistics requires a synchronic view of grammar. How shall we work with process unless we know the end for which it is aiming? And how shall we study the development of writing ability unless we have a more or less fixed notion of what constitutes adult-level performance? Kinneavy’s theory provides both; it is a description of the aims of mature discourse. Our purpose should be to complement his static view with its dialectical opposite, the process orientation.

Confirmation of the need for a static theory and a theory like Kinneavy’s has come from a study of writing development published four years after A Theory of Discourse appeared. I refer to James Britton’s justly celebrated monograph, The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18). In making sense out of the thousands of scripts they analyzed, one of the central moves of the Britton team was to offer a general view of mature discourse, as discussed in Chapter Five of their study. In other words, they recognized and acted upon dialectical necessity—the only possible ground for a study of writing development is a notion of mature writing ability. The theory they offer is remarkably like Kinneavy’s categories. In brief, they see all writing as issuing out of the expressive function, and as moving in one of two directions, either toward the transactional or towards the poetic. The transactional, they go on to specify, consists basically of the informative and conative functions. So what do we have? Kinneavy’s categories, for the basic functions of discourse according to Britton turn out to be Kinneavy’s aims, the expressive, the literary, the scientific, and the persuasive. What is remarkable about this
A match of functions and aims is that Britton and his associates apparently worked out their theory independently of Kinneavy—at least, there is no reference to him anywhere in their text. I would take this as good evidence for the basic soundness of Kinneavy's work—not only is it grounded in ancient tradition, ultimately in Aristotle, but his theory seems to be what recent explorations of discourse re-discover.

The near match between Britton's functional view and Kinneavy's taxonomy of aims also suggests that Kinneavy's theory can easily accommodate a developmental view of discourse. We need only study the process of discourse acquisition and development from the standpoint of the mature aims Kinneavy describes—if Britton's functions will serve the purpose, so will Kinneavy's aims.

In sum, then, what we ought to pursue is a comprehensive theory of written discourse, one that would synthesize the static and dynamic into a single, coherent, integrated view. Kinneavy does not provide such a theory, but his work does offer a paradigm from which we can work. Rather than continue to work at sixes and sevens, let us take Kinneavy's contribution and use it creatively to achieve definite theoretical goals. In this way, we can bring a measure of unity to our sadly fragmented field; in this way, we can channel our energies and form a true community of scholars and teachers.

Notes

AN ESSAY FOR SOME PROFESSORS
Susan Sejfarth
University of Iowa

I want to talk to you about writing. I am a graduate student in English, so I do quite a bit of writing, and I want to tell you the story of a writing experience I've had recently. Really, I am still having that experience, because I am thinking a lot about it and the way that I have been "taught" writing in graduate school.

In response to a call for papers, I wrote an article for Freshman English News (Winter, 1982). The issue was devoted to the roles of teaching assistants in English departments beyond their responsibilities as teachers. My article is about my tenure as a student assistant in the University of Iowa's Professional Development Program for first year Rhetoric teachers. At the time of composition, I was enrolled in an expository writing workshop; I submitted my article to the workshop for comments from the professor. You may not be surprised that his comments were very different from those of a friend who did some editing for me. You may be surprised about the way their comments are different.

I knew there was something unsettling about this particular piece, but to be unsettled is natural when I am responding to my written work. I gave the piece to my friend, hoping he'd return it with a box drawn around a paragraph and a note saying something like "Here is where I'm beginning to need more information. You had this experience; I didn't. Give me the specific details that will give me the sense of participating in this aspect of the program." Then I'd be able to feel less unsettled as I added a "for example" or a "such as" for clarity's sake. My friend read the piece and made the kinds of alterations that amount tofooling with my prose — transposing syntax here, eliminating a word there, and making the inevitable awkward sentence more fluent. I accepted these alterations and felt less unsettled because one thing that my writing teachers have given me since early in grammar school is loyalty to the mechanics of the language. Years of exercising in grammar and stye workbooks have provided me with a good deal of insecurity about my own abilities to write a fluent sentence, and I have concentrated on my writing at the sentence level, the workbook level, in the same way that my friendly editor did. Not so my expository writing teacher. He looked at my sentences and he asked questions and made suggestions about their collective effect. My friend asked no questions, and he too is a graduate student in English. I know now that he should have asked many. What suggestions did he have about the piece? What else did he want to know, or what information did he need or want to have? Why didn't he ask about the lack of voice in the writing? Why didn't he ask where I was in the prose? What had I done to make the piece distinctly mine? These are the issues my writing teacher addressed in his comments on the piece. These are the questions that have become answers and explanations for my uneasiness about the PEN piece and most all of the academic writings that I do: their reasons for being have very little to do with me, and I don't mean a me that is merely a student fulfilling course requirements. I mean the me who is engaged by pieces of literature, who cares about her teaching experiences, and then attempts to write about them. I have already described the way I usually feel about the results of these attempts. I am beginning to understand that the way I feel and the reasons for my prose's various states of being are connected and have a great deal to do with the way my knee jerks
response to professional and academic writing tasks. Let me give you some history on the subject, some more modern than the rest.

Throughout grammar school, high school, and as an undergraduate, I was taught "to write" by well-meaning teachers who believed in one of two methods: one learned "to write" by filling in the blanks in exercises provided by texts such as the Harbrace Handbook, or one wrote five paragraphs replete with topic sentences, primary and secondary support, and concluding material on an assigned topic. The summary of these experiences as a "writing student" is not meant to be a revelation; I mean for it to be a reminder of what, for many of us as graduate students in English, our writing experiences still are.

