

Arthur Wayne Glowka

When my freshmen learned that people other than English teachers could characterize a writer's personality by his style, self-respect prompted them to reconsider their writing difficulties as personal problems. For this purpose, I designed a unit which taught style as the linguistic interaction of a writer and his audience: we examined and rated a variety of styles across a spectrum of usages to develop a sensitivity to the social marking of language. We did not perform detailed linguistic analysis on these writing samples but practiced identifying personae and intended audiences according to our impressions of the social level of the language used in each piece. The students discovered that they could judge people by their writing and expect their own to be read with similar scrutiny.

The implications of teaching style to an E110 class allow the instructor to abandon rigorous but narrow theories of style for an eclectic but practical mode of operation. The classical conception of style permits the teacher to tamper with the style of the student: the teacher armed with such a philosophical base can feel justified in prodding a student into dressing up his language--raising the level of his diction and organizing his sentences within larger syntactic frames. The individualist's conception of the relationship between style and personality can instill a self-consciousness in the student about his writing. The aesthetic monist uses style as a measure of ideas: our words indicate the limits of our intelligence. Thus, if freshmen want to appear intelligent and personable in their writing, they must learn that there are linguistic options available to them which will enable them to be who they want to be on the page. When we can make their writing problems look as socially undesirable as acne pimples, they will respond to the red marks on their papers with deeper concern.

The first section of the unit concentrated on giving the students a sense of audience. The artificial writing situation of our class limited the practice that the students could have used in developing an awareness of audience--the audience was simply the teacher or at most the class itself. Despite the failure of writing exercises aimed at imaginary audiences, the readings of the course served to develop the needed conception. When the students learned that writing was only better or worse for its influence on an audience, they learned to expect success as writers only when they had responded to accurate assessments of their audiences. Work with advertisements forced the students to relate writers and audiences through their medium of language in a

Although our major concern for E110 students directs their style into an academic context, they gain perspective from an awareness of the varieties of English used by different social groups. The models for accurate linguistic description lie outside the curriculum of E110, but we can rely on a certain amount of intuition to direct students across a range of English usage. Quantitative analysis of the aspects of prose styles, useful in a comparative study, appears relevant only after interpretation; however, qualitative analysis based on some quantification and description explains and names the emotional impact of linguistic variation. As thoughtful readers and speakers of English, we can rate styles by clues in the writing, while relying on our conceptions of probable context. When we notice a high frequency of sentence fragments (a grammatical description that most freshmen can recognize), we know we are dealing with informal prose or speech; long, involved sentences loaded with multi-syllabic words point to formal language.

The students did not need to keep charts with elaborate lists of numbers to know a college professor's writing from that of an angry member of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>1</sup> The simplest model for rating the relative formality of prose was a line drawn on the blackboard with the words "formal" and "informal" written at opposite ends.<sup>2</sup> With certain writing samples clearly marked as extremely formal and informal, other samples were classified by using the previous examples as reference points. The spectrum allowed the students to see speech and writing in a continuum of styles, all proper and useful in their own contexts. Every sample of writing, no matter how useful in one social context, was judged according to its relationship with the kind of prose that E110 desires to produce. The practice of evaluating the style of each sample of writing in terms of its purpose gave the students a method for examining their own writing. They were able to see where they stood in the world of writers and what was expected of them in their present situation.

Their assessment of themselves as writers became meaningful only after they had developed confidence in characterizing a writer's persona on the basis of his style. To test whatever critical abilities the students had acquired from our discussions, I required them to write an essay based on an unidentified selection from Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." They were asked to characterize the persona, discuss his relationship with his audience, and determine the relative formality of his style using the criteria we had been using. Although some students found Edwards' persona psychotic and thought he must have hated people in general, most of them were able to rate the style of the piece with unexpected success. Following this, the students made a quantitative comparison of one of their paragraphs with one of a professional scholar who had written on the same passage. Some of the students claimed the comparison was unfair--the scholar did not write his in class--or that the scholar's prose was wordy, but most of them could report a benefit from the exercise. By this time, the students had demonstrated their ability and confidence to characterize a persona and his relationship with an audience on the basis of style. They could relate subject matter to stylistic forms and articulate a total impression of language in a social context. Their method for assessing and effecting

the social purpose of their writing now guarantees them a personal anxiety about the style suitable for the occasion.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Compare the letter and the surrounding text in Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), pp. 210-11.

<sup>2</sup>A variation of the model and an indispensable chart may be found in James M. McCrimmon, Writing With a Purpose, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp. 179-80.

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

A. D. Van Nostrand, C. H. Knoblauch, Peter J. McGuire, and Joan Pettigrew, Functional Writing. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978. Paper. Pp. 378.

I first heard about Functional Writing last year, in a Time article on Van Nostrand's writing program at Brown. Even at Brown, it seems, Johnny can't write, but Van Nostrand thought he knew why: Johnny can't think. So the functional writing program was devised to break down the writing process into a sequence of steps, each of them requiring the student writer to make a decision about the emerging organization of his essay, and in this way the program, so the Time story claimed, taught Johnny to think. I was impressed, but forgot all about it until recently, when a friend of mine reported seeing Van Nostrand eating breakfast with some writing program directors during the NCTE convention in New York last November. Nothing remarkable in this, but after that party left, Van Nostrand reappeared with another group of directors and ate a second breakfast. I knew at once that he was onto something. One breakfast, after all, is only reasonable, and a tax deduction too. But two breakfasts is more than the IRS will allow, and since Van Nostrand was paying hotel prices for his eggs-over easy, he had to be pretty sure that sales of FW would earn enough to pay him back. This confidence argued strongly for the book's merit, so I adopted it for my E110 sections this semester.

