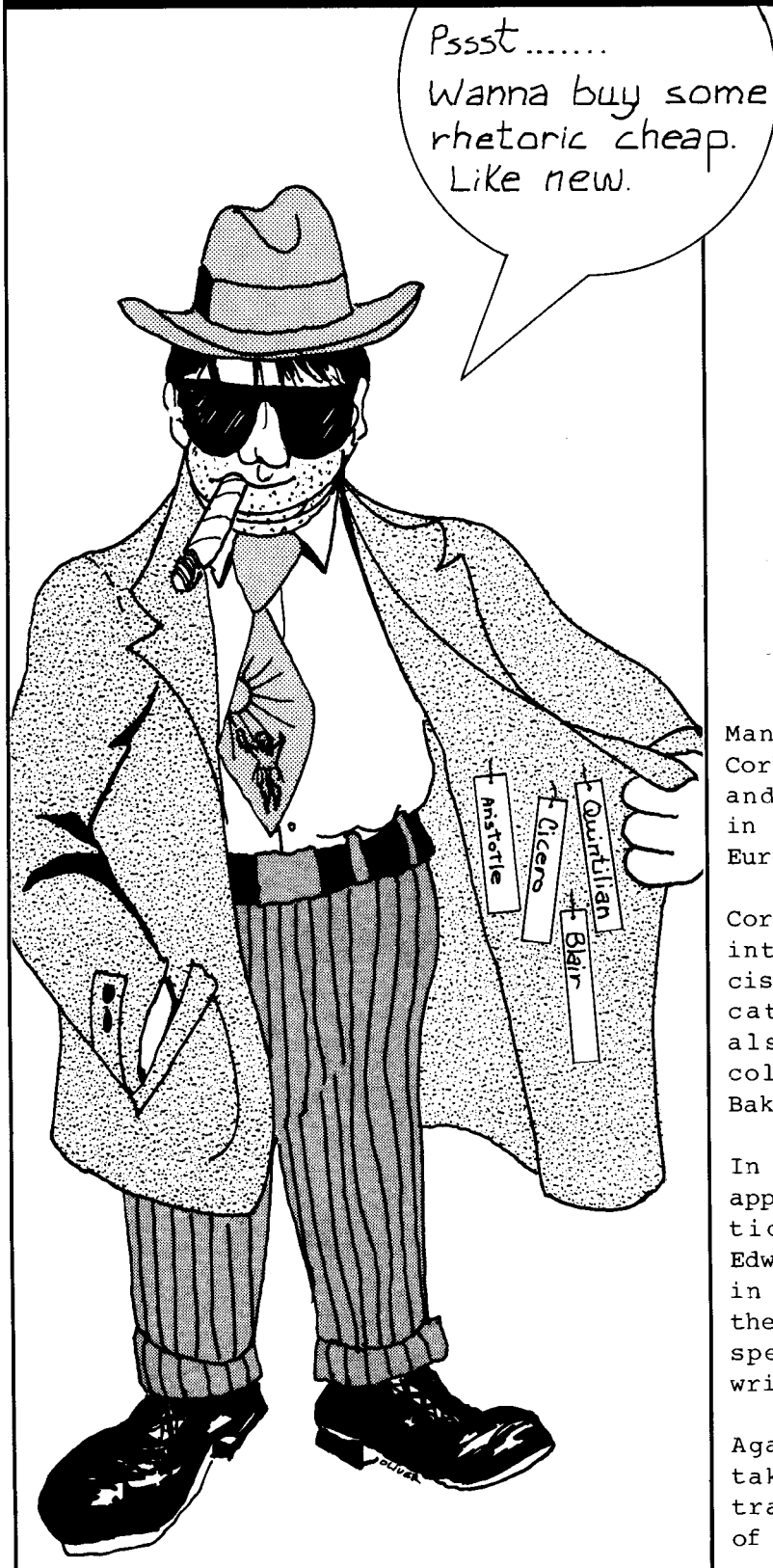


FFORUM

A Newsletter of the English Composition Board, University of Michigan



WRITING:

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Many who teach writing share Edward P. J. Corbett's assertion that the best ideas and practice available to them are found in the work of Greek, Roman, and western European rhetoricians of the past.

Corbett has translated classical theory into the modern idiom, giving neo-classicists material for their method. Advocates of the traditional approach have also found substance in the popular college and school textbooks of Sheridan Baker and John Warriner, among others.

In this issue of *fforum*, the traditional approach to writing is examined by theoreticians and pedagogical practitioners. Edward P. J. Corbett writes of his work in the field; Sheridan Baker celebrates the power of writing; and John Warriner specifies the components of a school-wide writing program.

Against a review of their work, teachers take their stands--pro and con--on the traditionalists' approach to the teaching of writing.