The bulk of the work we do is in literature classes. With few exceptions, our professors expect us to write "academic" papers; these are papers in which there is little or no room left for interpretative uncertainties or stylistic experimentations. It is hoped that one will produce a paper in which a literary epiphany occurs, but that epiphany ought and really must occur within the confines of the "scholarly paper" (read: an extended version of the voiceless five paragraph theme). That is to say one must compose a statement of purpose—for example:

If we look at the play in terms of its various parts—character, plot, theme, imagery, and other dramatic strategies—I believe we shall be able to see the sum of those parts as a unified work in which Fielding's purposes are not submerged but clear. His purposes are to satirize the state of contemporary art, to provide criticism and instruction on moral and ethical issues, and to attempt to explore the possible metaphors for both the fictional and real worlds, thus developing his individual theory of drama and art.

One must then provide numerous examples from the text to prove one's point. In this case, I provided twenty pages of examples from Henry Fielding's The Author's Focus that I think demonstrate quite clearly that Fielding's purposes are to satirize, criticize, and explore. I conclude with some questions about why this play has been neglected by critics, and I try to answer these questions in ways that might make readers want to pay attention to and take note of this play. What I do not do anywhere is give any indication of a reason for caring, thinking, or writing about the play, and I could have done that. I should have done that because those should be the reasons for the paper's being. I am going to tell you why I think I did not write with the conviction that I wish I had.

In graduate school, we do not learn to write. In view of the fact that most of us desire teaching jobs whose security lies in the fact of publications, isn't this a strange phenomenon? Many would answer my question by saying that we are taught to write; we are told to read the important journals in our fields and are given numerous opportunities to write papers in the styles represented in those journals. In my experience of four years of undergraduate work as an English major, five years of graduate work, my responses to writing invitations have been to jerk my knee and write an extended version of the five paragraph theme because this is what I see so much of in the journals. I have always been rewarded for my responses, and those rewards have come in the always important form of the highest grades. I think that is why I responded to the call for articles in PEN in a knee-jerking, five paragraph theme manner. I laugh now when I think about that response because I certainly cannot characterize all the articles that appear in the TA issue of PEN in the way I typify my own writing. One article begins, "So you gotta teach comp, and you don't have any idea of how you're gonna go about it?" Maybe the author, Douglas Cazort, learned to write in graduate school, maybe not. I do believe that there is and must be room in the writing component in graduate courses for actually learning about one's own writing. And I am talking now about an activity that we do with purpose; and that purpose must be based on what we care about as individuals and the ways that we think about those things. Let me tell you about some approaches that are tried and tried but do not necessarily lead to discovering any truths about ourselves and our thinking, and later, let me tell you too about some ways that might change that direction and lead toward thinking and discovery and truth in writing.

One theory that does not work is the theory that enables a professor to say that x number of papers will be required on x dates; when each of those papers is returned, it will bear a letter grade that represents how well the writer has proved her point, something that most often has nothing to do with whether or not the writer has made any part of the literary text hers. Nevertheless, the grades on these papers will usually determine one's final grade in a course. This approach does not seem to me to be one in which student writing is treated as a very serious endeavor. The students may have written several drafts, but why don't they get the benefit of editorial commentary from their professors as they progress or regress from draft to draft? I cannot think of other teaching and learning situations in which we do not consult with "experts" along the way. I am learning to play racquetball; most often I play with my son who knows the game well and is quite an accomplished player. He will stop in the midst of our volleying to show me what would happen if I tried my backhand strokes with one hand rather than two. He will also compliment me when I return a difficult shot by telling me how and why the shot was difficult and what I did right in returning it. When my husband tries something new in the kitchen, he consults with me; I've been hanging around kitchens far longer than he has, so he looks to me for the help and criticism that will contribute to his success. Why, then, isn't development of a student's writing about literature treated as a very important aspect of his mastery of the text itself? How can one really learn the text, really make it a part of herself, when the process of writing about it is not treated as a vital part of experiencing literature? When a writer submits a "final" draft for evaluation by the professor, and no discussion, no dialogue has occurred regarding the piece, you have what I have called an unworkable theory, but now it is a practice. I doubt that the practice has much to do with the two words I have underlined in this paragraph, development and process.

Writers of stature never submit their manuscripts for publication without assuming that many editors will read and make suggestions about their work. Mrs. Eliot and Ezra Pound edited and put in order "The Wasteland" for T. S. Eliot; why, then, do professors expect their students of literature to write with stature when there has been no dialogue about the students' discourse? There is room for dialogue about student writing in graduate literature courses. Not only is there room, but there is a responsibility to deal with student writing in the very nature of the courses. That nature lies in a definition of learning; a friend of mine says learning truly occurs when we take a piece of information, a fact, a literary text, and we incorporate it into the body of what is meaningful to us. We "make it our own." When we make a piece of literature our own, that possession must be reflected in our writing/thinking. The act of writing and thinking about a subject cannot involve merely reading and then responding in a knee-jerk, thesis sentence, supporting material,
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and concluding paragraph way. The reason that such a written response is unacceptable is that the reader's response must finally be "so what?" In terms of the writer, the question is really unanswerable. Readers can never tell why writers produce these papers other than for the obvious reasons of either fulfilling an assignment or getting published. I responded to the editor of *FEN* in order to get published. I was uneasy about my response, but it took several readers before I understood my own uneasiness. Finally, someone told me precisely how and where the piece goes wrong. The prose is not mine. Rather, the speaker is an impersonation of the only voice that I thought could speak to an audience of professionals. The speaker is removed, whereas I am involved. Because that speaker is an impersonator, she has not shared my experience in the Professional Development Program; her voice cannot bring it to a reader. In fact, she brings an experience to the audience through language I would never use. Let me give you an example of her artificial dictum:

I shared my method of using student-led reading discussions to increase comprehension and to integrate speech and reading with my group leader. He, in turn, asked me to share this approach with our entire group. I received instant feedback on my idea.

