3. For expressions of this philosophy of education by renowned nineteenth-century figures, see Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Modern Education," and the views of Henry Barnard, founder of the *American Journal of Education,* first U.S. Commissioner of Education, and organizer of the U.S. Bureau of Education. Barnard expresses this creed: "The education of a people bears a constant and most pre-eminently influential relation to its attainments and excellences—physical, mental, and moral. . . . [T]he history of education affords the only ready and perfect key to the history of the human race, and of each nation in it—an unfailing standard for estimating its advance or retreat upon the line of human progress" (qtd. by Downs 123).

4. Mann was one of the foremost educators in the first half of the century and one of the chief architects of the modern system of education in the United States. He created the Massachusetts Board of Education and was first secretary for several years. His annual reports to the board are now regarded as landmark documents in the history of education. Mann believed that public education for all was essential to a healthy democracy. Applebee confirms that Mann approved of rhetoric because it "offered a 'scientific' rigor and discipline" (39).

5. Gilman was president of the University of California, 1872–75, before accepting the position at Johns Hopkins. Gilman was one of the leading figures during the expansionist period between 1870 and 1890, during which offerings at universities became far more diversified. For other works by Gilman on higher education see his *University Problems in the United States.*

6. Other educators who promoted this view included Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, and John Bascom, president of the University of Wisconsin from 1874 to 1887 and author of the highly regarded *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1888). Like Gilman, Eliot was one of the leading philosophers of higher education in the latter decades of the century. Although a less well known figure, Bascom wrote extensively on the aims of higher education. Bascom perceived the college to be a place at which the individual could develop mental abilities that contribute to the social good. See James, *Charles W. Eliot,* and "The Mind of John Bascom," in Curti and Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin.*

7. The mental abilities that Broadus defines here were associated with the study of rhetoric, belles lettres, and literature. For an analysis of nineteenth-century educators' views of the general relevance of instruction in English and literature to the development of mental discipline, see Graff. For an analysis of the influence of the mental discipline philosophy on Canadian higher education in particular, see Johnson, "Rhetoric and Belles Lettres."

8. Frederick Augustus Porter Barnard was president of the University of Mississippi between 1850 and 1858 and chancellor from 1858 to 1861. He assumed the presidency of Columbia College in 1864 and was the guiding force in the development of Columbia into a major university and research institution. Barnard College for women is named after him. Like Eliot of Harvard and Bascom of Wisconsin, Barnard was a champion of women's education.

9. Like his contemporary Horace Mann in the United States, Egerton Ryerson promoted the common school movement in Canada; he also pressed for the development of institutions of higher learning in Canada. Committed to the notion that education develops the mind and the Christian virtues, Ryerson defined higher education as that level of education which cultivates the mind to the highest extent: "Man is made for physical, mental, and moral action; and the grand object of education is to develop, improve, and perfect, as far as possible, his physical, mental and moral faculties. . . . education signifies the cultivation of the mind by means of Schools and Colleges" (9). For background on Ryerson see McDonald and Chaiton; for an analysis of Ryerson's contribution to the development of English studies and the discipline of rhetoric in Canada, see Hubert.

Sharon Crowley

"The Methodical Memory on Display: The Five-Paragraph Theme"

A popular conceit among eighteenth-century rhetorical theorists characterized the relation between thought and its expression as analogous to that between soul and body. George Campbell employed the analogy in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* as follows:

> In contemplating a human creature, the most natural division of the subject is the common division into soul and body, or into the living principle of perception and of action, and that system of material organs by which the other receives information from without, and is enabled to exert its powers. . . . Analogous to this, there are two things in every discourse which principally claim our attention, the sense and the expression; or in other words, the thought and the symbol by which it is communicated. These may be said to constitute the soul and the body of an oration, or indeed of whatever is signified to another by language. For, as in man, each of these constituent parts hath its distinctive attributes, and as the perfection of the latter consisteth in its fitness for serving the purposes of the former, it is precisely with those two essential parts of every speech, the sense and the expression. (32)

Campbell's metaphoric distinction between an inner core and an outer envelope endured within current-traditional thought. To supply only one example of its many appearances, I quote Day in the *Art of Discourse:* "No process of art is complete until its product appears in a sensible form; and language is the form in which the art of discourse embodies itself, as sound furnishes the body in the art of music and color in that of painting" (208). In the modern rhetorical systems I am examining here, language was treated as a pliant medium that exactly represented thought. Thought, the "soul," "interior," or "core" of discourse, always preceded, and was superior to, language, which was a secondary, fallen, exterior embodiment of what was really important.

Because language had only one function—to mirror thought—the function of arrangement came to be very like that of style in current-traditional rhetoric.