But first I checked it out with a woman who's been using FW at Drexel for a few years. Although the trade edition was just published, a preliminary edition has been "class-tested for four years" according to the advertising blurb. This woman was apparently one of the testers, and she reported nothing but good results. She sent me off with her best wishes, her syllabus, and the optimistic feeling that, with Van Nostrand on my side, I could at last stay the anarchy's hand in my writing courses at Delaware this term.

What then is FW? Most composition textbooks fall into one of two categories, which ultimately reflect, I guess, two opposed conceptions about man and his possibilities. There are the "classical" textbooks,

the think-before-you-write school, which views the essay (even the freshman essay) as the product of some prior effort at organization, carried on mostly in the mind though manifested in notes, outlines, and so forth. McCrimmon is the best known example, since in his view an essay stands or falls according to the quality of the writer's work during the prewriting phase of the composition process. Think before you write, in other words. On the other side are the new romantics, the write-before-you-think people who follow Macrorie's advice about the value of that creative chaos he dubbed freewriting. Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers is a good example, as well as an instructive one, for Elbow's approach is actually group therapy wherein the student and his fellows join together to rake out the embers, those glimmers of the truth of the heart, in the ashes of his prose. Taken to its logical extreme--and why not take it there?--Elbow's isn't a method for teaching writing at all; indeed, because sincerity of statement is the touchstone of his approach, writing is actually unnecessary, unless to provide a written record of the soul's travail. Besides this conceptual failure, freewriting poses practical problems since it takes too much time in too short a semester to guide the student out of the ashes. And we're not fooling him anyway: he knows that the course grade depends on the quality of the product, not on the sincerity of his effort. So the anxiety about writing that the freewriters hoped to alleviate eventually surfaces, and usually in acute form, late in the semester, often too late to do anything constructive about it.

The FW approach falls somewhere between these extremes. Unlike the classicists, it doesn't take the student's ability to think for granted. The format of the book--a "text/workbook" in the jargon of the instructor's manual--requires the student to translate his fuzzy ideas, however ill-conceived, into plain prose, leading him from the subject (which FW defines as "that part of your environment on which you are concentrating at any moment") through assertions about the subject to the organizing idea which patterns these assertions in a significant sequence. In other words, the book breaks down the prewriting phase of the composition process into a series of steps, recognizing all the while that this process is never straightforward but rather that the process itself is heuristic: we don't know for sure what we're writing about until we actually start writing. Thus, in contrast to the freewriter's conception of this process as a salvage job, Van Nostrand's approach is both rigid and flexible at the same time.

In some ways, then, the book's strong point is its organization. Its twenty chapters guide the student writer step by step from the initial glimmer of an idea to a developed statement about it. These steps, however, are conceived as mental operations the writer must execute, a sequence of decisions--about the organizing idea, about the evidence used to support it, about the intended reader, and about the developing organization of the essay--which grow more complex as the writer works his way through the book. Thus FW can be contrasted to textbooks which treat this process rhetorically (audience, voice, occasion) or, more modestly, as a wholly verbal movement from lower to higher units of discourse (the sentence, the paragraph, the completed essay). Indeed, the book sometimes announces these contrasts, as in this discussion of the organizing idea:

Unlike a topic sentence, an organizing idea is not static. It begins in your consciousness as an impression of the probable connections you will establish. This impression is tentative; it is your best estimate of the significance of your information. It grows progressively clearer to you as you write. You come to recognize your developed organizing idea only through your effort to evolve a logical statement. The concept of topic sentence denies the possibility of growth or development. It assumes that a writer has already found a fully evolved idea. But in most paragraphs this knowledge is an achievement of the writing process, not a ready-made conclusion at the start.

True, and well worth knowing, though an experienced instructor might wonder whether students really benefit by knowing this difference. Paragraphs like this one seem aimed at the instructor rather than his students, bent on educating him, not them. This suspicion lingers as we encounter more and more jargon: "system of information," "frame of reference," "forecasting," "expanding or diminishing sequences," and so on. Apparently the authors felt compelled to devise a new idiom for the teaching of composition in order to announce their disagreement with traditional methods. I think the jargon is justified at times. A student who thinks in terms of an organizing idea is probably better off than one who learns that the essay is a fixed structure, with topic sentences hanging from a thesis. On the other hand, the pay-off is often counterfeit, as when Van Nostrand prints what looks like a flow chart for his "Functional Writing Model" in the endpapers of the book. Who needs it? Also, instructors who think that truth is beauty and beauty is truth, even in composition classes, will be put off by Van Nostrand's style, or lack of it. The paragraph quoted above is a good sample: it is clear, well-organized, but needlessly tedious and abstract. The mind throbs while reading it.