*Feedback* is not a word that occurs normally in my speaking or writing vocabulary. In fact, I cringe when I hear it because it smacks of jargon and educationalese. Yet, when I wrote for *FEN* I lapsed into the kind of language that I hear and read often when the topic of teaching arises, although not necessarily in that particular journal. The rhetoricians may respond that I am demonstrating an awareness of my audience, but it is an artificial audience with artificial expectations. Most of the people I know who might read *FEN* would cringe too at the word *feedback*, and yet none of my friends who previewed my article ever mentioned the jargon and how unlike me the language sounded. As readers and products of graduate programs in English, they appear to be victims of the same sort of conditioning as I am. Not only do our knees jerk when we write, but also when we read.

I would like to be able to resubmit my piece to *FEN*, but it has already been published. I got what I wanted. But I am not happy; I am embarrassed. I am angry too. And I feel that I have been cheated out of a lot of time and money and learning and writing. I started to tell you about how one might "make room" for the writing component in graduate courses — and undergraduate and high school and grammar school, too. It will take room, space on the syllabus, time in the classroom: There may not be time to discuss one of the novels or a group of sonnets, but we can and must sacrifice that for the addition of an exciting new element to our courses, the discussion of students' and professors' writings about the texts. Once, I heard of a class, a graduate seminar on Alexander Pope, that was conducted in a way that I think gets at what I'm talking about.

The class met once a week, and besides reading, each member was assigned specific lines in a poem on which to write. At class time, copies of the short papers were distributed and discussions of the literary text were extended to include the students' and professor's critical responses. The focus was shifted from Pope exclusively to include the ways in which each writer had dealt with Pope; purpose, style, and form were considered in Pope's work and in each writer's response to his work. Another requirement for the course was the inevitable long critical paper, and in this case the teacher required drafts of these papers before the spring holiday. They were returned quickly with editorial comments, and each student had a conference with the teacher to discuss the reworking of the draft. The students were invited to consult with the teacher on any other drafts, partial or complete, before turning in the final one. This approach to writing in a graduate English course seems to me to be eminently sensible. It eliminates the trap that is laid in most courses, and that trap is set when a professor requires the students to write a lengthy critical paper in which they engage some problematic area of the text. The assignment is given at the beginning of the semester; it is usually responded to at the end. Within the last two weeks of the term, the professor receives a batch of drafts; she reads them; she evaluates them. Sometimes these evaluations are responsible commentaries that are meant truly to help the student. Of course, the help is coming too late for that paper in that course. The term is over essentially. Other times, the evaluations consist of a grade and a not-so-helpful comment. Let me give you some examples from my own work. An eight-page paper on *Jane Eyre* received an "A" and the comment "Very good work." Seven pages on *The Egost* were returned with a grade accompanied by the words "an authoritative and well presented paper." Another five pages on *The Way of All Flesh* were called "a well reasoned paper." I would really like to know specifically what about the work I do is very good, well presented, and well reasoned. When a professor comments, "you weren't skeptical enough," I would like the opportunity to develop the skepticism that might lead me to a more accurate and responsible reading of *Arthur Mervyn*.

Given the cyclical nature of academic life where beginnings and endings are marked by semesters or quarters, students rarely can continue to work on or go back to papers once a term has ended. A new one begins, and the pressure to submit more "publishable" critical papers is renewed. One semester, in an attempt to thwart this system of largely ignoring the process of writing, I went to a professor about a paper with which I was having monumental problems. I was thinking and thinking and had written a beginning for the piece, but I couldn't get any further. I think the monumental problem is called Writer's Block. My teacher's response came in two forms: first, he told me I probably needed to drop out of school for a while; second, he wrote a note for my file in which he said I'd had a great deal of trouble writing a paper for the course. Although I got the paper in on time and was rewarded for my efforts with an "A" in the course, I somehow have never felt that I thwarted any system. I don't know if the paper is any good because I don't know what it is in my writing, specifically, that motivates people to make comments like "very good work." I think it is probably that most of my teachers respond well to my ability to write a topic sentence, provide support for it, and provide a unifying conclusion.

I cannot call those responses sensible because I am not being sensible in my writing. I am not being sensible in this respect. I do not fully realize the literature and make it my own anymore than I did with the experience I tried to write about for *FEN*. I think that making something my own is a process, and, as a writer, part of that process must be the dialogue that occurs between my editors — read teachers and friends — about my discourse.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CHRONOLOGICAL THINKING SKILLS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO
WRITING

Karl K. Taylor
Illinois Central College

Over the last decade or so, the bulk of the research in composition has been confined primarily to these four areas: the effect of oral language on the written, the movement from egocentricism to exocentrism, the development of syntactic complexity, and the writing processes of good and poor writers. These are all very high level skills. By the time an individual is able to write a fairly competent paragraph or two, he/she has mastered to some degree a great many subskills undergirding the composing process. What are some of these skills? Again, at a relatively high level, non-handicapped individuals are able to hear and probably most have learned how to speak before writing, and knowing how to read may be helpful but not necessary. However, below these language skills are mental abilities which may exist apart from reading or writing, but which are crucial in those two areas. These mental abilities are ways the brain manipulates information and may include tools for grasping or structuring experience or data. These mental skills include, for example, comparison, division, classification, generalization, specification; and they might incorporate ways for understanding time and space, like chronology, shape, size and distance.