Both served to externalize the internalized process of invention. Where arrangement made graphic the larger movements of mind, such as analysis or synthesis, style made graphic its connections between simple ideas. Indeed, early current-traditional rhetoricians acknowledged this likeness between the two canons by submerging their treatment of arrangement within that given to style. For example, Alexander Jamieson included arrangement in his general remarks on style in his *Grammar of Rhetoric and Polite Literature* (originally published 1818).[1] Samuel Newman also placed his very brief treatment of arrangement in the *Practical System of Rhetoric* under the heading of style.

Thus many current-traditional authors maintained that rhetoric, and hence composition, had only two canons: invention and style. Arrangement, suspended as it was between the binaries of thought and expression never quite found a comfortable home in their textbooks. Occasionally it was submerged within invention, as when various sorts of aims were associated with their respective orders of development within genres. Of course this was made possible by the two-faced nature of method, which could both direct the progress of thought and exactly represent that progress in discourse.

Despite all of this, current-traditional authors were very concerned with arrangement, even though they no longer gave that name to the disposition within a discourse of its larger parts or divisions. Two developments characterized mature current-traditional treatments of the arrangement of discourse on a page: the hardening and reduction of methodical principles into the trinity of unity, coherence, and emphasis and the emergence of what I call the "nesting approach" to composing.

EARLY COMMENTARY ON ARRANGEMENT

In *On Invention*, Cicero discriminated six parts that could appear in any rhetorical discourse: the introduction, which readied audiences to receive the argument; the narration, which gave the history of the case; the partition, which announced the issues that would be addressed and the order in which the rhetor would address them; the confirmation and refutation, which presented the rhetor's arguments for the case and against those offered by opponents; and the peroration or conclusion, which excited enthusiasm for the rhetor's argument or set the audience against the case advanced by opponents (2.20–190).

The arrangement of any discourse was determined by the rhetor's assessment of the rhetorical situation for which she was preparing. For example, the composition of an introduction was determined by her guess about the attitude of the targeted audience toward her ethos and the case at hand. Were they hostile? Did she need to be conciliatory? Or were they receptive, so that she could begin more directly? If the audience were familiar with the case, the rhetor could dispense with the narration of its history; if the audience were uninformed and there was no skilled opponent, a refutation was unnecessary. In other words, the

composition and arrangement of the parts of the discourse were determined by the rhetor's informed guess about how listeners or readers would react.

Current-traditional discourse theory, on the other hand, painted listeners and readers as curiously docile. They were never hostile or inattentive—they were just interested. Writers needed only to arrange their discourse, then, in a fashion that would ease the reading process—that would, in fact, reflect the way any reasonable person might have written it, according to the natural dictates of the rational mind.

Alexander Jamieson was among the few current-traditional rhetoricians who drew on Cicero's six-part division of the oration for his principles of arrangement. However, he updated the classical treatment by adding some methodical refinements to his discussion of the partition—just as Hugh Blair had. While Cicero had only recommended that the partition be stated briefly, clearly, and concisely, Jamieson noted that the division of the subject ought to follow "the order of nature"; otherwise it should be "concealed." He recommended natural method (analysis) for general use since it moved from the simple to the complex and was appropriate for any discourse, such as a sermon, where "division is proper to be used." In this case, the parts of the division must be "really distinct from one another." They should begin "with the simplest points, such as are easiest apprehended." Taken together, the "several members of a division ought to exhaust the subject." Their terms ought to be absolutely clear, and "unnecessary multiplication of heads" was to be avoided (249). Observance of these careful methodical procedures, Jamieson thought, would insure that any similarly rational reader could follow the writer's train of thought.

This is the last we hear of Ciceronian arrangement in mainstream current-traditional textbooks, however. Newman's treatment of arrangement, which occupied perhaps a single page of his textbook, was suffused with methodical principles much like those advanced by George Campbell. Newman suggested that the arguments in a discourse ought to be arranged synthetically, since this method was more natural given that "men usually assert their opinions, and then assign the reasons on which they are founded." However, "if what is asserted is likely, either from its being novel, or uncommon, or from its being opposed to the prejudices of the reader, to disaffect him, and to prevent his due consideration of the arguments brought forward, it is better to . . . defer the formal statement of the proposition maintained to the close" (37). This is analysis, couched in the "concealed" or "hidden" method of presentation recommended by Blair and Watts.

As Campbell and Priestley had done, Newman made some comments on transitions. As generic lines altered, conventional classical means of marking the major sections of discourse were not so ubiquitous nor so familiar to educated readers as they once had been. Newman noted that transitions were not so important in argumentative discourse, "where the different parts are connected by a common reference to some particular point" (38). Since argumentative discourse was the genre to which classical lore about arrangement was most often applied, its conventions regarding the disposition of its parts were well known, and thus argument needed fewer explicit transitions.