But the book partly overcomes these difficulties by ruthlessly relating its precepts to practice. Each chapter is followed by questions on the concepts presented and exercises which apply them in writing. These exercises are carefully structured so as to make them easy to complete and also to evaluate. The test, of course, is whether the student's work shows his mastery of the chapter, and since the book insists on his knowing what is required at each step, he and the instructor can agree (in theory) on whether an exercise is satisfactory or not. As a result of this format, the student is asked to produce a good deal of writing, sometimes too much, as in Chapter Three, which asks for three sets of paragraphs, an original plus a revision, as well as the FW apparatus of a "tentative organizing idea," a "first developed organizing idea," and a "second developed organizing idea." The drudgery involved in getting such an assignment done works against getting it done well. On the whole, however, there's a great deal to be said for this insistence on practice. FW's intellectual streamlining of the writing process is valuable, but even more valuable--for the student anyway--is actual, pen-on-paper, practice in turning out paragraphs and essays. He must produce something for each class session, and if you believe (as I do) that one's writing improves the more practice one gets, then this aspect of FW is sure to produce results. Yes, in the last analysis, and despite

the authors' ballyhoo, FW is a workbook.

The prospect of getting a set of papers at each class meeting is admittedly chilling. You get punchy after awhile as page after page of student prose dulls your higher faculties. Sooner or later you're bound to question the grammatical verities you've hitherto accepted unthinkingly: is "a lot" one or two words? is there any important difference between "its" and "it's" and if so who cares? Students don't. So for relief you may fly to Mitchell Morse's acid essays which console by showing what you've already suspected, that students in comp classes really are mindless nits who have trampled the wine out of English and are now sucking the lees, Arnold's ignorant armies. False consolation, this: remember that today's job market for English instructors practically guarantees that most of your career will be spent in composition classrooms, so get used to it. Besides, I don't think anybody gains by reading everything the student produces. Students normally see us as biological adjuncts of our red marking pens; consequently, the more we mark, the more inhumane we seem to them. (Incidentally, the Dr. Feelgoods who think grading is unnecessary are kidding themselves.) So if you use FW, just make sure the exercises are being done. Announce in advance which of them you intend to read and grade, and use class time for an analysis of two or three student papers written for that day. Otherwise you'll surely go mad. This advice, by the way, is intended for the typical writing class of twenty-plus students, which is much too large to allow for individualized instruction without some fancy schedule juggling on your part. In smaller classes you can deploy the book differently (the instructor's manual suggests a number of course procedures you may wish to try).

About course procedures: since FW limits itself to teaching the writing process, it's not a complete textbook. There are no readings, for example, and it's hard to imagine how well the book would work in conjunction with standard readers like Decker's Patterns of Exposition since FW offers no instruction in the various rhetorical types of the essay. It concentrates exclusively on composing a written argument. My Drexel friend tells me that she relies on student work for examples, and this seems sensible. Again, FW never dwindles into a discussion of grammar, mechanics, or style. It must be supplemented with a handbook of some kind; I'm using the Harbrace Workbook this term. This is no real liability, however, since the grammar book thereby becomes a reference tool for students to use and not the core of the course. One real deficiency for E110 instructors is that FW offers no guidance on writing the research paper. There's no section on using the library, compiling a bibliography, or writing footnotes. This means, of course, that the instructor must ask students to buy another book or, better, provide copious handouts on these matters. As for the research paper, FW presents the further problem of figuring out how to adapt your teaching approach to the model of writing presented in the book. The instructor's manual recommends that each student compose a "work-in-progress" (again, the jargon) to be written in four stages, and suggests that this might accommodate a research assignment. Yes, it can, but doing it this way means that you have to start students thinking about their research papers very early in the course, although they would rather postpone the

inevitable. It also means that you have to read and grade each of the four stages. Yet writing a research paper in this way also means, finally, that students actually come to learn something about the process of gathering material, organizing it, putting it together in a finished product, and very possibly about how to do the whole tedious chore successfully. The extra work involved, for you and your students, may pay off. Most students, I have found, learn very little by hastily composing a research paper the night before the due date, which in most cases comes too late in the course, the last day or last week, to allow you to review their work with them. Who could learn anything this way? From their viewpoint, the research paper is just one more hoop we ask them to jump through. Van Nostrand may set up four hoops, but at least the instructor is there to catch his class as it jumps from one to the next.

In sum, FW is not the way, the truth, and the light. Using it calls for a good deal of ingenuity as well as a sense of humor able to laugh off the book's puffery and jargon. Its real strengths are two-fold: its conception of the writing process as a sequence of steps that require the writer to make decisions about the structure of his statement, and its insistence on practice, practice, practice. The defects of the book are perhaps best seen as the consequence of these strengths. Incessant practice is as tedious as it is necessary, while Van Nostrand's usually lucid explanation of his functional writing model clarifies concepts which many other textbooks fail to define satisfactorily.

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Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, Virginia Clark. Language Awareness, 2nd ed. St. Martin's Press, 1978. Paper. Pp. 297.

The editors of Language Awareness propose, as their book's title implies, to bring students of composition to an awareness of the language that is used around them. Since language is not only the raw material, but also the end product of writing, their aim is a very sensible one. Certainly language itself is just as valid a subject for freshman composition as are the contemporary issues of politics, sociology, and sports found in some readers, and the traditional literature found in others. Essays on language can be used for a two-fold purpose: they can act as examples of rhetorical strategy, plus they can serve to direct students' thinking into some of the facets of the often mysterious substance of human language. I would support a freshman reader that had language awareness as its focus; and for that reason I support this one.

What troubles me about this text, however, is the particular selection of topics about language. The emphasis in many of the chapters is on language as a thing to be guarded against, to be wary of, to look out for. One half of the sections that contain essays (one contains poems, which I did not count) have titles which focus on language in an entirely negative way. The chapters on "Politics and Doublespeak," "The Language of Advertising," "The Language of Radio, Television, and Newspapers,"

and "Jargon, Jargon, Jargon," are full of selections that show how language is misused and abused in our culture. While there is a need to heighten students' awareness of the often overwhelming amount of verbiage around them, I don't think there is a need to spend a half a semester's reading about it. In fact, I think this could even be counter-productive.