Many English teachers are familiar with these skills because traditionally some of them were incorporated in rhetorically based composition courses. Students were taught, for instance, how to write a comparison/contrast or a classification paper; the high school or college English instructor did not teach them how to compare or to classify. Somewhere, somehow the students had been born with, developed, or learned the mental ability to compare pieces of information or to sort data into categories using a ruling principle. Psychologists, on the other hand, have been exploring how and when these mental skills appear and what can be done to foster their development, ranging from studies of preschool infants to adults in college. For instance, at one end of the spectrum, J. McV. Hunt (1973) has been studying when children are able to identify color, position (in, on, under, etc.), shape and number. At the other end of the spectrum, Jerome Bruner (1956) has been analyzing how college students classify. Other examples could be cited of psychologists working on various subskills of writing, but apparently these concerns have generally not interested researchers in composition. Three exceptions are Taylor (1979), Purves (1978), and Tibbetts (1979). Many writing researchers, like Flower and Hayes (1979), seem to believe that these subskills, which later become helpful in organizing writing, unfold spontaneously when a writing situation demands them, or that writers have somehow acquired generalized writing plans very similar to story grammars or schemata which will be discussed later. Thus, they have pictures or images of how material can be organized, and from these models they develop an organizational scheme. The purposes of this paper, then, are to examine one subskill — namely chronological order — report how the literature explains its growth, and make recommendations for future instruction and research.

As we live through experience after experience, we must somehow learn to structure and make sense out of the events appearing before our eyes. Although life involves an unfolding of events in which we sometimes participate and sometimes merely observe, man has the capacity to recall these events in memory and to reflect on and analyze them. For the adult, experience is not one continuous episode as it might be for the child; through his mental powers, the adult can structure his past experience, arbitrarily designating the beginning and ending of particular segments. Unlike small children, adults can make judgments about these experiences, comparing one day to another or placing certain days under categories. Apparently psychologists feel the ability to place material in chronological order is an important skill because subjects are asked to arrange a series of drawings in this fashion on at least one major I.Q. test. To communicate our experiences, we must be able to organize what we say so other people can learn or benefit from or enjoy what we have experienced. If we had no organizing ability for speech, our explanations would be disjointed and unclear to our listeners. Where and how does one learn to organize what he/she wants to say orally or in writing? Where does one learn how to use the relatively simple skills of chronology? Are these taught directly or indirectly or do they appear naturally? Are these all separate skills which are learned individually during the course of development, or do human beings learn or develop a single sense of organization which they apply to all aspects of their lives?

Competence with chronology may range, then, from the preschooler's ability to comprehend the simple passage of events before his/her eyes to the adolescent's ability to record chronologically a series of events in writing. At this point, we are concerned with the beginning of man's sense of structure, with what a small child might be able to understand or to utilize. Probably one of the earliest and most primitive notions of chronology develops in individuals as events unfold and recede before them. Early man must have noted not only the change in seasons during one year, but also the same cycle during the next year. By living through these seasons and by noting their time-ordered sequence — spring, summer, fall and winter — man may have begun to develop this sense of chronology. Today, this concept of order is reinforced in many ways. Children learn order by following a sequence of events which they see on a television program or hear about in a story read to them. Children know something about chronology before they go to school because, for example, they learn that a nap follows lunch or that Sesame Street comes on in the morning. They follow a chronological schedule during their school day. What small child doesn't know what comes first, second or last in his/her schedule? Thus, children find themselves involved in events either actively or passively, and these experiences help them shape their notion of chronology, affecting what they hear, say, read and write.

As Brown (1976) has pointed out, to understand chronology children must be able to grasp the concept of time — past, present and future — to recognize that an event happened yesterday, which is distinct from today or tomorrow. Philosophers like Kant (1934) and Descartes (1825) believed that man's sense of time was innate without any dependence on experience. But according to Piaget (1969) and many developmental psychologists, an understanding of time comes from experience; children, therefore, must construct a concept of it. Their understanding depends on three subskills or concepts — serialization, duration, and reversibility. First, they must be able to order events in temporal succession; event B occurred after event A, and event C came after event A and B. Second, they must be able
to grasp whether one span of time is longer or shorter than another. The interval between event A and C is greater, for example, than the interval between A and B. Children reach the final stage when they can reverse time mentally, moving from the present to the past and vice versa.

In what sequence do children acquire these chronological skills? Some of the youngest children using chronology are reported by Brown and Murphy (1975) who demonstrated that four-year-olds could reconstruct a sequence, either arbitrary or logical. The children could copy the order of items on a clothes line with a model present, or they could do so from memory. Children could also reconstruct a series of pictures if they were presented in an order in which the children could have experienced them. For instance, the pictures might represent several activities associated with getting up in the morning: getting out of bed, washing their faces, and eating breakfast. If the pictures were arranged arbitrarily without regard for logic or the children's experience, they had difficulty reconstructing the order, suggesting that prior experience greatly affected their performance. Piaget (1969) concluded, to the contrary, that children younger than seven years of age could not order information chronologically because they had not developed the skill of reversibility; they could not reverse the order of events, going forward and backward in time. However, Brown and Murphy (1975) have shown that pre-operational youngsters can recognize, reconstruct, and recall chronological sequences without mastering the skill of reversibility. In addition, other researchers have discovered five- and six-year-olds can understand both "before" and "after" (Amidon and Carey, 1972; Barrie-Blackley, 1973; Bever, 1970; Clark, 1970, 1971; Clark, 1974). They can understand "first" and "last" (Brown and Murphy, 1975), and copy or match an ordered series (Braine, 1959; Brown and Murphy, 1975, and Pufall and Furth, 1966). Finally, they can reconstruct an ordered series from memory (Brown and Murphy, 1975; Rosner, 1973).

The development of a sense of time and the experience of living through time contribute to an understanding of chronological skills. Conversation — both listening to it and becoming involved in it — may also contribute, according to Bruner (1975), Fine (1978), Garvey (1975) and Reichman (1978). Reichman, for instance, has attempted to specify the steps by which participants in a conversation are able to keep their conversation coherent. Each conversant follows some kind of model or schemata of what a conversation should be like. And others have shown that anecdote narration, occasions when children describe their experiences chronologically, is one of the common forms of conversational speech.