Transitions were crucial, however, in those sorts of discourse that followed the newer analytic approach. Newman wrote that transitions were to be "natural and easy, that is, in agreement with the common modes of associating the thoughts" (38). They were most skillfully employed when they represented resemblance, cause and effect, or contiguity as to time or place. Newman's interest in transitions as a means of representing mental patterns of association marked his work as indebted to the new rhetoric, insofar as the accurate linguistic representation of mental connections had become crucial to readers' ability to follow an argument. Later current-traditional rhetoricians identified the methodical principle of coherence with the ability to make appropriate transitions between the parts of discourse.

THE GANG OF THREE: UNITY, COHERENCE, AND FRIEND

Method came into its own in mature current-traditional rhetoric as a means of amplification. Textbook authors set forth dispositional formulas that prescribed which formal features ought to characterize every finished piece of discourse. Some of these formulas were derived from method.

As I noted earlier, advocates of method employed it during the discovery process in the hope of reducing the intrusion of unpredictable factors that might extend the investigation forever. The concept of unity (also called clarity) allowed investigators to impose arbitrary limits on the area roped off for investigation. A second concept, called variously distinction, division, or progression, insured that the investigation touched systematically on every point that could be deemed relevant to the notion under study. That unity and progression were part of the history of logic was never acknowledged by the current-traditional rhetoricians who adopted it as an inflexible principle of amplification. They took great pains to establish unity as a natural and necessary principle of discourse at every level from the sentence on up to whole compositions.

The importation of method into current-traditional rhetoric as a means of amplification owed a good deal to two influential midcentury rhetoricians, Henry Noble Day and Alexander Bain. Throughout his explication of the means of amplification in the *Elements of Rhetoric*, Day insisted on the absolute observance of two requirements: unity and completeness. In explanatory discourse, the principle of unity required "that the conception which forms the theme, be one. This one conception, however, may be simple or complex; may embrace but one individual or a class" (53). This passage indicates that, for Day, unity meant representation in discourse of a single idea as this term was used in association psychology—that is, of an idea that had resulted from a simple perception or a combination of perceptions.

But Day had a fetish about unity, which was apparently a self-evident principle of discourse for him. In his discussion of invention in general, he argued that "unless the object of speaking be distinctly perceived and that object be strictly one, the inventive faculty has no foothold at all, or, at least, no sure standing and

all of its operations must be unsteady and feeble" (44). Unity was to be secured in discourse, then, not only by selecting a single subject for development, but by choosing but "one leading object to be effected" (43). Elsewhere, Day argued that since discourse was a rational procedure, any "discourse can hardly with propriety be called one which has more than one general theme. The unity of a discourse in which, indeed, lies its very life, requires that there be but one thought to which every other shall be subordinate and subservient, utterly forbids the introduction of two or more co-ordinate thoughts" (38). To take Day's remarks quite literally, every discourse is to represent one whole thought and the relation of its parts, since this thought in its turn represents a combination of the rhetor's aim with her mental representation of some object perceived in nature. Observance of the principle of unity apparently insured that all discourses that observed it would be eminently readable, since they announced themselves as representations of single thought units.

By the time Day wrote the *Art of Discourse*, the laws of unity and completeness had been joined by two others—selection and method. Unity, selection, completeness, and method were to govern amplification in every genre, although he gave them their fullest explication in connection with explanatory discourse.

In his later work Day took even fewer pains to justify the necessity of unity than he had previously. He noted that unity was "founded in the nature of all discourse as a rational procedure" (60). He then referred his readers to two other sections of his text, in each of which he made a circular argument for the necessity of unity. Since unity required that a discourse have only one subject, it was important that writers center their discourse around a single thought, so that their work would have unity (44, 51).

The law of selection reinforced unity in that selection was "grounded in the necessity of excluding some of the infinite variety of subordinate thoughts or views through which the general theme may be developed" (Day, *Art of Discourse* 60). The law of completeness was also mandated by the rational nature of discourse and provided for a "full exhibition of the theme for the object proposed" (62). The laws of unity, selection, and completeness, taken together, repeat Descartes' injunction that any investigation be characterized by clarity and distinction. The laws mandated that writers concentrate on a single whole, that they divide it into its constituent parts, and that all of the resulting parts be enumerated.

When unity, selection, and completeness were used as means of amplification, they repeated methodical advice for analyzing the proposition, now applied on the scale of the whole discourse; that is, the organization of the entire discourse would now repeat the analytic moves that were appropriate to establishing the proposition and its parts, and thus the structure of whole essays would now reflect the structure of their propositions on a larger scale. Here Day employed the micro-macrocosmic vision that was characteristic of method: smaller parts repeat and fit neatly into larger parts.

What was left, then, was to provide some advice about progression, which Day did in his discussion of the law of method. The law of method had to govern invention since to proceed methodically was to exert the activity of the mind "freely, fully, and successfully," that is, "as it proceeds in accordance with the laws of its own

nature." He was further confident that the laws of the mind were consonant with those of nature, "so that the mind . . . must be proceeding at the same time in accordance with the principles of truth." Nonetheless method, however natural, had to be studied and applied in discourse so that it could form and strengthen "those habits of methodical thinking" that were the indispensable condition of all rational progress. "A mind trained to habitual activity in method has reached its true maturity of training. Without this, it is essentially deficient in its culture" (*Art of Discourse* 61). The constant study and practice of discourse could be justified on the ground that it immersed its students in the exercise of method; method in turn exercised the mind along its natural lines and thus strengthened it.