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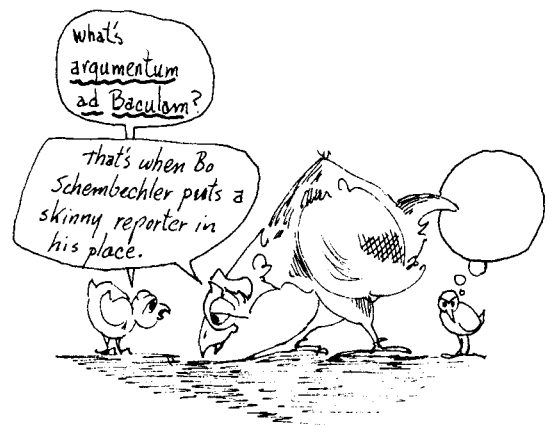
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forum

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At the Lectern

MY WORK IN RHETORIC

Edward P. J. Corbett

I feel like a con man whenever I catch myself talking about "my work in rhetoric." All "my work" is really somebody else's work. I have stolen all of it from wiser heads than mine will ever be. In the argot of the con man, I am a "fence," a purveyor of stolen goods.

What I have appropriated from others is indeed "goods." In fact, it is good goods. This much at least can be said for me: I was shrewd enough to recognize valuable property when I saw it. Others of my contemporaries had gone to the fountainheads before me. Apparently, many of them did not realize the value of what they found there. Even before I had sluiced the streams, I detected the golden grains suspended there in solution.

I came to Aristotle and eventually to Cicero and Quintilian via the eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorician, Hugh Blair. I discovered Hugh Blair, quite by accident, one day in a college library while I was searching for something else. My eye was attracted by a calf-skin-covered book on the shelves. It was one of the more than 150 editions of Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres that were published in England and America after the book was first issued in 1783. I took the book down from the shelf, broke it open, and began reading. An hour later, I left the library, with the book tucked under my arm. Little did I know it then, but that was the beginning of "my work in rhetoric."

I was then in my first teaching job. My graduate work for the M.A. degree had given me a marvelous preparation to teach literature. But in that first job, I was assigned to teach only one literature course (a sophomore survey of English literature) and four sections of freshman composition. In those composition courses, I just thrashed around futilely, because my graduate work had not trained me to be a teacher of writing. My poor students were the victims of my trials and errors. But Hugh Blair's book gave

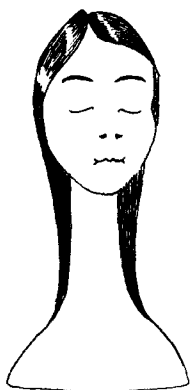
me hope--and something of a method. When I read Blair's book carefully at home, I saw that he was dealing with written discourse, not only the aesthetic kind that I was analyzing with my students in my literature course but also the utilitarian kind that I was struggling with in my composition classes. And I also saw that Blair was operating in a tradition, the tradition of rhetoric, which had its roots in ancient Greece.

I should have known about Aristotle's Rhetoric. For my master's degree, I had gone to the University of Chicago, which, under the aegis of Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, had become a hotbed of Aristotelianism. Largely because of the influence of Ronald S. Crane, the bible for one of the factions in Chicago's English department was Aristotle's Poetics. Hardly any graduate student in the English department there in those years escaped without some exposure to the so-called "Chicago school of criticism." I recall having read Aristotle's Rhetoric, but that text did not particularly impress me at the time, maybe because it was overshadowed in that atmosphere by the Poetics.

But Blair made me aware that if I wanted some help as a teacher of writing, I had to go back to Aristotle's Rhetoric and the dozens of other rhetoric texts that were spawned by that seminal work. Eventually, I got steeped in the rhetorical tradition. Having chosen to do my doctoral dissertation on Blair, I had to spend a couple of years acquainting myself with the history of rhetoric and reading the influential primary texts in rhetoric from the classical, medieval, Renaissance, and eighteenth-century periods.

One of the things that this review of the tradition did for me was make me aware that many of the approaches and techniques that I had used quite instinctively in my composition classes were sound. I also learned, of course, that many of the things I had been doing in my writing classes were idiotic and unproductive. I should have been sued by my students for malpractice.

What Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and dozens of other derivative rhetoricians made me aware of is that there are certain rock-bottom fundamentals about the writing situation and the writing process that do not change from age to age or from culture to culture. Writing was, and still is, a transaction involving a writer, a reader, and a message--someone saying something to somebody else for a purpose. You can't get any more rock-bottom than that.



ARISTOTLE'S OWN
ENTHYMEME

Rhetoric: The Practical Art

Rhetoric gave a "local habitation and a name" to many of the strategies that I had deliberately or instinctively used myself when I was trying to communicate with others through either the spoken or the written medium. It was reassuring to learn that there was, after all, a method to my muddlings. And if there was a method, there had to be an art that codified all the means to an end. Rhetoric was that art. Aristotle classified rhetoric as one of the practical arts, an art of "doing," a behavior, a skill. The ancients maintained that we acquired a skill by some combination of ars (a set of precepts), imitatio (observation of the practice of others), and exercitatio (repeated practice of the skill). That triad sets up the whole rationale of the pedagogy of composition. If one studies the history of the teaching of writing in the schools or contemplates just the various philosophies of composition that prevail in the schools today, one sees that the various approaches to the teaching of writing are shaped by the particular element in that triad which receives the greatest emphasis.