Children learn a great deal about chronology from their reading. Applebee (1979) says children enjoy hearing and telling stories because they "are engaged in searching for meaning, a search for structures and patterns that will suggest order and consistency in the world around them" (p. 645). Children acquire certain expectations of stories — what they should contain, how they should be organized, etc. Young children realize that a chronological narrative has a character who is involved in some kind of action in order to achieve a specific goal for which there is some kind of consequence. Stein and Glen (1977) have developed what is called a story grammar, a schematic representation of stories used by individuals to understand them. As Stein (1978) says, these schemata, "defined as a set of rewrite rules, specify the types of information which should occur in stories and the types of logical relations which should connect story components. They guide a listener or reader in determining when information, critical to the cohesiveness of a story, has been omitted from text and when the logical organization of a story has deviated from the expected sequence of events" (p. 1).

According to Brown et al. (1977), these schemata provide both adults and children a framework for comprehending stories. However, to understand them, readers do not simply compare the narrative being read to their story schemata, but as Stein and Nieworski (1978) point out, readers construct or add to their own schemata. This notion is supported by an earlier study (Stein, 1976), indicating that children can detect when material has been disorganized. When they detect this change does not fit their schemata, they "create an entirely new episode to incorporate the moved category into a more coherent story." This development "indicates that schematic control over story information is quite strong" (p. 10), and may also reflect a well-developed sense of chronology. Stein and Glenn (1977) found children's stories become logically more complex with age and they can use logical structures more easily as they grow older. This skill may also be related to a growing, stronger sense of chronology. When children are asked to write or tell stories, Stein (1979) found that once again prior knowledge has great effect on the quality of stories which children can produce. Those aged 5-11 had no trouble producing structurally cohesive narratives, but their prose lacked specificity.

Bereiter (1978) believes children in the primary grades have well-developed strategies for understanding narratives, but they have difficulty grasping the causes and reasons linking the events. He believes the schema for comprehending narrative is the same as or very similar to the schema for direct experience. Therefore, understanding narrative materials is so easy for youngsters because "narrative comprehension depends on already developed (and possible innate) mental structures for processing direct experience" (p. 10). He claims youngsters understand any type of narrative that is chronological and that produces concrete imagery; on the other hand, they have difficulty understanding narrative that is not chronological or filled with concrete images. By the same token, expository material is difficult for children to understand because their narrative schema, based on chronology, will not fit the new expository forms, which have no time sequence and are frequently devoid of concrete images.

Children, in summary, develop a sense of chronology over the years by acquiring a concept of time, by living through time, by listening to and becoming involved in conversations, and by listening to and reading stories written in chronological order. In fact, by the time youngsters have entered elementary school, the skill of chronology is strong and comes so easily to children that they use it quite frequently whether it is appropriate or not. For example, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1980) found some youngsters used narrative to respond to a writing situation calling for an expository organizational pattern. Squire (1964) implies that adolescents, when asked to respond to literature critically, often resort to summarizing the plot of what they read and apparently expect readers to consider the summary as being critical. In other words, no matter how teachers ask students to respond to a piece of literature, they write a chronological plot summary. This finding may support the notion that chronology is a strong organizational pattern and may seem appropriate to youngsters when it is not. When Freedle and Hale (1979) studied the ability of five- and six-year-olds to comprehend expository and narrative materials, they found children had great difficulty with the expository, but little with the narrative. More important, however, when they took the information from the expository essay and
placed it in narrative, chronological order or form, more students than previously were able to grasp the ideas. Again, this example supports the notion that narrative schemata are very powerful even in young children. Hogan (1980) discovered that writing chronological stories is an appealing assignment for students in grades one through four, but somewhat less popular among students in grades four through eight. Writing exposition, however, is one of the least popular tasks for the older group of students. Hidi and Hildyard (1980) asked children in third and fifth grades to produce a narrative story and an opinion essay, half of them writing both assignments, and the other half recording their responses on audio tape. Whether speaking or writing, the children had equal difficulty expressing themselves. Further, their subjects found narratives (chronology) easier to write than opinion essays (exposition), and the difficulty of the task depended on age. Children's narratives, they found, were longer and better than their expositions because the youngsters felt comfortable using a chronological structure. Their expositions suffered because they had apparently not acquired a fully developed schema for exposition.

Perhaps Applebee (1977) best summarizes the significance of narration and chronology for children in the following passage:

It is probably not accidental that instructional materials for beginning reading are usually narratives, and that attempts to wholly replace narrative materials with factual reading have never been successful. Narrative is highly structured, and children's sense of that structure is highly developed. As the story emerges from the print before them, fulfilling their expectations about what a story should be, it confirms their sense that their reading has been successful. (p. 347).

Implications for Instruction

From a review of the literature, then, it seems appropriate that beginning writers spend a number of years, perhaps four or five, composing chronological narratives. The reason for this suggestion is that elementary school children have developed a schema for narration; and although writing of any kind is not particularly easy at this age, chronology is the simplest organizational pattern for them. As several researchers have pointed out, beginning writers, more so than experienced ones, are affected by what seem to be relatively simple matters to the experienced—handwriting, spelling, mechanical problems, etc. Therefore, to reduce the number of constraints on the child and make writing less difficult, a teacher can call for an easily organized paper like what they did on a special occasion like a birthday or a holiday. Without the heavy constraint on organization, children will be able to focus on and become more competent in such areas as spelling, mechanics, and punctuation. Gradually teachers can shift their focus from surface skills to organizational structure as children become capable of considering more complex writing requirements. Conversely, teachers should not stress expository writing until children have had sufficient exposure to it and can handle such complex organizational schemes as classification and others. Experience with exposition would come from reading a great deal of it and learning how it is structured. In fact, to improve reading skills, Bereiter (1978) has suggested that instruction should move from material most in common with narration and move gradually over the years to material having the least in common with narration and thus with chronology. The same kind of plan for writing seems equally sensible and would be supported by Britton (1975) and Moffett (1968).