To some extent the four laws of method supplanted the classical list of means of amplification that Day had formerly favored. The resulting discussion looks a lot more like Watts' list of rules for method as presentation than anything derived from classical rhetoric. Day could have found an early connection between method and the amplification of scientific discourse in Priestley's *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. It seems more likely, however, that the connection suggested itself simply because explanatory discourse took science as its subject, and thus method, as the discovery process that took nature as its model, was appropriate to it.

However, Day was not alone in utilizing methodical means of amplification. Alexander Bain also derived his famous principles for the formulation of acceptable paragraphs from method.[2] His innovative departure from tradition in this regard did not lay in the principles themselves but rather in his interest in paragraphs, which had received virtually no modern attention prior to the publication of the first edition of *English Composition and Rhetoric*.

Bain justified his attention to paragraphs by means of "an old homely maxim," borrowed from the methodical tradition, which posited that smaller units of discourse should always bear a microcosmic relation to larger units. As he put it: "Look to the paragraphs and the discourse will look to itself, for, although a discourse as a whole has a method or plan suited to its nature, yet the confining of each paragraph to a distinct topic avoids some of the worst faults of composition; besides which, he that fully comprehends the method of a paragraph, will also comprehend the method of an entire work" (151). Like Day, Bain authorized the micro-macrocosmic view of discourse that characterized late current-traditional thought.

Bain defined "the Paragraph" as "a collection of sentences with unity of purpose" (142). His requirements for their formation can be summarized as follows: paragraphs must have (1) coherence, which demanded explicit reference and use of conjunctions; (2) parallel construction, which mandated that sentences that express ideas roughly equal in weight be presented as grammatically equivalent to one another; (3) a clear statement of the topic in the opening sentence; (4) an absence of dislocation, which required that sentences succeed one another in some logical sequence, the preferred descent being from the general to the particular; (5) unity, so that the writer could make her purpose immediately apparent to readers and avoid digression; (6) due proportion between principal and subordinate statements (142–52).

Bain's concern for the major requirements of method—unity and progression—is apparent in these principles. Every paragraph was to represent one whole thought and the relation of its parts, since this representation in its turn represented some object in nature. Observance of the principles insured that all paragraphs would be eminently readable, since they announced themselves as representations of a single thought, idea, or notion.

Unity was secured by observance of the fifth and third principles. Each paragraph would be opened by a sentence that stated its contents in general form. This sentence came to be called the topic sentence, and it owes its genesis to synthetic method. Given the ubiquitous assumption in methodical theory that larger units of discourse reflect the structure and movement of smaller ones, Bain may have derived his principle of the topic sentence by analogy with the proposition that was to govern the direction of the entire discourse—just as Day had done. The presence of the topic sentence gave further assurance that unity would be observed in the paragraph that followed.

Progression required that all parts of the discourse be explicitly related to one another. Bain refined this principle to insist that sentences within a paragraph be ordered by means of some discernible sequence, preferably from the general to the specific. Bain's second and fourth principles—parallel construction and logical sequence—are reminiscent of synthetic method, where they were standard means of division. His preference for a descending order of generality could have been dictated by methodical tradition, which usually recommended synthetic method as a means of arranging material that had already been discovered. Or he could have chosen synthesis out of concern for his audience; synthetic method was always the recommended movement for discourse aimed at learners, and *English Composition and Rhetoric* itself employs a synthetic movement. Of course, Bain's avowed allegiance to science—which he defined as the production of useful generalizations—could also have dictated the precedence of generality.

Observance of the first principle secured surface coherence in any paragraph. This would be represented by the selection of appropriate transitions, which announced the logical relation of each sentence to those that preceded and followed it. Principle six, which required that writers show a due awareness of the relationships that obtain between levels of generality, was a traditional methodical means of insuring distinctiveness. This last principle was refined by Bain's imitators into a rule requiring that all discourse demonstrate something called mass or proportion or emphasis.

My hunch that Bain derived these principles out of method is lent support not only by the interesting analogies that obtain between his rules and older lists of laws governing presentational method such as Watts', but by some affinities with other contemporary applications of the law of method, such as Day's. For example, the methodical interest in a clear statement of the "leading inquiry" or proposition is apparent in his second principle. What is new is Bain's systematization of a long conceptual tradition governing patterns of inquiry into inflexible rules for paragraph development. In a sense, his principles of the paragraph complete the process I have been tracing, a process that shifts the ultimate

responsibility for the ordering of discourse away from the steps gone through during inquiry and onto the way that discourse is supposed to look on the page.