Because the principles of classical rhetoric were so elementary and universal, I found that they were readily adaptable to the modern classroom. In fact, much of what is touted in modern writing texts as being "new" often turns out to be something old in a new guise with a new name. Some teachers claim that the system of classical rhetoric is too limited for the modern classroom because it deals primarily, if not exclusively, with persuasive discourse. One response to that charge is that all discourse is, in some ultimate sense, persuasive; even if our objective is to inform or enlighten or entertain our readers, we ultimately have to win acceptance of our presentation from our readers. If there is a persuasive thrust in all discourse, classical rhetoric is still the best system of persuasive strategies. It touches all the bases: the three kinds of appeal--logical, emotional, and ethical; the two basic strands of logical appeal--the deductive (the enthymeme) and the inductive (the example); the three kinds of persuasive discourse--the judicial (arguing about things that have already occurred), the deliberative (arguing about things that will or should take place), the ceremonial (arguing about things that are occurring in the present).

Another answer to the charge that classical rhetoric is too limited to be of use in the modern classroom is that even though classical rhetoric was concerned mainly with persuasive discourse, many of the strategies laid out by the classical rhetoricians are applicable also to expository, descriptive, and narrative discourses. Much of the heuristic system (especially the topics), much of the doctrine about the effective arrangement of the parts of a discourse, almost all of the immensely rich collection of instructions about style and rhythm and figures of speech are just as applicable to the expository, descriptive, and narrative modes of discourse as to the persuasive mode.

It should be interesting for readers to discover from subsequent issues of forum
(cont. on p. 55)

WRITING AS LEARNING

Sheridan Baker

The Practical Stylist arose directly from an article I wrote, as a young Instructor of English, against the new "Communication Skills," touted to replace old-hat freshman composition. Communication Skills was to include Speaking, Listening, and Reading, along with writing, not very strongly capitalized. It included a lot of listening to speech in hallways and playgrounds, pasting up bits from newspapers, magazines, and advertisements, watching people communicating through gestures and postures, and responding to movies and each other in darkened theaters. This new playschool almost crowded writing out completely, at best demoting it a clear seventy-five percent, and ignoring it as one of our most essential and powerful means of learning.

The new course took its cue from the new linguistics, whose slogan was "The spoken language is the language." Writing, newly described as a pale and imperfect imitation of speech, moved to the edges of education, and almost completely out the doors. The man whose article I answered in my first step toward The Practical Stylist was Ken Macrorie, then of the English department at Eastern Michigan University. He too eventually wrote a couple of textbooks, still representing his early stand against the square ideas of traditional composition, providing a kind of south pole to my north. A few years ago, and twenty-five years after our initial confrontation in the pages of an academic journal, Ken Macrorie and I finally met, for the first time, on a panel at a conference on composition where we aired our opposite views.

Macrorie believes that composition should be purely autobiographical. Students write best about what they know, he says, and they know themselves best. His students write first-person confessionals and complaints, sounding off as they produce an admirable number of pages--fluent, emotive, and, of course, interesting, like all human turmoil. The agonized "I" dominates throughout:

"I...I...I....," like the kindergartener's "show and tell" promoted to paper.



Lively, yes--but oblivious to the greatest advantage composition has for a student.

Composition is a way of learning. It teaches us how to move from the circumscribed self-center of childhood and adolescence into mature thinking, how to generalize from our attitudes, emotions, hunches, and private ideas into mature and valid thought. It moves us from self to object, from emotional expression to rational thinking. The emotive and expressive is always with us. What an education should develop constantly is our rational and intellectual powers, not so readily operative as to need no encouragement. And composition, reasoning through language, does this better than anything else.

In The Practical Stylist, I urge two points: (1) writing leads to maturity, in the only places we mature significantly, in our attitudes, in our minds; (2) writing discovers our thoughts for us, as we try to produce them, clarify them, grasp them, and state them, on paper.

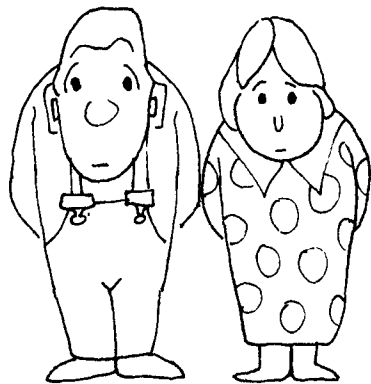
My point about maturity is this. If you say "I liked that film," you state a personal and historical fact, of no more consequence than "She went over to the

(cont. on p. 55)

THE RITE-AID SPIRAL THEME NOTEBOOK

John Warriner

A recent advertising flyer, mailed to local post office boxholders, presented twenty-five small display advertisements. Among ads for hair spray, glue, and a sixpack of beer, appeared an ad for "The Rite-Aid Spiral Theme Notebook," 100 sheets, 8X10, for 59 cents. This ad attracted my attention because of its implication that themes are being written in today's schools; at least, the supermarket expected a demand for a theme notebook. As we all realize, while the ad may sell a quantity of "Rite-Aids" to conscientious (or pessimistic) students getting ready for the opening of school in September, it may still be quite wrong in its implied conviction about theme writing. One may wonder, perhaps, about the spelling accuracy expected in themes when in the brand name of the theme notebook, spiral or not, "write" is spelled "rite."



major premises

Teachers of English will surely welcome, in the hands of their students, a sparkling new, as yet uncontaminated, theme notebook. Our question is how effectively will teachers be able to bring it into use?