Such an emphasis on chronological writing would make even more sense if some thought went into the development of a hierarchy of assignments. Instruction in the elementary grades should include a series of tasks which become progressively more difficult, moving from the short to the long, from the concrete to the abstract, and from the simple to the complex. Presently, English teachers view chronological narrative as a very easy way of organizing material, which does not need much attention because their students already understand it. As Britton (1975) points out, many teachers jump too quickly to exposition before children have learned to handle chronology. Teachers perhaps fail to see that chronology is potentially a very complicated skill which may range in sophistication from the simple recording of events to a highly polished professional short story. As a result, the gap between writing simple chronological narratives and relatively complicated expository prose may be too large for many students to bridge. A more thorough understanding of narrative would help students when they are learning both to read and to write exposition.

Implications for Research

A review of the literature on chronology and narration, therefore, raises a number of questions for researchers.

1. How many poor readers (good decoders, but poor comprehenders) in the first four years of school have inadequately developed narrative schemata?
2. To what extent could direct instruction in the components of narrative schema improve elementary school readers' ability to understand stories?
3. If narrative schemata are highly dependent upon hearing stories, listening to them, and becoming involved in conversations and other auditory activities, what kinds of narrative schemata are developed by the deaf?
4. How much chronological narrative writing is done by students at all grade levels?
5. Should some college-age students with writing or reading problems be tested for their knowledge of story schema and for the ability to write chronological narratives?
6. If narrative prose is the easiest kind to read and write, what kind is the most difficult?
7. To what extent could instruction in increasingly more difficult techniques of narrative composition prepare a student for the skills required in exposition?
8. What hierarchy of narrative and expository instruction offers the ideal transition to increasingly more complex levels of writing skills?

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TEXTBOOK ADOPTION BY OPTION: EXTENSIONS OF RHETORIC

Theresa Enos
Southern Methodist University

When yellow-starred jonquils join great-purple irises blooming in Dixie cups and blue-paper memos keep springing up in departmental mail boxes, those of us who've been teaching composition for a while recognize the signs of another spring. It's time, the memos tell us, for the textbook committee to meet. In my department this committee, charged with adopting next fall's rhetoric text, usually has six appointees, who, although the names may change from year to year, do seem to reflect certain characteristics.

I'd like briefly to describe these roles that many of us have played, minimizing here and exaggerating there in an attempt to outline an adoption committee that perhaps is not unfamiliar.

Chairing the group more often than not is the strong, experienced teacher who for years has instructed from traditional product-centered texts. Opposite is the relative newcomer who tries to keep abreast of current research and theory and whose teaching emphasizes the writing process. Perhaps less vocal than these two during committee meetings is the teacher who is writing a composition text and is struggling with the section on argument, therefore is particularly interested in new texts and their approaches to argument. And there's the always out-of-breath participant who enthusiastically began the process of selection with an armload of texts to evaluate, but who now finds the usual spring acceleration of academic activity both damping the former fervor and diminishing the armload of texts to one. Another collects examination copies to sell — by the vertical foot — to the "used" textbook representative. And then there is the grumbler who doesn't want to be on this committee and says so frequently enough.

The committee meets when they can find the time and somehow manages to select the "right" text for next fall's classes. Usually, the procedure varies little. First, they quickly narrow the field of texts to a manageable number for closer scrutiny, then "make available" perhaps five or six texts by placing them in a central place to encourage reading by and comments from other teachers. From the five or six texts "made available," perhaps one reflects in its pages the latest research and theory.

We've probably wondered if writing teachers really read these texts being considered for adoption, but each one of us might be willing to let others think we in fact do read them. If we're honest, sure we feel guilty about not having time to read even one. What happens, then, when this adoption procedure is followed? Usually, the comfortable, familiar composition text is adopted for the following year, while the text written out of recent research is rejected, and neglected. Should we then too harshly blame the publishers who "keep on giving us new editions of old works"? Should we then too severely criticize texts that include only a chapter, if even that, on invention, when the texts that incorporate invention as an on-going process usually do not even make it to the "made available" pool?

I cannot say I have the answer, but after having served on several textbook committees, I wonder if it's the procedure itself that helps perpetuate the exclusive use of traditional texts while process-centered texts many times are virtually ignored. Here I want to propose an alternate procedure for adoption that incor-
porates the best in both traditional and newer texts, a process that is based on the rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, style.

Before outlining this rhetorical procedure for adoption, I want first to mention what some others have said about the value of extending our uses of rhetoric. Second, I'll include what three of our colleagues, who have taught composition for many years, say about monism and textbooks. And third, I'll outline the inclusive procedure for text adoption that seems logically to further these thoughts.

Plaguing us with problems of definition, the term rhetoric today is commonly used in two related senses. On the one hand, it still refers to a substantive body of knowledge; on the other hand, it also refers to the application of principles drawn from this body of knowledge. Those of us who agree with P. Albert Duhamel that rhetoric "is an art without any special subject but which can be applied to all subjects" probably also will agree that rhetoric has been able to survive each of its attacks throughout past and present centuries by extensions of its theory and practice. In *Uses of Rhetoric*, Jim Corder explores the range of rhetoric and convinces us that it "offers usable methods of investigation... The art is a way of thinking and a way of opening up other ways of thinking." Theoretical and practical extensions are reminders that rhetoric can provide means from its store of traditional methods that lead us into various kinds of study, in Corder's words, "sometimes providing new insight, sometimes providing new light for existing insights" (p. 9). Donald Bryant tells us, "Rhetoric exists because a world of certainty is not the world of human affairs... Rhetoric... is the method... for deciding the unpredictable questions." These words, and others like them keep reminding us of the generative power of rhetoric and its inclusive province.