There are several good features about Language Awareness, though. One of them is the apparatus included with each essay. At the end of each selection there are four categories of teaching aids: "Questions on Content," "Questions on Rhetoric," "Vocabulary," and "Classroom Activities." The first three are self-explanatory. The fourth, "Classroom Activities," suggests brief exercises which, according to the Instructor's Manual, "enable students to work with language principles and rhetorical strategies in the classroom, often as a group." In most of these, the editors cull some of the main points from the preceding essay, think of further examples to illustrate those points, and ask the students to discuss them. That way each essay offers a little more than just itself. In addition to the apparatus at the end of each essay, there are two features at the end of each chapter. One is a thoughtfully prepared list of writing assignments for the particular section, and the other is a list of "Notable Quotations" excerpted from the essays. Furthermore, there is a list of forty topics for research papers at the end of the book. A separate Instructor's Manual then gives the editors' response to each of the questions posed in the text.

The nine chapters contain approximately four selections each, and there are some very good essays among these. George Orwell's classic "Politics and the English Language" and Stuart Chase's "Goddledygook" are two often anthologized pieces that work well for the purpose of this text. Besides these, there are four less well known essays that I especially appreciated for the insights on language they offer. These are: Walker Gibson's "Must a Great Newspaper Be Dull?" which is a perceptive comparison of the New York Times, the Herald Tribune, and Time magazine's treatment of a single incident; Gordon Allport's "The Language of Prejudice," which explains ways that language shapes thoughts and forms categories without our realizing it; Barbara Lawrence's "Four Letter Words Can Hurt You," which is a delightful denunciation of a wanton use of obscenity in contemporary writing; and Melvin Maddock's "The Limitations of Language," which is a good summary essay for the book's focus on this country's "semantic ephasia."

Many of the selections, unfortunately, are redundant, and the sarcastic tone present in such pieces as "The Euphemism," "Weasel Words: God's Little Helpers," "A Vivacious Blonde Was Fatally Shot Today or How to Read a Tabloid," "CB Radio: the Electronic Toy," "Occupational Euphemisms," and "Football Verbiage," becomes tedious after a while. Several of these could well be omitted and replaced by some chapters of descriptive, linguistic, essays on language, which could present a more positive picture of language study. If I were going to teach a course with language as its subject matter, I would feel very uncomfortable about relying solely on writers whose main object was to point out Archie "Bunkerisms," the language of the law, corporate censorship in television, and sportwriters' overworn metaphors. There is enough research being conducted in all areas of linguistics to provide a poll



from which some simple, basic language essays could be drawn.

My linguistics bias is not the only thing that would make me hesitate before teaching many of the essays in Language Awareness, though. I'm not sure that a class full of tense, apprehensive freshmen, most of whom are dreading the upcoming semester full of writing, need to hear about all the ways that language tricks and cajoles them; many of them are afraid enough to put pen to paper. It is good for them to be able to recognize false reasoning and meaningless phrases so they can avoid such pitfalls in their own writing. But this treatment of language needs to be countered with a treatment of language as an interesting, provocative phenomenon worth their investigating. This is why I think Language Awareness, if it is really intended, as the preface states, to point out how we are not only imprisoned by language, but also liberated by it, needs to focus more attention on the latter. I respect the attention the editors have given to the subject and the good apparatus they have produced for teaching it; I only wish they had included more essays that were positive or at least neutral and descriptive in nature, and less that were so negative.

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W. Ross Winterowd. Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1975. Paper. Pp. 380.

The purpose of Winterowd's collection is to provide its readers with a conceptual background in rhetoric. But one thing those readers will need before they begin is a conceptual background in rhetoric. Heuristics, phenomenological criticism, exegetical techniques, and syntactic fluency should be familiar terms. Despite the stiff requirements I propose, Winterowd claims that "the book is aimed at a broad and varied audience: composition students at all levels (who can use it as their reader and theoretical base); those who are in training to be instructors of writing at any level (who can use it as their textbook); students of rhetoric; and scholars in the field of rhetoric." I seriously doubt whether any one book could address itself to such a diversified audience. A text that could satisfy composition students at all levels would be amazing enough; if that same text could also satisfy teachers in training, as well as students and scholars of rhetoric, it would be awesome indeed.

This book, which includes articles by important scholars such as Emig, Burke, Young, Becker, Mellon, and Christensen, is primarily written for a specialized audience - for students and scholars who know the jargon and who have debated the issues of contemporary rhetoric. It is not for composition students at any level, except perhaps the Ivy League. And those in training to be instructors of writing had better be prepared for a good bit of cerebral strain if they decide to take up this text. The problem is not so much that new or difficult concepts are introduced,