Bain's principles were widely adopted by later current-traditional textbook writers, perhaps because his was the first popular composition textbook to pay extended attention to paragraphs as separate units of composition. Certainly current-traditional textbook authors have more often treated his principles as rules to be employed in the amplification of paragraphs than in essays, which were usually to be amplified by the expository means of development. At the very least, Bain's application of methodical principles to the development of paragraphs exacerbated the emerging tendency of nineteenth-century composition theory to concentrate on the shape of discourse, rather than on its contents or on the persons who compose and read it.[3] His rules for paragraph formation must also have accelerated the tendency of school rhetoric to assume that universal rules could be generated for the composition of almost any discourse, regardless of its occasion.

Scott and Denney adapted a conflation of Day's and Bain's methodical principles in order to forge their "laws of the paragraph" for *Paragraph-Writing*. The law of unity required "that the sentences composing the paragraph be intimately connected with one another in thought and purpose. . . . [U]nity forbids digressions and irrelevant matter" (4). The law of selection mandated that "of all which might be said on the subject treated, only those points be chosen for mention in the sentences which will best subserve the purpose of the paragraph," while the law of proportion dictated the scope, length, and placement of important points within the paragraph (6). The law of sequence, that is, of method, required "that the sentences be presented in the order which will best bring out the thought" (13).

Scott and Denney did add a new law to the list: variety. This law required "that as much diversity as is consistent with the purpose of the paragraph is introduced." Lest the law of variety be thought to contradict the law of unity, Scott and Denney hastened to add that variety was a matter of length, structure, and order, rather than of thought (*Paragraph-Writing* 15). Here again, the rigid current-traditional distinction between thought and language surfaced. "Artistic" flourishes, such as variety, were always associated with language, and as such, were always subservient to the rules mandating clarity and distinctiveness of thought.

As they had done in the case of the expository means of development, later current-traditional textbook authors recommended a variety of methods for paragraph development. There could be as many as four of these—as in Day—or five or six—as in Scott and Denney or Bain. But mature current-traditional theory more consistently condensed the principles governing the development of paragraphs into three.[4] Genung reduced the paragraph principles to unity, continuity, and proportion, and his influential example may have established the tripartite tradition, although Barrett Wendell may have been complicit in this as well. In his discussion of the whole composition, Wendell extended the principles of unity, coherence, and mass (proportion) to the composition of all discourse at all levels, since the trains of thought they represented were typical of all minds (153–54).

Wendell marshaled the principles as first lines of defense against the confused and disordered state in which ideas presented themselves to writers.

In the methodical tradition, of course, unity was treated as a self-evident principle of discourse, and as I have tried to demonstrate, it was crucial to such thinking. The ubiquity of unity as a primary principle of discourse was no doubt reinforced by teachers' fear that students would bite off more than they could chew in a short discourse; Whately's dictum that no discourse should "enter on too wide a field of discussion" is the primary example (37). But in current-traditional rhetoric, unity came to be conceived as an end in itself to which the flow of all parts of the discourse, even sentences, was to be subordinated.

Continuity or coherence was also necessary to method, since discursive coherence represented the connections made between mental ideas; that is, the connective logic of the mind could be repeated in discourse by selection of the appropriate transitions. This was especially true when the method chosen was analysis, where the connecting links between the parts of the discourse depended upon the associative movement of the writer's mind, rather than on some predetermined or conventional form. Writers employing this method would have to take special care to cue their readers into the movement and relation of their ideas by means of explicit linguistic transitions.

Emphasis, or proportion, may also have derived from method. As formulated originally by Bain, emphasis meant placing generalities in a dominant position so that their relation of primacy over the particulars that supported them was absolutely clear. Barrett Wendell generalized this rule somewhat; he defined emphasis (he called it mass) as the discursive feature governing the relative placement of ideas on the page, no matter what their level of generality. He lamented that sometimes the achievement of coherence interfered with the principle of mass, but he solved this difficulty by announcing that coherence was more important at the beginnings of paragraphs than at their conclusions, where mass assumed predominance (180).

During the twentieth century, unity, coherence, and emphasis increasingly controlled the process of amplification in general. They were to be applied in the composition of all discourse at all levels, no matter what its kind. In some textbooks unity and coherence even got chapters all to themselves. Their observance was often recommended in negative terms. Writers could violate the principle of unity by failing to cover everything associated with the main idea of a paragraph or composition, or they could commit the sin of digression. There were also two ways to violate the principle of coherence. Sentences could follow one another in some illogical order, or the writer could fail to include transitions that signaled the appropriate relations between sentences. The recommended "logical" orders were usually the means of expository amplification, although in some writers these were limited to three orders, all drawn from method: chronology, spatial arrangement, and analysis. Transitions were to announce and track such movements—the inclusion of words and phrases such as *moreover, besides, on the contrary,* or *in conclusion* would constantly cue readers into the method underlying the paragraph or discourse.