In curious contrast to these pleas that we use rhetoric to help direct us into generative lines of inquiry and judgment are monistic methods that too often give us a dangerous sense of assurance in our teaching. Questioning certain assumptions that some of us follow without question in our teaching, Corder has cited texts, both old and new, that have led us to assume false principles. For instance, the text that not only instructs us on the "right way" to construct a paragraph but tells us that paragraphs must have topic sentences ignores the fact that fewer than 40 percent of paragraphs have topic sentences. For instance, the text that tells us the "right way" to punctuate ignores the fact that punctuation, except for a few conventions we must follow, is variable. These, and other texts like them, give us lists that impose boundaries; each one seems to know the Truth. Such monistic approaches, Corder tells us, have built up a textbook mythology, a mythology we have perpetuated in our teaching.

When we as teachers follow any monistic method of teaching, we violate the art of writing as well as our own profession. Monistic methods at best give only a momentary adequacy, and, as Corder warns us, they may not do even that.

Maxine Hairston also has commented on texts that hold a common body of assumptions about writing and about monistic approaches to teaching. In one passage she bluntly makes us see ourselves and our profession:

... the overwhelming majority of college writing teachers in the United States are not professional writing teachers. They do not do research or publish on rhetoric or composition, and they do not know the scholarship in the field; they do not read the professional journals and they do not attend professional meetings such as the annual Conference on College Communication and Composition; they do not partic-

ipate in faculty development workshops for writing teachers. They are trained as literary critics first and as teachers of literature second, yet out of necessity most of them are doing half or more of their teaching in composition. And they teach it by the traditional paradigm, just as they did when they were untrained teaching assistants ten or twenty or forty years ago. Often they use a newer edition of the same book they used as teaching assistants.

Teaching from an outdated paradigm can lead us to frustration as students persist in improving so little. Hairston points out that when we teach from traditional texts that represent "accepted authority," we frequently emphasize "techniques that the research has largely discredited" (p. 80).

We're reminded again and again of what Donald Stewart discovered when he critiqued 34 composition texts published between 1970-77, but it's important enough to reiterate: only 7 out of the 34 texts indicated an awareness of new approaches to the composing process.

The procedure for textbook adoption that I'll outline here is offered not only as a response to pleas for the extension of rhetorical method but also to lessen dependence on monistic methods. Essentially, a textbook committee would follow the canons of rhetoric — invention, arrangement, style — in the process of reading, compiling, questioning, arranging, and evaluating. Such a procedure would generate closer analysis and a greater possibility of using various methods than the less structured, traditional method of adoption.

The committee would begin the process by following some techniques of invention. When we think upon such activities, we probably think of an open set of questions that precede the discourse we end up with, questions that guide us through our thinking, searching, and choosing available information. Our rhetorical activities follow a sequence, whether we take advantage of the classical *topoi* or any of the methods of research, in our attempt to test all available possibilities.

This attention to openness means, ideally, we would have to read *all* the texts on writing. It means we'd have to read all the texts on writing from cover to cover. I won't pretend we could find an easy alternative to such a staggering labor. However, we probably are already familiar with texts that have been through several editions, and we at least recognize those texts published in the last few years. The necessity of such marathon reading would mean, I suppose, that textbook committees need be appointed for a term of one or more years rather than convening only each spring.

The reading list would contain those traditional texts that have gone through more than one edition and all of those published during the last five or so years. Recently, the *Writing Program Administration Journal* announced that it hopes to publish annually its "Bibliography of Writing Textbooks," an annotated listing of new and revised texts for the year. The adoption committee could use such a listing that includes both traditional and process-centered texts.

After the list has been divided among the committee and after the texts have been read, the members would then follow certain methods of organizing and arranging. For instance, William Dowie's questionnaire, included in the appendix to "Rating Your Rhetoric Text," would be useful. His categories include (1) range of subject, (2) emphasis, (3) organization, and (4) pedagogy. Such categories are useful as strategies for organization, helping fulfill many of the same purposes as outlining and clustering of ideas. Even as these particular "slots" are filled, they
can generate other levels of arrangement and organization, thus continuing invention throughout the process. However, just as an outline is not the discourse itself, so the completion of a questionnaire is not enough by which to select a text. Although useful, if solely relied upon, questionnaires can invite us to skim rather than study our texts. Reading and studying each of these texts gives us the confidence to evaluate them according to particular strengths and weaknesses. One, for instance, may be innovative and challenging in its treatment of argument. Another, though weak in argument, may present practical classroom exercises. And one may explore inventive methods throughout the writing process, while another may have an excellent chapter on voice.

To organize strengths and weaknesses by some system like Dowie's would enable us to know some things about our texts. But we really come to know by using them in the classroom. Selecting portions of a text being evaluated and introducing some elements of theory, method, or practice in our classes would help us to judge student response. Probably all of us have favored a particular text only to discover how some material took on a different shape when we tried to use it in class. Ironically, some of these changing texts hated at semester's end we choose at another semester's beginning. Perhaps part of the reason for this seeming madness is our comfort in familiarity and the reluctance to prepare another syllabus.