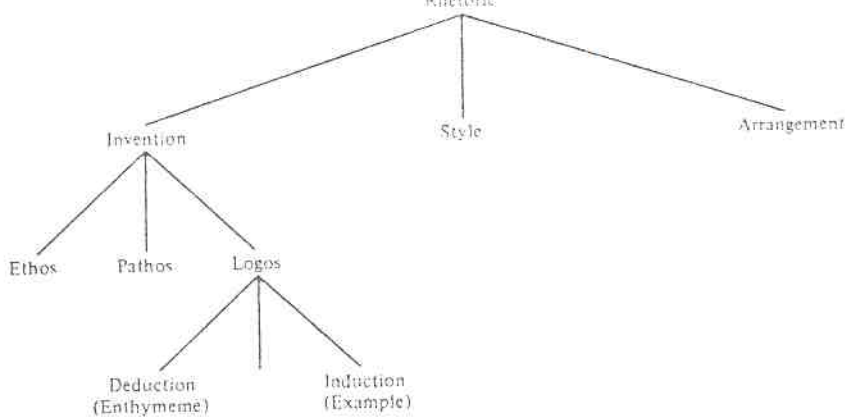
but that familiar ones are uprooted. Teachers in training will find themselves struggling less over the meaning and worth of tagmemics or generative rhetoric, than over the meaning and worth of the good old expository essay. It is Winterowd himself who questions the need for this essay form. He also introduces ideas such as "writing according to formula is hack writing" and "the writing class should be a happy anarchy, giving students rich opportunities for any kind of composition they feel they need." Such suggestions are bound to cause some controversy. Students and scholars of rhetoric could depend upon their reading or teaching experience to provide them with counter-arguments if they wished to debate the issues. But teachers in training with little conceptual background would most likely be confused, since they are usually encouraged to teach in a systematic way a series of formulae for expository writing, to do what seems to be the opposite of what Winterowd suggests. They wouldn't have enough resources to argue either for anarchy or order. Furthermore, they wouldn't know how to handle a happy anarchy and they'd probably be the saddest people in it.

However, before I begin to explore some of these issues, I'd like to develop my argument that those unfamiliar with the vocabulary of contemporary rhetoric will be at a disadvantage when they open this book. Although Winterowd claims he is writing for a "broad and varied" audience, often his approach does not support that claim. I sometimes can't imagine how he could think that composition students and teachers in training would understand what he is saying. My honest suggestion is that novices start in the middle of the book with Young and Becker's article, "Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric: A Tagmemic Contribution." Young and Becker, unlike Winterowd, define the terminology they use. In addition, they give a clear outline of the history of rhetoric including modern theories and methods. The definitions and outline they provide would be most helpful to any beginner trying to read Winterowd's introduction. But given that most people follow the traditional procedure of starting a book at the beginning, consider the plight of students and teachers who are new to the field of rhetoric:

#### Introduction: Some Remarks on Pedagogy

A conceptual framework is a schema- sometimes diagrammatic - that serves two purposes. It allows one to organize a subject, and it automatically becomes an inventive heuristic for the discovery of subject matter.

First, how many comp students, how many new TAs even, could define pedagogy? Second, though most people know that a framework or schema can organize something, can they comprehend that an inventive heuristic (are there uninventive ones?) could help them discover subject matter? Even Winterowd's "most obvious example" of what he means provides little clarification:



Again, the problem here is not with the idea of organization but with inventive heuristic, which this schema, in some mysterious way, has "automatically" become. Also the example still does not answer the question, how does this schema help a person discover subject matter? And why does subject matter need to be discovered? What does that mean?

At this point (and we haven't even moved past page one), composition students at various levels would probably drop their English courses, not because they couldn't answer the questions above (which they probably couldn't formulate), but because they haven't a clue what an enthymeme is, and because they always thought invention was a problem for science. And the new TA who's been assigned this book for his graduate course in teaching composition would probably drop out too and start applying to MBA programs.

However, as it turns out, this would be a case of unnecessary anxiety, because on page two Winterowd says of his heuristic (the term is still undefined), "Admittedly, it is not a very discriminating heuristic; it is, in fact, so gross as to be useless for most discourses." Oh, well. No problem really. If they had stayed after page one, they'd have left by page four, at which point the author backs himself into "an apparently paradoxical corner" (which he freely admits having done). Anyone can understand that, and if he claims he can't, let him cast the first stone. At any rate, Winterowd decides not to, as he says, "wriggle" his way out since that would be too digressive. And surely any reader can understand that. The problem is that Winterowd says he "will simply refer the reader to the emerging doctrines of phenomenological criticism and to his article 'The Realms of Meaning: Text-Centered Criticism'." Can you picture students at Wheatpatch Kansas Community College trotting off to the library for that?

If Winterowd's style is puzzling at times, some of his ideas are even more so. I have decided to discuss in this paper three of those ideas which I consider to be not only puzzling but also controversial. The first is this: "I am arguing that college students do not need to

learn to write expository essays so that they can survive in the world" (10). The statement prompts several questions. If students don't need to learn to write expository essays so they can survive in the world, then why do so many textbooks begin with the assumption that they do need to learn the skill? Have English teachers been selling a needless commodity, making false claims perhaps? What is an expository essay anyway? And is there really any value in learning to write one?

Winterowd's answers to some of these questions are rather perplexing. "It is," he says, "doubtful that very many people who are involved in getting the business of the world done really need to write exposition of the sort that English instructors think of when they say the word, for these people, I suspect, have at the back of their minds the kinds of things that appear in Harper's, Atlantic Monthly, and Partisan Review" (10). It may be that English teachers think the ideal expository essay is the kind that appears in such magazines. But I suspect this is not what they expect of their freshmen. Winterowd, I think, defines the term expository essay too narrowly here. It is "essayists," he says, who write expository essays. "College professors," he goes on to explain, "usually write technical essays based on their research, and so on. Essayists are a small and highly specialized group of craftsmen who exercise their skills for love and profit and for, I suspect, an increasingly small audience" (10). (If I may digress for a moment, recall that this book, among other things, is supposed to be a freshman reader. I doubt teachers would want to spend class time on the distinction he makes here.) At any rate, I believe that teachers who assign expository essays are not really trying to prepare their students for careers as essayists. They are only hoping their students learn some techniques of exposition.