In very-current-traditional textbooks, the principles have returned to their original province—the paragraph. They are now generally identified as unity, coherence, and completeness. Very-current-traditional textbooks emphasize that paragraphs are not just any old random assemblage of sentences: "A block of words on a page is not a paragraph merely because it looks like one; it must also *function* like one" (Winkler and McCuen 94). Paragraphs are predictive—for writers as well as readers. Their topic sentences (usually placed at the beginning of the paragraph) announce to readers what will happen in the following sentences, thereby securing unity for the paragraph. Certain transitional words announce the relation of every sentence to those that precede and follow it, and hence coherence is assured. The textbooks sometimes offer question-begging advice about completeness. Writers know that their paragraphs are complete when enough sentences have been supplied to support the topic sentence. Others supplement this advice by calling on the limits of readers' ability to endure hardship. For example, Packer and Timpane say that readers will call it quits when "they find it difficult to retain the overall shape of the argument, or their eyes and mind begin to tire." (170). They do give writers a rule of thumb for estimating completeness, however; paragraphs shouldn't require more than ten sentences, nor should they spread over a whole page.

DISCOURSE AS NESTING BEHAVIOR

The current-traditional preoccupation with the paragraph as an independent unit of discourse is a very curious phenomenon. Scholars have attempted to account for it by connecting it to the rise of literacy (after all, spoken discourse does not break itself into paragraphs). A historical rationale can also be found in the enormous influence exerted on current-traditional rhetoric by Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric*, which spawned Scott and Denney's equally influential *Paragraph-Writing*.

But many current-traditional authors adopted a pedagogical rationale to justify their preference for paragraphs: since paragraphs were shorter than essays, they could be composed with more ease, especially by younger students. Scott and Denney rationalized the entire project of *Paragraph-Writing* in just this way: the paragraph exemplified the principles of discourse in "small and convenient compass so that they are easily appreciable by the beginner" (iv). A student could also "write more paragraphs than he can write essays in the same length of time; hence the character of the work may be made for him more varied, progressive, and interesting" (v). Nor did Scott and Denney overlook the advantage of paragraph exercises to teachers, who would have shorter compositions to evaluate than if they assigned whole essays.

I think that current-traditional focus on the paragraph had a great deal to do with the tradition's reliance on method. Scott and Denney would not so casually have substituted paragraph writing for essay practice were they not confident

that the same principles were at work in both. Paragraphs were a little handier than whole essays as ways of reflecting the movement of minds. The topic sentence with its accompanying details, whose internal relations were rigidly controlled by the principles of coherence and emphasis, constituted a tidy graphic display of unity and progression. Nor can there be any doubt that current-traditional rhetoricians regarded paragraphs as representations of complete thoughts, just as sentences were. For example, in *Writing and Thinking* (originally published 1931) Norman Foerster and J. M. Steadman charged that "scrappy" paragraphs resulted from "a mere fragment of the full-formed idea that lies in the mind but that we are too lazy to call forth" (68).

Paragraphs came into their own because of the methodical habit of viewing the universe of discourse as a collection of increasingly larger repetitions of its smallest elements. After about 1880, textbook authors began to organize their texts according to what might be called the constituent units of discourse: words, sentences, paragraphs, whole compositions. The constituent units of discourse often named chapters or sections of traditional textbooks, as they did, for example, in Adams Sherman Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric*.

In its maturity, current-traditional rhetoric tended to see a composition as a nest of Chinese boxes, in which the smaller parts of discourse—words and sentences—were contained inside, and reflected by, the structure of increasingly larger parts—the paragraph and the essay. In treatises on method, this microcosmic to macrocosmic view of discourse was often illustrated by analogy with the study of grammar, which began with letters, syllables, and words since these were the smallest discernible units and supposedly the least difficult to understand. Once they had mastered these, students were allowed to move on to the study of sentences.

Adams Sherman Hill provided an influential example in the direction of treating larger levels of discourse as reflections of smaller ones. In the most effective arrangement of words, he wrote, "the position of every verbal sign would exactly correspond to that of the thing signified; the order of language would be the order of the thought, and would distinctly indicate the relative importance of every constituent part of the composition" (*Principles of Rhetoric* 129).

Although Hill cited Lord Kames as his authority here, associationism and method seem to be the sources of this line of thought. To recap briefly: the mental entities called ideas were connected in the mind by means of mental operations called associations. Hill apparently thought that ideas and operations ought to be representable in the syntax of the sentence, where the grammatical subject represented an idea and the predicate represented whatever operation was applied to the subject. Thus sentences could represent complete thoughts, just as they did in logical propositions. And, just as "every sentence should contain but one principal assertion; every paragraph should discuss the subject in hand from but one point of view; every essay or discourse should treat of but one subject, and of but one proposition relating to that subject at a time" (159). This is an argument for observance of the principle of unity at all levels of discourse. Hill was equally insistent on the observance of coherence at all levels beyond the sentence: "If a sentence can be put in one place as well as in another, there is a defect somewhere" (157).

