

was very choosy about which persons he sold his rods to. Is that a possible subject? The distinguishing marks and quality of the Powell rod? How does it differ from an Orvis, for example? (279)

To check my own appreciation of *The Versatile Writer*, I feel obliged to measure it against the criteria of our discipline's most vigilant textbook-watchdog, Donald Stewart. In his well-known 1978 essay, "Composition Textbooks and the Assault on Tradition" (*CCC* 29: 171-76), Stewart complained that few textbooks "were at least aware of new approaches to the composing process" and argued for increased attention to research on invention, as well as attention to options for arrangement and style. Certainly, Stewart has responded to his own call in this textbook, acknowledging by imaginative adaptation the contributions of classical rhetoric as well as the modern work of Young, Burke, Rohman, Christensen, Weathers, and so forth. In his recent essay, "Textbooks Revisited" (Moran and Lunsford, *Research in Composition and Rhetoric*, Greenwood Press, 1984, 453-68), Stewart adds to his concern for currency in the field the question of whether "good writing" is sufficiently defined in textbooks. He responds to that question in *The Versatile Writer* with the persistent identification of good writing with both versatility and authenticity, insisting that good writers take moral responsibility for their words: "Writing should tell the truth" (306). Indeed.

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***Sentence Combining: A Rhetorical Perspective*. Ed. Donald A. Daiker, Andrew Kerek, and Max Morenberg. Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, xxi + 386 pages.**

This compilation is an effort to make rhetorical sense out of a pedagogical technique that both admirers and detractors have often regarded as syntactic manipulation sans rationale, practice devoid of theory. The volume consists of twenty-three papers presented at the Miami University Conference on Sentence Combining and the Teaching of Writing during October 1983.

Despite the editors' claim that the essays describe a "thematic arc," some of the contributors occupy rhetorical universes that have little in common with each other. By ignoring their neighbors altogether or by engaging in unacknowledged disagreements, authors often talk past each other. This tend-

ency, along with the disagreements themselves, prevents the editors from delivering on their promise of *A Rhetorical Perspective*. A more accurate subtitle would read: *A Rhetorical Supermarket* or, better, *A Chinese Grocery Store*. One opens the door to encounter a welter of pungent and often clashing aromas. A walk down the aisle reveals an array of topics by both lesser-known and brand-name authors: Sentence Combining and “mega-nouns” (John Mellon); an SC experiment (William Smith and Glynda Hull); a catalogue of “macrosyntactic structures” (Glenn Broadhead); SC and discourse theory (Robert de Beaugrande); SC and Christensen’s generative rhetoric (William Stull); SC, rhetorical modes, and cognitive development (Rosemary Hake and Joseph Williams); SC and ethnographic study (Patrick Hartwell and Gene LoPresti); SC and Perry-inspired instruction (Janice Neuleib and Ron Fortune); (inevitably) SC and computers (Linda Feldmeier); SC and whole essay revision (Jeffrey Sommers); SC and teaching literature (Russell Hunt); content-provided instruction and a variation of primary-trait scoring (Lester Faigley); “Writing Badly to Write Well” (Donald Murray); SC as a way to reduce cognitive overload (Richard Gebhardt); SC as play (Monica Weis; Joseph Comprone); SC and freewriting (Peter Elbow); SC and texts with multiple voices (Nevin Laib; Arthur Palacas); SC and Toulmin’s layong (James Stratman); SC meets Emerson, Burke, and Said (David Bartholomae); “An Epistemic View” of SC (Kenneth Dowst); and “How SC Works” (William Strong). (Given the abundance of composition generalists and veteran sentence combiners, the only conspicuous omission among the authors is Frank O’Hare.)

Although no one admits that disagreements are taking place, they are not hard to find. The *RTE*-type study of Smith and Hull converses with Mellon and Broadhead but is not on speaking terms with Elbow and Murray. Although Mellon uses T-Units in the conventional manner of sentence combiners, de Beaugrande argues that punctuation, which T-Unit measurements ignore, plays an important role in the chunking of discourse and that the “relation of syntactic complexity to chunking and to informationality [largely accounts for] the maturity and quality of written prose. . . .” Contradicting the usual assumption of combiners, Hake and Williams maintain that smaller sentences are sometimes better, especially with regard to attempts to master more complex rhetorical modes. Hake and Williams also challenge the cognitive scheme of Piaget and Perry that underlies the writing curriculum advocated by Neuleib and Fortune. Although Hunt makes an unusual and stimulating argument for sentence combining as a method of teaching literature, everyone else ignores both him and literature.