What is most perplexing is that Winterowd, in his extensive introduction, fails to point out the value of knowing those techniques. He only gives parenthetical consideration to the fact that students need expository writing skills in order to get through college: "I realize that freshmen in the composition classes go on to write essays for history and research papers for psychology. But after they graduate, very few of them ever have need or occasion to compose in any real sense" (12). Readers may wonder, "If writing in college can be so easily dismissed, then why all the hullabaloo that the Johnny who can't write finally made it to college? He'll be out in four years, and chances are he won't need to write in the real world, so what does it matter?" Or, as Winterowd predicts, readers may argue, "Almost everyone needs to learn to express himself or herself effectively, and the principles learned in the writing of expository essays will carry over into other modes of expression." To which Winterowd says, "Well, I answer, that is an untested premise, and it is not particularly attractive anyway" (10). A reader might then concede, "Winterowd's right, the premise hasn't been tested. So there goes my good old argument that expository essay writing teaches such things as principles of organization that will carry over into other modes of expression such as reports, business letters, memos, etc." And finally, what can an English teacher say to someone who declares, "As far as I'm concerned, there is really no compelling reason for insisting that every student have a try at composing a series of expository essays, any more than one might argue

that every student ought to have some skill at dentistry or any other single discipline" (11). Could Winterowd be right? (If so, imagine the headlines: NATIONWIDE FRAUD! YEARS OF DECEIT! COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS KEEP THEIR JOBS, PRETEND EXPOSITORY WRITING IS A NECESSARY SKILL! WINTEROWD UNVEILS THE TRUTH!)

In a sense the headlines are not so outrageous, considering the stand Winterowd takes against expository writing. Nevertheless, later in the book he does say a few nice things about exposition. I became curious, of course, so I turned to his freshman rhetoric-handbook, The Contemporary Writer: A Practical Rhetoric (HBJ, 1975), for a view of his practice and a better view of his theory. He does say in both books that knowing how to write expository essays is not necessary for survival in the world and that people can be educated and cultured without having the skill. But that marks a parting of the ways. In the introduction to Contemporary Rhetoric, Winterowd declares the expository essay a relatively useless form. And nary a word, I remind you, is given in defense of exposition as a technique. However, in The Contemporary Writer: A Practical Rhetoric, Winterowd spends an entire chapter on exposition and defines it as one of four kinds of writing. He even gives "compelling" reasons why students should "spend time and energy improving [their] ability to write expository essays."

In the first place, you'll need that skill to get through college with maximum effectiveness and minimum nervous strain. Much of your grade in many of the courses will probably depend upon your ability to express yourself in writing. That is a simple fact, even though it does not hold true for all students.

More important: If you master the skills required in one sort of writing, you can transfer those skills to other kinds of writing. Therefore, improvement in one area brings about improvement in others(142).

Winterowd's first reason here is certainly more emphatic than his parenthetical evasion in Contemporary Rhetoric. And compare his second reason above with his cursory disregard, in Contemporary Rhetoric, of the argument that "principles learned in the writing of expository essays will carry over into other modes of expression." Using one book to clarify the other, we can now see that whatever Winterowd meant by "other modes of expression" he did not mean "other kinds of writing." I can't help but wonder why he isn't more specific in the first place. After hours of thinking, rereading and writing, after asking friends to think, reread, listen and respond (my special thanks to those who kindly assisted), I will finally say this without hesitation: in Contemporary Rhetoric Winterowd is inexcusably evasive about expository writing.

The second major issue I've chosen to discuss concerns the word "self-expression." Winterowd says, "I believe that the only real "use" of writing -except in extremely rare instances - is self-expression (which I take to be concomitant with self-discovery)" (16). But how does Winterowd define self-expressive writing, and how does he think it useful? First of all, he explains, self-expressive writing is useful in that it helps one "adjust to the world"(13). What he thinks self-expressive writing actually is, is not an easy question to answer. But

we can begin with what it is not. It is not mechanical or programmed. Winterowd basically agrees with Emig's assertion, "One could say that the major kind of essay too many students have been taught to write in American schools is algorithmic, or so mechanical that a computer could readily be programmed to produce it; when a student is hurried or anxious, he simply reverts or regresses to the only program he knows, as if inserting a single card into his brain"(13). Emig calls this algorithmic model the "five-star" or five-paragraph essay.

Whether or not students know the "five-star" form seems to be a matter for debate. Kirsznner and Mandell, authors of Basic College Writing, and Schor and Fishman, authors of The Random House Guide to Basic College Writing all believe that teachers can no longer assume the principles of the five-paragraph essay have been taught. On the other hand, I have been told that college students enter the comp class so locked into the pattern that they think there is nothing else. And I understand that the teacher who has to break that lock has a difficult job. I don't know. I've never had the pleasure.