If, as writers and teachers are constantly reminding us, the only way to learn to write is to write, we must regularly require our students to write. On our way to a discussion of how to do this, we may as well avoid apoplexy by resisting the urge to explain heatedly the reasons always advanced for the low level of writing competence displayed by many of our high school graduates.

Three reasons are usually cited for this incompetence. The first is the large class load given to English teachers. This heavy load, which makes the composition teacher's task unbearably time-consuming, is certainly a major reason why teachers do not assign the requisite number of compositions. The second reason is the audio-visual, but not literacy-producing, experience of TV. To the extent that TV reduces the amount of reading our students do, it must also reduce the quality of their writing. Familiarity with the written language is



minor premise

essential to an understanding of what good writing is. The third reason, long blamed for making writing obsolete in the schools, is the wide use of objective tests.

Those are the universally offered causes of our problem, but constantly deploring them accomplishes nothing. The solution of any one of them must be a long-range effort, but our need is immediate. It is at least doubtful, anyway, whether any important change in the size of pupil load, in the lure of TV, and in the kind of testing that does not require writing will ever be achieved. Given these formidable drawbacks, what can we do to bring about improvement in student writing?

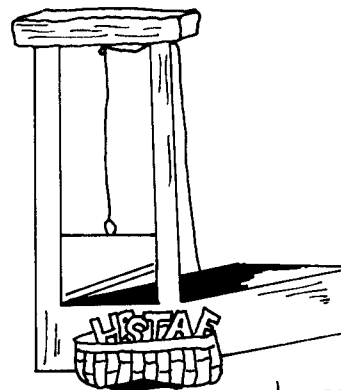
The Components of Good Composition Teaching

Most English teachers have developed their own successful ways of teaching writing, but whatever their tricks of the trade, all good composition teaching must embrace the following:

(1) Establish a school-wide composition program. The first step is administrative, or supervisory. It is the estab-

lishment of a school-wide or system-wide writing program that specifies exactly how often compositions are to be written and what writing skill is to be taught in each assignment. A school-wide requirement--two compositions a month, for example--helps to assure that writing practice will not be forgotten. Teachers will see to it that their students write the required compositions and study the designated skills. On the other side of the desk, students will accept their regular writing assignments with less complaining because they know everyone else is receiving the same assignments. They expect to have to write. The program should help to bring an end to the sudden, unexpected, and therefore resented, assignment. The off-the-top-of-the-head assignment, announced suddenly without any clear purpose, except to test, certainly not to teach writing, and given usually without any real help from the teacher in its preparation, turns students against composition assignments and inevitably produces poor, if any, results. Simply announcing that a composition will be due on Tuesday is not teaching, and probably not even testing, anything.

(2) Teach a writing skill to be learned and demonstrated in each composition assignment. When an assignment is vague, when it is not prepared for, and when it comes as an unexpected nuisance, it probably accomplishes very little. Teachers should devote a class period to preparing the class to write. Part of the period should be spent teaching the particular writing skill to be put into practice. Students must understand what is expected of them. For example, one simple skill taught many times in any composition program is beginning an expository paragraph with a generalization, or topic sentence, and developing, or supporting, the opening generalization with examples. In preparing their class, teachers will read and analyze with them some model expository paragraphs. They may supply a "decapitated" paragraph, one without an opening generalization, and have students supply a suitable topic sentence for it. As a result of this preparation, every student knows the



decapitated paragraph

assignment requires the writing of a paragraph that begins with a topic sentence and is developed by examples. The writing skill has been taught.

(3) Help students to find something to write about. The second part of the preparatory lesson helps the student to find something to write about. The teacher suggests topics. Class discussion produces more topics. Sometimes a paragraph can be created on the chalkboard, the entire class participating. Now with a clear idea of the skill to be demonstrated and with a subject to write about, the student approaches his assignment free of at least two of the frustrations a composition assignment often imposes.

(4) Follow-up the assignment. Even teachers with 125 to 150 students can read one-paragraph compositions productively, provided they have established one skill as a requirement for the paragraph. In their follow-up--their reading, correcting, and evaluating--they are concerned primarily with how well the writers have demonstrated their grasp of the skill taught. If the writers have, all is well. If not, there must be a second chance. A skill is rarely mastered in one practice session. The procedure in the composition lesson is the same whether the skill to be taught is as simple as the one just mentioned or as sophisticated as using concrete narrative detail in telling a story. Teach a skill. Help with subject matter. Follow up.