Wendell found the principles of unity, coherence, and mass in sentences, paragraphs, and whole compositions. He was able to do this because he firmly separated words from ideas and awarded priority to ideas. In *English Composition* he wrote that once we know "what ideas we wish to group together, the task of finding words for them is immensely simplified" (29-30). Apparently ideas took form in the mind already equipped with unity, which always characterized the immaterial ideas for which material words stood. Coherence was the province of both ideas and words; that is, the associative operations of the mind lent coherence to ideas, while discursive transitions lent coherence to discourse. Mass, however, applied only to words, and, as I already noted, sometimes the achievement of mass got in the way of coherence (34, 180).

Here again a current-traditional writer had difficulty in getting language to lie down and behave itself. Despite his assured tone, Wendell had no little difficulty when he applied his three principles to composition of the sentence, where they were "constantly hampered by good use." He wrote this peculiarity off as a result of the vagaries of English grammar (120). Good use never stood in Wendell's way when he set about the business of applying his three principles to the production of discourse at all levels.

Later current-traditional authors imported the principles into their discussions of syntax in an attempt to demonstrate that individual sentences could display unity, coherence, and emphasis. The principles also appeared in some twentieth-century textbooks as principles of composition for essays and paragraphs. In sum, later current-traditional textbooks created a grammar of discourse, where whole discourses were reflective sums of their parts. Just as sentences combined subjects with predicates, paragraphs named their subjects in an opening sentence, to which its body bore one or another of a series of predicated relationships. Whole compositions, in their turn, displayed thesis statements that were analogous to topic sentences; the ordering of the paragraphs and their relation to the whole composition and to each other mirrored the ordering of sentences within a paragraph and their relation to each other. Wendell provided his readers with a fine statement of the nesting theory of arrangement when he wrote that "a paragraph whose unity can be demonstrated by summarizing its substance in a sentence whose subject shall be a summary of its opening sentence, and whose predicate shall be a summary of its closing sentence, is theoretically well massed" (129). Here is method with a vengeance; Peter Ramus would feel right at home.

Because they adopted a word-sentence-paragraph approach to composition, textbooks often postponed work with essays, preferring to begin with grammar and syntax and moving through the composition of paragraphs to whole essays. The difficult character assigned to essays assumed, of course, that the bigger parts of discourse were harder to write—an assumption that seems to contradict the assertion that all parts of a discourse display the same principles.

The tendency of current-traditional composition theory to structuralize concepts that were formerly means of invention and to disperse them graphically within a theme as components of its arrangement saw its most striking manifestation in the paradigm discourse espoused by many twentieth-century current-

traditional textbooks—the five-paragraph theme. This ideal discourse was a standard to be imitated whenever students wrote. The standard was formal rather than conceptual; that is, a set of static relations dictated the placement on the page of certain structural features of the text. The five-paragraph theme had a paragraph of introduction, three of development, and one of conclusion. Each of the developmental paragraphs was initiated by a topic sentence summarizing the body of the paragraph.

If there was a conceptual movement within this paradigm, it was from general to particular. By virtue of this synthetic movement, the parts of the discourse fit neatly into one another. Just as essays contained thesis and body paragraphs that specified the thesis, paragraphs contained topic and body sentences that specified the topic of each paragraph. The model five-paragraph theme could be laid out on the page with the aid of colored lines, boxes, and arrows. Discourse had shape. Shape was clarified by analogy to funnels, pyramids, or keyholes. (I borrow these metaphors from Sheridan Baker's *The Practical Stylist* [1962]).

Of course the five-paragraph theme is a graphic representation of the introspective model of invention I traced in earlier chapters. This paradigm appeared as a methodical process for arranging didactic discourse in Adam Smith's lectures in the 1760s. It was still appearing in current-traditional textbooks written two hundred years later. But by the middle years of the twentieth century, the synthetic process was more often treated as a graphic structure than a means of invention.

The five-paragraph theme was the most thoroughgoing scheme for spatializing discourse that had appeared in rhetorical theory since Peter Ramus' method of dichotomizing division rendered all the world divisible by halves. Indeed, it is no doubt indebted to method, as this entered traditional composition theory via Bain's paragraph principles and Day's laws of amplification, and was translated to twentieth-century textbook authors in the guise of Wendell's three principles of discourse. The five-paragraph theme was prescribed to students in the absence of a historical context; it was simply touted as the way things are done. The intellectual contexts originally recommended for the use of synthesis had disappeared from the tradition entirely, as had the psychological arguments that made it analogous to the movement of the human mind in acts of communication.