At any rate, what matters here is Winterowd's opinion. He has made it clear that he prefers the self-expressive mode which as a pure type is non-algorithmic: "The writer who opts for the self-expressive mode (might it not, in its purest form, be called the idiosyncratic mode?) enters into the jungle with no compass and no maps (no algorithms)"(14). His tendency is against teaching methods which prescribe structural formulas (if, he wonders, writing can even be taught). His bias is that "writing according to formula is hack writing - which is exactly what most essays in composition classes are"(14). For some reason, he seems to have faith that students can manage basic exposition, that they can organize well enough if they need to. His faith allows him to take the leap into that jungle, the self-expressive mode. Obviously, not everyone is willing to go that far.

At this point it is interesting to consider an alternative viewpoint such as Edward P.J. Corbett's statement in the Preface to his text Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student.

In writing this book, the author believes that the elaborate system of the ancients, which taught the student how to find something to say, how to select and organize his material, and how to phrase it in the best possible way, is still useful and effective--perhaps more useful and effective than the various courses of study that replaced it. No system, classical or modern, has been devised that can change students suddenly and irrevocably into masters of elegant prose, but the ancient teachers of rhetoric, refusing to be impressed by the notion of "creative self-expression" until the student had a self to express and a facility for expressing it, succeeded in large part in developing a method which, when well taught, could help students to write and speak effectively.

Are Winterowd and Corbett really in opposition here? Well, that is difficult to determine. It depends on what each of them means by "self-expression." And the problem is compounded because Winterowd uses the term in two different ways. First, as I have already explained, he uses

"self-expression" to mean undirected, non-algorithmic writing. In this sense the two would be at odds since Corbett clearly advocates the idea of direction. But Winterowd introduces another meaning for the term when he later advocates "that writing of any kind equals self-expression, and that self-expression can have a variety of manifestations, from the emotive to the conative"(16). The breadth of this second meaning could keep Winterowd and Corbett in agreement. However, there are other problems. Winterowd questions whether writing can be taught; Corbett believes it can. And whereas Winterowd considers "self-expression" a means by which students can find themselves, Corbett tends to think they should have a self to express before they start.

But the issue still centers on the meaning of "self-expression." The problem could be simplified if one could establish where Winterowd places his primary focus - on emotive writing as self-expression or on all modes of writing as self-expression. Winterowd seems to sense what a reader's dilemma might be here, because he says, "But I suppose that as an honest man I need to lay it on the line and make clear where I stand"(16). It is at this point that he makes the statement I quoted at the beginning of this discussion : "I believe that the only real "use" of writing - except in extremely rare instances - is self-expression (which I take to be concomitant with self-discovery)." Well, this does not make the matter any clearer, because self-discovery can occur not only in the self-expressive mode, but in all modes. Although we do know Winterowd's focus is on self-discovery, it is still not evident where he stands as to which of his two definitions of self-expression he prefers. It is in his next sentence, however, that we can finally discover Winterowd's real position: "Since self-expression is as various as the purposes of discourse, I think that the writing class should be a happy anarchy, giving students rich opportunities for any kind of composition they feel they need, either for "real" uses or for self-expression" (16). As you can see, with regard to self-expression, Winterowd has decided to stand on both sides of the fence. I'll leave you to ponder that maneuver, to accept or reject it as you please, while I move on to the idea sandwiched between those two sides of self-expression, the idea that "the writing class should be a happy anarchy, giving students rich opportunities for any kind of composition they feel they need."

This idea, needless to say, is not uncontroversial. Not everyone has such interest in what students "feel they need." J. Mitchell Morse, for example, in his article "Nothing is True, Nothing is False" (Chronicle of Higher Education, April 5, 1976, p. 40), reacts against the expression "I feel," and points out the dangers of excessive subjectivity. In explaining his reasons for this view, he records a dispute between himself and some students (juniors and seniors). He gives examples of their writing, criticizes it, then gives their reaction to his criticism:

"He sat in this apt., formally frequented by abandoned societal types. Now, even that's gone. His hair a straggly main, he suffered with haranged senses."

"In Heart of Darkness Marlowe sympathizers in the oppressed native's robed of their few possessions

however he refused in accepting the practices of canonabalism."

"In 'Lady Chatterlys Lover' there is a man called Sir Clifford who was nothing more than a personality. He had lost all contact with his 'mental life.' Sex to him is strictly a sensation one feels with their body but is no way related or involved with your mind. He gave to Conie a mental love which he found lacking to her being. She had no ideniny. I hope I have arisen enough interest to convince the reader."

Morse points out,

I was the reader. I was not convinced by any of these writers. All three protested.

"I feel," said the first. "you ought to grade us on content, not the form."

"I feel," said the second, "you are downgrading me because like I was creative and just didn't, like, parrot back what you said."

"I feel," said the third, "that as a consumer I'm entitled to the education I'm paying for. This is the first time I've ever gotten less than a B. When can we go over the paper and see where you went wrong?"

Obviously, Morse knows what they need more than they do. As he says in his book The Irrelevant English Teacher (Temple Univ. Press, 1972), "our poor innocent mixed-up students are not our intellectual equals; we must no longer listen to them as if they were, and we must try to strengthen the spines of our colleagues who do"(71). I am not suggesting that Winterowd is completely guilty in this regard. For although he says students should do what they feel the need to do, he does not necessarily think they are his intellectual equals; that is, he does not necessarily think they'll make the proper choices. But, he explains, that doesn't matter. It is in this regard, I think, that Winterowd needs some spine strengthening. What they do, or choose to do, ought to matter. Nevertheless, this is his position:

Since it is axiomatic with me that--given physical and mental abilities--any student will master any language task that he or she really feels the need to master, I see no reason for a stress upon any one kind of writing in any composition class. The problem is, of course, that students may discover their need after they have passed through freshman English, but that is no excuse for using the freshman English class to prepare students to accomplish tasks that they may well never encounter. This means, of course, that the English department should staff writing labs, to help students at all levels with writing problems as those problems arise. When students need to write a research paper for history--if indeed they ever do--they can read Turabian, and if that does not suffice, they can come to the writing lab, where they will get help (16).