(cont. on p. 49)

In the Library

IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Amy J. Devitt

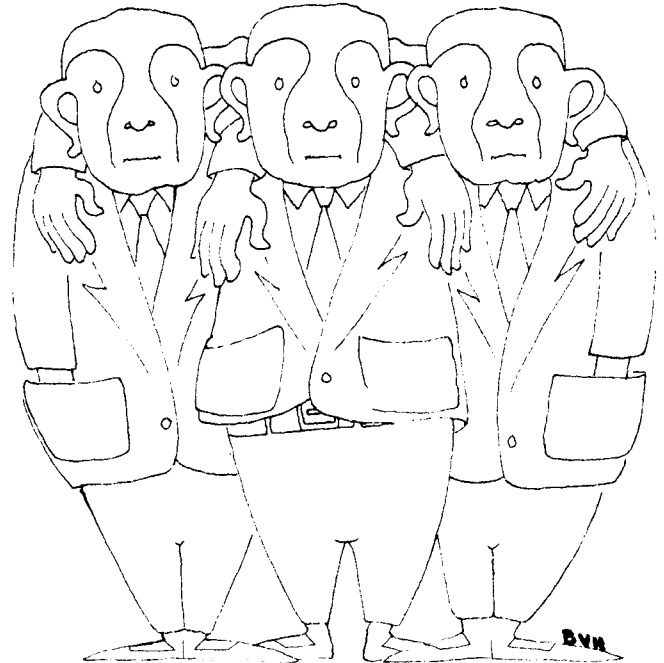
John Grove

In the perennial search for the ideal "substance" of composition courses, some theorists and teachers in the 1960's argued for a new kind of "substance" in the classroom: teaching the student how to express her creative self. Other teachers decided that this approach really provided no subject matter at all; and they kept on searching. Many believed they had finally found the answer in 1965, when Edward P. J. Corbett published his textbook Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student. Because he believes that the self-expressive approach produces few creative writers and many confused ones, Corbett argues in Classical Rhetoric and other articles that the most fruitful "substance" for composition courses is just what the title of his 1965 text implies, an adaptation of classical rhetoric. For Corbett, study of classical rhetoric improves students' reading of modern prose (see Corbett's Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works); and such study allays students' fears about writing because it is prescriptive rather than proscriptive, focusing student writers' attention where it belongs, on the audience, and providing much-needed guidelines for writing.

Corbett's Adaptation of Classical Rhetoric

Corbett incorporates much traditional theory, but he explicitly adapts some of its principles in Classical Rhetoric. He accepts, for example, Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the art dealing with the discovery and use of 'all the available means of persuasion in any given case,'" but he enlarges that definition by arguing that rhetorical principles apply to any writing which attempts to affect an audience in any way. Such writing includes the traditional modes of discourse--argumentation, exposition, description, and narration. Since Corbett sees persuasion as the most dominant form of writing, he focuses his attention on argumentation, as did classical rhetoric.

The principle of classical rhetoric which Corbett deems crucial is this: "The subject, the occasion, the audience, and the personality of the speaker or writer will dictate the means we should employ to effect our purpose." He recommends that the writer begin with a standard method which rhetoric has established, discover and order the parts of an essay in a specified manner, and then decide how the situation dictates manipulation of the classical pattern of the essay.



SUPPORTIVE DETAILS

This standard method which the writer adapts to the situation is actually a linear process of movement through orderly steps. Although Corbett accepts the classical method, he narrows its five traditional components to three: discovery of arguments, arrangement of material, and style. According to Corbett, rhetoric begins after the student has conceived of what she wants to say and has stated that idea in a single declarative sentence--a thesis statement. The student's first step, then, is to discover useful arguments by exploring the traditional topics, a list of statements or questions designed to provide the writer with what to say. Next the student arranges her material into an essay. Again Corbett modifies

the traditional conception, this time reducing the classical five-part essay to a four-part one: introduction, statement of fact, confirmation (or proof), and conclusion. The final step in the writing process is "'thinking out into language.'"

Because form and content are related integrally, Corbett treats style as a matter of choosing among a number of possible expressions in a language. Choosing the "better" expressions involves working for diction that has purity, propriety, and precision and working for a style that suits the situation. This may be achieved by using the figures of speech.

In the study of style, Corbett focuses on another cardinal principle of rhetoric: Deviate from the standard method in order to best affect the audience. The student's presumed ability to deviate effectively accounts for Corbett's statement that "style is the most teachable of the skills involved in composition."

Corbett's Case for Imitation as Access to Style

Corbett advocates imitation as one of the ways to teach style. By copying, restructuring, and imitating the writing of professionals, the student will gain (1) awareness of the resources of language, (2) practice in varying styles, and (3) recognition of different effects produced by different patterns. The final goal, though, is not to have the student