After using parts of texts in the classroom—and we may get only an idea of usefulness at this point—then the committee members could proceed to the third canon, style, and together or separately prepare written critiques of the texts. Although the process of selecting, organizing, testing, and evaluating has been going on all along, the careful preparation of critiques forces the committee's findings into a usable form intended for teachers in a particular department. During this part of the process, the committee could strengthen evaluations by carefully determining and recognizing intended audience. We should keep reminding ourselves that these texts are written for students, not teachers. If we reject a text because it has been "dumbed down" (a phrase I kept hearing at last year's committee meetings), are we recognizing its intended audience? Are our classes part of a community college, a technological institute, a liberal arts college, an open-admissions college? Surely, we've learned by now that, rhetorically, different needs require different approaches.

Just to respond to a text, then, is not enough. We need to analyze our own response; we need to include in our analyses student response. We need to consider in our evaluations the teachers for whom the evaluations are intended. These kinds of evaluations of a selected number of texts being considered for a particular group of students are different in purpose from book reviews in journals aimed at a more general audience, although such reviews certainly are useful. Critiques written for specific teachers of specific courses, courses that in some departments may even have a common syllabus, would be more useful in text selection than general reviews.

Would the writing teachers read these critiques? Earlier, when I was sketching a committee and a system that many may recognize, I mentioned the practice of making certain texts available for others to read. Usually placed in some central area for the writing faculty's convenience, they remain available, though often mostly unread. I don't think I'm too different in this respect from other writing teachers; I know that at adoption time when I've been harried and pressured, I've only looked through the offerings and then picked one or two for closer examination. However, I've not read even one text from cover to cover before making my decision. And then, expectedly, during the semester I've always come to know the book in different ways. The reassessment of a text at semester's end, I suspect, will not cease, nor should it, but critiques might at least affect the degree of our surprises, while we're either preparing a syllabus or teaching during the semester. I do know that I'd have welcomed written evaluations of texts being considered for adoption. Although many of us wouldn't find the time during the semester to read carefully several composition texts, especially if some of them are new and incorporate unfamiliar material, we'd likely read critiques.

When teachers have read these evaluations, and maybe examined the texts themselves, they could then give the committee suggestions that may help in choosing a text. I'd like again to emphasize that his text should be for the students. Effective teachers do not so much teach from the text as make reference to parts of it as they reinforce, lead to, agree with other teaching materials and sources. Over the years most of us have been adding to our teaching strategies: file drawers are well stocked with material we use when we know our classes are ready. Some we may use often; some only when they seem right for a particular class. And of course from our colleagues we continue getting ideas that strengthen our teaching strategies.

Added to these resources would be the evaluations of texts. Perhaps these critiques at first would only partially fill a file drawer but in time might become a small library with cross-referenced information and pedagogical assistance that would be available to both the inexperienced and the experienced teacher. Under invention, for instance, would be listed texts that actually incorporate theory and methods of invention, not just the mandatory section on "prewriting" before going on to the traditional separation of mode and form. Under methods of invention would be those texts or parts of texts that treat Kenneth Burke's principle of dramatism fully, not a reductionist method of answering journalistic questions on one level only. Consciously drawing on the strengths of many texts surely would help guide us and our students away from monistic approaches to writing. Further, we could use what our students discover if we assigned student evaluations of their rhetoric text at semester's end. Students could illustrate their ability to read and analyze critically; teachers could add selected student analyses as complements to teacher evaluations of the same text.

Some teachers who have been teaching from the same text, or a newer edition of it, for many years may of course reject the possibilities that the rhetorical method can offer; but I believe many of us would grow more effective as teachers as our methods and strategies grew in degree and kind, while at the same time we would lessen our dependence on monistic writing practices.

I've not forgotten the obvious problem. Even if we do recognize the merit of such an adoption-by-option procedure, could we find time? Working with our students takes up the greatest part of our time. Some of us try to write ourselves. And we serve on other committees. We don't get paid extra for these activities. But there are other professional activities for which we do receive some compensation, perhaps even course relief. We advise students; we evaluate Advanced Placement tests. We edit departmental or college publications; we staff writing centers. Evaluating texts to find the one we think best for a body of students as large as any freshman class is as important as these other duties that traditionally have been compensated. I'm suggesting that the teachers who write specialized critiques of composition texts be compensated for this valuable work.
If most teachers of composition read the professional journals in their field, if most teachers of composition took at least one graduate course in rhetoric, if it were somehow possible that so many of our teachers of composition did not teach writing out of their training as teachers of literature — then we'd probably adopt more texts written out of recent research in composition and rhetorical theory. And perhaps those publishing firms that keep on giving us safe and salable editions of product-centered texts would work more closely with those in the discipline and encourage the writing of texts that reflect current movements in rhetoric and composition. Perhaps the majority of writing teachers will not begin to do research. Perhaps they can never find time to read as many professional journals or attend as many professional conventions as they would like or need to. But a textbook adoption procedure that draws upon rhetorical canons at least can help us to become more knowledgeable about theory and practice, thus helping us on our way toward becoming better teachers.

Rhetorical methods are available for our use — a variety of ways we haven't yet explored fully or at all. To restrict ourselves to a single view, that is, to ignore rhetoric's riches, is to trivialize ourselves and our profession. When we open ourselves to explore any idea, when we seek out all possible resources, we are making use of rhetoric. Decisions and evaluations represent choice made among options. And, finally, on our way to becoming good teachers, we act and act again upon our various choices. Options' give us freedom — the more options, the greater freedom.

I do believe that the borders of rhetoric are not yet defined; there's much to be discovered around and about its territory. For myself, I'm going to try hard to read each text on my growing list, from cover to cover if at all possible, before next spring's flowers bloom and next semester's text committees form.

Notes


6Donald C. Stewart, "Composition Textbooks and the Assault on Tradition," College Composition and Communication, 29 (May, 1978), 174.