My first objection is that college students should encounter the task of writing expository prose. And if they attend a college where they hardly encounter it, they should consider themselves cheated. Whether or not they ever need to write expository prose in the "real" world doesn't matter. College graduates should be able to write clear exposition. Then if they have to write it, they'll be prepared. And if they don't have to, so what? They've lost nothing (except perhaps the chance to find their psychic balance in English class, but they can do that via the diary or disco dancing or some other "mode of expression"). That students may not need to write exposition is no excuse for using the freshman English class for the primary purpose of self-discovery. My second objection is that departments already do staff writing labs, and people there have enough to do without having a slew of sophomores on their hands who have somehow realized they can't write exposition. And, if for some peculiar reason, more than a slew of sophomores realized they couldn't write, then the English department would end up staffing the old traditional comp classes through the writing lab. And that would be an administrative nightmare. But, it could be worth it. Winterrowd has a point. The course could be called "soph comp." Undoubtedly that term has more zip, more appeal than "freshman comp." In addition, that demeaning nuisance, the freshman English requirement, could be eliminated. "Soph comp" would be freely chosen by a wiser and happier student body. In Utopia--not in the U.S.A. Our students most likely wouldn't realize the extent of their deficiencies. Consider, for example, this specimen of student writing:

The issue of legalizing marijuana in the United States has taken a distinctly divided stand among United States citizens. One factor contributing to this clear split is the everlasting generation gap; this gap resembles the divided opinions between Democrats and Republicans. A feeling of respect and envy is gained for the victor; moreover, another battled defeated for the loser. These underlying tones have pushed the real issue aside. Analytically the decision made should rely on the results of surveys and research studies conducted revealing the negative and positive effects of the drug. The final decision pending on innocent until proven guilty. The weighted evidence must be tilting on the negative side to justify banning the use of marijuana constricting bias opinion.

Studies show that marijuana smokers are liable to impair their health by indulging in this activity. Even though the large number of studies is significantly large; further research shows that the evidence is not always valid. Some experiments had influential factors swaying the outcome. In an experiment Dr. M. Stenchner compared chromosome damage . . .

A sociology teacher may be happy with the thoroughness of the essay and give the student a B+. J. Mitchell Morse would consider the awarding of such a grade "a crime against the university and against society, if not against the student himself," and he would also say, "I suppose we all know by now that it does no good to urge our colleagues in other departments to insist on good English" (The Irrelevant English Teacher,

p. 73). (Colleagues in other departments have been more cooperative since Morse wrote this, as is evidenced by campus-wide writing programs at Beaver College and the University of Michigan, and other institutions which are following suit.) But that is no reason to breathe a big sigh of relief. It is still most likely that teachers outside the English Department would not penalize the essay above for its punctuation errors, its sentence fragment, its poor word choice, or its questionable logic. Few would ask how an issue could take a stand. And the student who wrote that would be satisfied. He wouldn't go to the writing center for help. What for? He always got A's in English in high school. His writing is clear to him and clear enough to his teacher. Plus he followed Turabian and got all his footnotes right which is more than his roommate did. So what if years from now his boss at the electric company has to pay top dollar for a technical writing consultant to teach him what he never learned? Would you really mind the increase in your electric bills if you knew that the poor writer at least enjoyed a happy anarchy in his college English class? How seriously do I mean that? I'll do what Winterowd did when he suggested that an introductory course in dentistry was more valuable than a course in expository writing -- "I take the Fifth and let the reader decide."

Meanwhile, before you blame Winterowd for increases in your electric bill, let me tell you something that may take him off the hook (although it puts him on a few others): by anarchy he may not really mean anarchy. I say this because later in his book he speaks of the value of having students write about topics that are provided by teachers rather than chosen by students themselves. Then he says, "I am not suggesting students should be deprived of their marvelous, chaotic freedom, for I love both chaos and freedom. But what I am suggesting is that there are more efficient "programs" for enabling students to gain the freedom to express themselves." (47). What if students do not "feel the need" for the particular program he has in mind? Worse yet, what if they are smart enough to sense a possible paradox, to question whether his program and their anarchy can peacefully co-exist? And worst, what if they say they aren't happy any more? No doubt Winterowd has the rhetorical skills to convince his students that all this makes perfect sense and that they have every reason to be happy. But I'd like to see a TA pull it off. Many of Winterowd's ideas are fine, I am sure, for Winterowd. But how many teachers, especially new ones, would be willing to follow his ideas, to declare a class an anarchy (whatever that is), emphasize self-expression (whatever that is), and relegate the expository essay (whatever that is) to an inferior position? It is hard enough to figure out Winterowd's intentions, let alone communicate those intentions to a class.

Although I have chosen in this paper to take issue with Winterowd, I should finally remind you that the book is a handy collection of articles by important scholars in the field of rhetoric. If you are new to the field, those articles will be difficult, but not as difficult as the introduction. As a means of measuring your probable ease or anguish with regard to reading the text, I'd say if heuristic is a working word in your vocabulary, you probably have the background to make it through OK. If it's not, and you feel lost, be assured you're not alone.

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