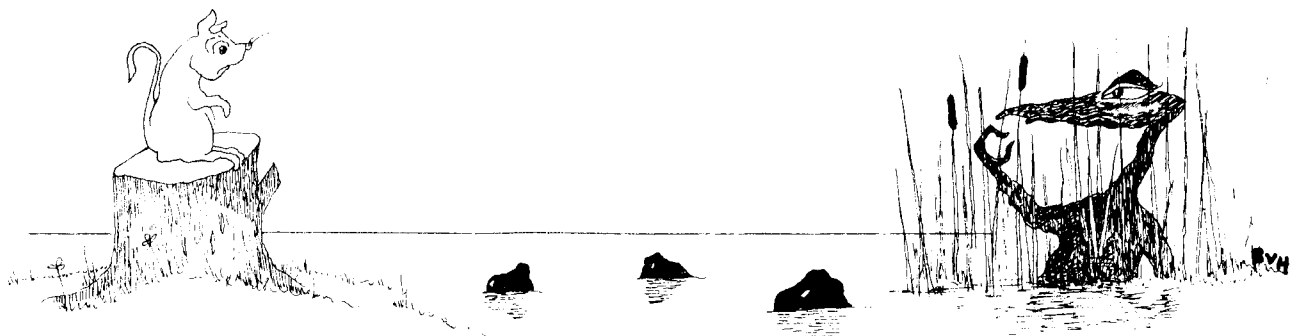
blindly imitate but to free her to use the new-found resources in unique and personal ways. In an article devoted to the topic of imitation, "The Theory and Practice of Imitation in Classical Rhetoric," Corbett states the desired result as "that internalization of structures that unlocks our powers and sets us free to be creative, original, and ultimately effective. Imitate that you may be different."

That internalization of structures sets the writer free is an implicit principle in all of Corbett's work. Yet Corbett implies a definite hierarchy, for the writer will not and cannot be set free until she has internalized the specific structures noted. In the section on style in Classical Rhetoric, for example, Corbett assumes that the student has a basic competence in grammar, for only with that competence, he states, can a writer proceed to develop rhetorical and stylistic effectiveness. His Little English Handbook attempts to provide the student with the necessary grammatical competence.

The essence of rhetoric demands adapting the discourse to the situation. The fact that Classical Rhetoric has few specific guidelines for such adaptation, while it has an abundance of guidelines for the standard method, implies Corbett's sense that the deviations are instinctive or intuitive and hence unteachable:

"As in most rhetorical activities, we must develop instincts for what is

Got it by sentence combining



Dubious Inference (left) is tempted by Emerging Selfish Interest to leap from safe assumption by way of specious premises towards Utterly False Conclusion.

most appropriate and most effective. Because such instincts are among 'the nameless graces beyond the reach of art,' rhetoric cannot equip the student with those instincts; it can only point the way" (p. 155).

Effective deviation, then, requires instincts that cannot be taught, that must be developed through practice. Similarly, one cannot "adapt" a standard method until one has internalized that standard method. So Corbett's work focuses on teaching rhetoric's standard methods, the structures that the student must know, before she can be set free to be creative with those structures.

In his article "The Usefulness of Classical Rhetoric," published just two years before the appearance of Classical Rhetoric, Corbett states:

"What most of our students need, even the brightest ones, is careful, systematized guidance at every step in the writing process. Classical rhetoric can provide that kind of positive guidance" (p. 164).

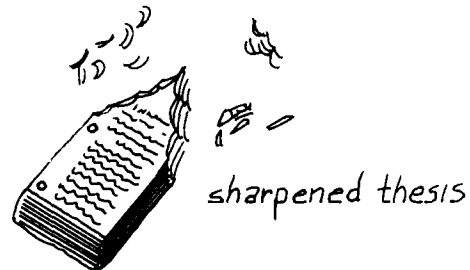
While other rhetoricians today focus on the situation which produces a discourse as the primary subject to be taught and derive guidelines from that situation, Corbett teaches the guidelines first, treating adaptation to situation as a modification of the standard method. He believes the student acquires rhetorical sophistication through practice in mastering a standard form and learning to deviate from it in ways appropriate to given situations. In offering such a schema, he provides for many teachers of composition the rigorous discipline and the "substance" which they have been seeking.

Baker and Warriner: Classroom Texts

Sheridan Baker and John Warriner also believe that students benefit from instruction in principles and precepts of writing, by imitating good writers, and by writing themselves. Their textbooks (cited in the "Select Bibliography") have

been used extensively in college and secondary school classrooms.

Baker's texts deal with all aspects of developing and polishing writing style, from finding a thesis in a topic and sharpening that thesis to developing style. His graphic representation of the structure of a well-written essay gives a



"keyhole" configuration to the classic five-paragraph essay. Baker advises the student to begin in broad terms, narrowing and focusing into a thesis. This thesis is then supported with details arranged in order of increasing importance. To conclude, the student moves from a restated thesis back to the more general context. In addition to his graphic aid, Baker offers advice on ordering details in essays, including spatial, temporal, cause and effect, problem and solution, comparison and contrast, and inductive and deductive schemas. All of this material is accompanied by examples and exercises to give students practice in the skills.

Syntactic exercises are also included, covering topics such as parallel construction, correcting wordy sentences, and complex and compound sentences. The handbook section of the text touches on the history of the English language, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and usage.

The Warriner series of textbooks also explicates rules and provides exercises for the student. In English Workshops 1-5 and Composition: Models and Exercises 1-5, Warriner provides for practice in imitation and invention as well as specific exercises.

(cont. on p. 55)

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At the Bar

RHETORIC IN THE CLASSROOM: SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Johanna Kobran
George Keith

Pro

In her essay "Journal Writing: Rolfing in Reverse," in the September, 1978, issue of Media and Methods, Neva Daniel says that

the single most important value to be gained from education is a positive self-image. Two years ago, the Progoff method of intensive journal writing arrived in my life like a tidal wave of effectiveness for accomplishing this purpose (p. 50).