The most divisive issue is the role of content-provided instruction. At the risk

of oversimplifying various contributors' positions, I see Sommers, Hunt, Faigley, Gebhardt, Laib, Stratman, Strong, and (surprisingly) Dowst as defenders of some form of content-provided exercises. De Beaugrande and Hake and Williams offer two sets of forceful reservations about the value of such exercises, at least in their customary form. Like de Beaugrande, Comprone criticizes exercise designers for stressing syntactic choices at the expense of rhetorical considerations. Elbow is also reluctant to embrace exercises, stating, "Exercises are inevitably clearer, simpler, and more coherent than writing." As an alternative, he wants students to decombine and recombine their own problem passages. Murray's call for messy writing seems an unacknowledged rejection of exercises and content-provided instruction in general.

Lying at the center of this issue is the question of invention. As the editors proudly tell us, sentence combining has survived the recent "paradigm shift" in composition. If the shift has any meaning at all, it represents a return to and a reinvigoration of invention, the initial and primary canon of Aristotelian rhetoric. In order for sentence combining to contribute to—as well as to survive—the shift, someone must relate it to invention.

Unfortunately, some of the content providers—notably Faigley—offer writing tasks that virtually eliminate any possibility of invention or discovery on the part of student writers. Other combiners wrestle with invention. Strong, in particular, treats it with the seriousness it deserves; his account of the "outer game" and "inner game" of writing and of the "automaticity" of skilled writers is fascinating and useful.

Other essayists make diverse and occasionally ingenious efforts to tie sentence combining to invention. After advocating a Burkean "rhetoric of combination," Bartholomae shows how such a rhetoric could work by using one combining exercise as a metaphor for another. By defining jogging as a game show, Bartholomae's invention manipulates the exercises instead of being hamstrung by them. Hartwell and LoPresti treat sentence combining as a potential aid to ethnographic study, which promises to enable teachers to remove obstacles to "tacit learning" and thereby to foster successful invention and revision. Laib and Palacas are more successful than Dowst in defining the relationship between shifts in texts and shifts in perspective. Laib's examination of "lumpy" discourse and Palacas's notion of "world combining" serve as significant contributions to a rhetoric of multi-layered voices. Their efforts should also help students to present the views of different sources and to distinguish among facets of an authorial perspective.

The nub of the disagreement over the relationship between content-provided activities and invention emerges in an unacknowledged debate between

Gebhardt and Comprone. Gebhardt argues that content-provided exercises reduce the load for the cognitive juggling necessary in writing and thereby offer valuable practice for students. According to Gebhardt, students can begin more easily if they master other things before they have to invent. Comprone, however, contends that conventional combining exercises linearize “an essentially recursive composing process” and create “a falsely dichotomous situation for student writers,” who must make syntactic choices with other writers’ kernels before thinking about “rhetoric and coherence.” According to Comprone, this false dichotomy has prevented combiners from developing “any proven strategies for teaching rhetorical consciousness.”

I find Comprone’s argument more convincing. His suggestion of freewheeling and open combining activity and Elbow’s recommendation of decombining and recombining original problem passages strike me as significant “practical” ideas for relating combining to invention.

Despite the attention of Comprone, Elbow, and other scholars, we don’t yet have a rhetorical perspective on a technique whose long-time advocates have only recently turned to the offices of rhetoric. Instead, we have the beginnings of several, sometimes related rhetorical perspectives. The work of de Beaugrande, Hake and Williams, Strong, Bartholomae, Hartwell and LoPresti, Laib, Palacas, Elbow, Comprone, and one or two others begins to link the devoted labors of sentence combiners to the most primary and necessary rhetorical canon: invention. If other knowledgeable rhetoricians—such as Frank D’Angelo, E. P. J. Corbett, John Gage, Ross Winterowd, Lisa Ede, Marie Secor, and James Berlin—were to join the debate, the result would be salutary. (I would like O’Hare to join as well.) And, eventually, our students may learn that invention and discovery are inseparable from style.

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Beverly L. Clark, *Talking about Writing: A Guide for Tutor and Teacher Conferences*. The University of Michigan Press, 1985. 225 pages.

Who Is Tutoring Whom?

The popularity of writing center instruction is clearly on the rise. Writing center-based teaching, which twenty years ago had been used only at a few schools and primarily with their underprepared students, now seems to be used