In the same issue of Media and Methods, G. Lynn Nelson begins his essay "Learning from Within: Ira Progoff and the Power of Personal Writing" with this:

Personal writing is writing with myself as audience. It is writing to discover what I know and what I feel; through seeing what I say. Someone once noted that every I is a we, and personal writing is a process of allowing the many that make up me to talk to each other and to learn to live comfortably with each other (p. 49).

"But what do you do with this stuff if you want to get into the University of Michigan?" a student once asked us. If personal writing is the exclusive frame of reference, students end up frustrated. They feel that they need to communicate with the outside world in a practical, efficient manner. Clearly, personal writing exercises may be essential heuristic devices in developing a writer's writing consciousness; but when left to itself, personal writing does not satisfy those aspects of self-image which are tied to how a person is received by the outside world.

When a student was presented with a pre-writing exercise of Macrorie's at a University of Michigan workshop titled "Alternatives to the Five-Paragraph theme," he asked: "Now what do I do with it?"

The response was, "Take one of the 'things' and develop an essay from it."

A bewildered look accompanied the next question: "What 'things'?"

The non-reply was, "I suppose I am using 'things' differently from the way most English teachers use 'things.'"

What specificity, what logical direction comes next? More free writing, more journals? More of the same solipsism, or a new direction which combines the processes into a continuing development of composing skills?

Instruction in rhetoric provides a viable amalgam of some personal writing and some communication with the outside world. Rhetoric acknowledges the self in invention while validating the real world and the necessity of making contact with it. Instruction in rhetoric, derived from the classical rhetoricians, provides a comprehensive, practical means to assist student essayists in the exploration, development, and refinement of their written communication. Invention, style, and audience become critical considerations in helping them mature as writers.

Invention

For developing writers rhetoric encourages originality of thought while giving them a structural frame of reference. In Errors and Expectations, Mina Shaughnessy notes the particular problems of developing student writers who must first labor with invention:

For the BW student, instruction in organization must begin, not with the techniques writers use to help their readers follow them, but with the more fundamental processes whereby writers get their thoughts in the first place and then get them under way....Yet students are not always certain of how a writer recognizes a main idea when he has one or how he sets about finding one if he doesn't (p. 245).

Invention today must mean more than Cicero's "discovery of valid arguments"

Pro (cont.)

if teachers are to assist developing writers. Teachers must be concerned with how heuristics can give developing writers systematic ways to examine their thoughts and feelings. One practical exercise which allows for exploration and invention is the use of audio-visual slides to provoke student responses: getting them to see contrasts, to ask what something means, to group observations, to describe what their eyes reveal.

Kenneth Burke's pentad developed in his Grammar of Motives is another way for initiating discoveries. The pentad of heuristic probes--act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose--suggests questions such as what was done? where? by whom? how? and why?

Burke's probes, coupled with audio-visuals, raise questions while students view slides or hear tapes and recordings. The students may respond to the stimuli orally or in written lists of words, phrases, or sentences. Gradually they understand that the questions are a regimen; then the instructor requires that the students ask their own questions; ultimately the instructor requests that they chart and compile their facts, observations, opinions. Feelings need not be neglected in this process. What students feel about the subject and what they value must be explored also. Students learn through differences in opinions, perceptions, and feelings, that they have a tremendous responsibility to communicate clearly and effectively if others are to understand them.

The instructor's role is to facilitate awareness. Out of awareness come assertions and judgments in sentences, and perhaps paragraphs. Coterminous with these assertions and judgments is the students' obligation to describe clearly and to explain clearly. After all, their audience may not know what they know, may not feel what they feel, may not assert what they assert. What can they do to structure their ideas to most effectively reach that audience?

In Classical Rhetoric for the Modern

Student, Edward P. J. Corbett outlines the problems of structure which face developing students. Dispelling inertia and helping students make potential choices is the teacher's task.

The difficulty everyone has, in varying degrees, in putting thoughts into language stems partly from the inertia that must be overcome at the beginning of any task, partly from the lack of something to say, partly from indecisiveness about what to say first, and partly from the variety of possible ways to say something. (p. 414).

Corbett's methods present precepts and materials for imitation, but he asserts: "One learns to write by writing" (p. 416).

Sentence combining is another method by which students both imitate and develop correct and effective styles. Students follow a set pattern of grammatically correct English sentences which supply them with the appropriate patterns for imitation. When working with sentence combining exercises, students are asked to make stylistic choices between and within sentences. As an additional benefit, this type of exercise can and does overcome the inertia of the blank page.

Arrangement

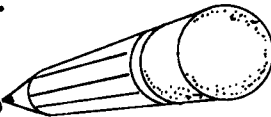
Invention goes beyond exploration to a practical method of arriving at thesis, of discovering potential arrangements for the development of the thesis. As Sheridan Baker remarks in The Practical Stylist: "If you do not find a thesis, your essay will be a tour through the miscellaneous" (p. 2). The instructor moves students toward assertions and judgments regarding a subject. Although anthologies of essays have been used typically to stimulate these thesis statements, the use of "cases" is also an effective means for getting students actively engaged in thinking problems through to written thesis statements.

Through discussion, disagreement and agreement, the students begin to acknowledge cogent statements about the subject

Pro (cont.)

which must be supported; inherent patterns of arrangements are discovered in the cases and their potential solutions. Field and Weiss's Cases for Composition serves as an excellent example of textbook cases designed for "practical writing situations." The instructor assists in the discovery process, not only in what can be asserted, but also in discovering potential arrangements which may be exploited to advance the writer's point of view. The instructor encourages recognition of diverse points of view, what must be done to prepare the audience for the reception of the point-to-be-made, what clarification must take place before the audience can fully accept a proposition or solution.

Some work in imitation of models is also appropriate. Pauline Christiansen's From Inside Out can be used to stimulate discussion, thesis creation, and finally imitation. The text has copious essays from student and professional writers which serve as functional models for student writing. As the regular students move through the semester, the instructor guides them from the dynamics of exposition to the dynamics of persuasion, a fuller consideration of the audience's shaping force in the presentation of the information and argument.

Writer's point of view 

Thus, as student writing matures, the students are led from the logic and reasonableness of order in thought to the logic and reasonableness of structures that may effectively influence the reader's point of view. One method of focusing instruction on point of view is to use ethical problems and moral dilemmas for classroom analysis and discussion. The Aristotelian topics provide a reference for inquiry. Students acquire some sense of the variety of value systems among them and the elusiveness of absolute truth. D'Angelo in Process and Thought in

Composition also provides a set of basic questions which assist in the examination of audience (p. 20).

The instructor, through exercises, can focus students' attention on his audience. Rogerian argument provides one such exercise mode. Young, Becker, and Pike's Rhetoric: Discovery and Change provides a guide to Rogerian strategy as does Hairston's A Contemporary Rhetoric. The exercises guide students into careful choices of evidence and examples known to specific audiences and respected by them.

Style

Writers can begin to understand and develop their own styles as they have understood the devices of invention, of arrangement, of evaluating audience, and of argument. In Understanding Arguments: Introduction to Informal Logic, Robert J. Fogelin suggests that a first step in the close analysis of an argument is to label the various argumentative components. Fogelin gives a series of examples which show students the uses of these stylistic devices both in being persuaded and in persuading. Students can be asked to rewrite a persuasive essay which has a particular slant, to redirect the writing to a different audience. By redirecting their thesis statements, by rearranging their essays, by redesigning their argumentative points, writers can appeal to a different audience and persuade them to new points of view. This exercise reinforces students' understanding that style adjusts as purpose and audience change.

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TOO OFTEN TRADITIONAL WRITING INSTRUCTION MEANS TEACHING GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Con Arlene Stover

Instruction in grammar and mechanics has been the traditional fare of writing instruction in many English classrooms.

However, some current research suggests that instruction in grammar has little, if any, favorable effect on writing of students. As a matter of fact, since teaching grammar takes the class time that students could spend on writing itself, and since its usefulness is unclear to many students, the effect of such teaching may be even harmful.

Why do we cling to this "traditional" method of teaching when studies show it does not help students to write better and classroom experiences reinforce this finding? Several explanations come to mind: habit; fear of trying something new or fear of losing our prestige by admitting we do not actually know the "correct" way to teach writing; a preference for the easy way; or a misunderstanding of what grammar actually is. Perhaps, several of these possibilities contain elements of the truth.

In the November, 1978, issue of the Scientific American, an article entitled "The Acquisition of Language," by Brene Arlene Moskowitz, suggests the problems facing writing teachers as they plan their curricula:

In order to understand how language is learned it is necessary to understand what language is. The issue is confused by two factors. First, language is learned in early childhood, and adults have few memories of the intense effort that went into the learning process, just as they do not remember the process of learning to walk. Second, adults do have conscious memories of being taught the few grammatical rules that are prescribed as "correct" usage, or the norms of "standard" language. It is difficult for adults to dissociate their memories of school lessons from those

of true language learning, but the rules learned in school are only the conventions of an educated society. They are arbitrary finishing touches of embroidery on a thick fabric of language that each child weaves for herself before arriving in the English teacher's classroom (p. 92).

The formal study of English is unique. In what other area of study do students come to school already proficient? Students come to us having completed the greater part of the language acquisition process, knowing the subtleties of their native language as it is spoken in a

The study of English is unique. In what other area of study do students come to school already proficient?

variety of situations. They do not address their grandmothers in the same manner as they speak to their peers or siblings. Likewise, they can apply this competency to their writing. For example, I have asked my students of varying ability levels to write four letters about an incident, one to be sent to a grandparent, one to a friend who has moved, one to the local newspaper, and one to be handed in as an English assignment. The results are always the same: the details are very similar, but the language and style of each text varies greatly. After the assignment has been completed, we discuss the letters. The students know that as the audience and purpose of writing vary, the writing differs.

I begin my writing classes by asking students to bring to class a sample of effective and a sample of ineffective writing. They share them with the class. Writing samples come from posters, insurance forms, newspapers, magazines, the Bible, and even textbooks. Based on the discussion (I stay in the background), criteria for effective