WRITING INSTRUCTION AS SOCIALIZATION

In 1936, I. A. Richards was invited to Bryn Mawr to lecture on rhetoric. In those lectures, subsequently published as *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), he fired several well-aimed salvos at textbook exemplars of both the new rhetoric and current-traditional rhetoric. Accusing them of "poking the fire from the top," he dismissed much of the advice they gave as irrelevant to rhetorical practice. Most telling of all, he launched a direct attack on the current-traditional notion that language could be separated from thought: "An idea or a notion, when unencumbered and undisguised, is no easier to get hold of than one of those oiled and

naked thieves who infest the railway carriages of India. Indeed an idea, or a notion, like the physicist's ultimate particles and rays, is only known by what it does. Apart from its dress or other signs it is not identifiable" (5). Richards' critique seems to have had little impact on the current-traditional juggernaut. He may have put his finger on one reason for its longevity when he characterized its strictures about discursive deportment as "the Club Spirit." As he noted, the club spirit enlisted language as a servant of manners, specifically those of "a special set of speakers. . . . Deviations from their customs is incorrectness and is visited with a social penalty as such" (78).

Current-traditional concern with mannerly discourse can be explained in part by the institutional circumstances in which college composition has always been taught. At least one introductory composition course has been required of students entering American colleges ever since the late nineteenth century.[5] At the turn of the twentieth century, the huge numbers of students who were required to take one or two introductory writing courses simply swamped the resources of most college and university English departments, which were just then emerging as representatives of an independent academic discipline. The immediate solution to the numbers difficulty was to develop a composition course that could be taught to many students at once, through lectures and readings. And if the theory of composition used were highly formalized, the work of grading papers could be simplified, since harried teachers could ignore the content of their students' themes and would only need to assess the degree of their conformity to the formal features prescribed by the lectures and the textbook. Students needed only to demonstrate that their writing conformed to standards that had been devised as measures of their work before they ever set foot inside the academy.

But herein lies an irony. Of all the subjects commonly taught in university curricula, composition is no doubt the skill least amenable to standardized instruction. Writing is best taught and learned through individual effort and attention. As Wallace Stegner pointed out in 1950, "anyone writing honestly creates and solves new problems every time he sits down at his desk. Nobody can solve them for him in advance, and no teacher had better try" (431).[6] And yet current-traditional pedagogy rests on this very assumption—that students' inventional processes can be forecasted, their difficulties anticipated, and their inadequacies named, in advance.

I am prepared to grant that the authors of current-traditional textbooks imported standardized techniques into writing instruction in order to render its demands on teachers less onerous. No doubt the textbooks composed by Wendell and the others were attractive because they provided a list of universal prescriptions that made evaluation of students' papers a routine matter. Wendell's text supplied teachers and students of composition with a small set of discursive principles that could be applied at any level of discourse with the same degree of analytical rigor. His system articulated three unequivocal rules that would determine how any completed discourse should look. Teachers had only to measure each student's discourse against the standardized ideal discourse in order to gauge a given paper's relative success or failure.

However, late nineteenth-century attempts to standardize composition instruction may have sprung from motives other than that of relieving composition teachers from some of the burden of paper grading. Evelyn Wright argues that socialization was a hidden agenda in most language arts instruction during the late nineteenth century. According to Wright, elementary schoolteachers were held "responsible for saving children from grammatical-rhetorical sins by which their personal character was judged"; that is, students' failure to meet universally imposed standards of good form was interpreted as a sign of inadequate moral development rather than an indication that the standards might have been insufficiently considered" (332).[7] And as Wright remarks in connection with a series of popular elementary textbooks, "When rules of courtesy or school deportment are smuggled into English lessons as if they are an intellectual discipline or a law of language or of thought, then the lesson obscures the social issues and apotheosizes middle-class manners by associating them with the sentence definition" (333). In other words, language arts instruction was efficiently (because silently) geared to include those whose manners and class it reflected. Those whose manners were not middle-class either adapted or were excluded.

Wright's analysis holds for college-level textbooks as well. The textbook series she excoriates in the passage above was written by Gardiner, Kittredge, and Arnold, whose college-level text, *A Manual of English Composition* (1907) was singled out for attack by Richards. In his review of the history of nineteenth-century rhetoric, Donald C. Stewart asserts that "late nineteenth-century composition theory and practice was less a response to the social and educational needs of the time and more a reflection of a select class's wrong-headed attitudes about the importance of usage and superficial editorial accuracy" ("Introduction" 230). That current-traditional textwriters saw their work in terms of the socialization of their charges was usually not acknowledged explicitly in their textbooks, but it came through loud and clear nonetheless. As Stewart noted, it showed up in their discussions of correct usage, which was consistently presented as the mark of an "educated person." It was also implicit in their pervasive assumption that unremitting practice in a prescribed discursive format would not only encourage the practice of straight thinking but would virtually insure it.

The formal standards the textbooks imposed on student writers reflected ethical and social values fully as much as intellectual ones. A discourse marked by unity, coherence, and emphasis, stringently construed, would of necessity reflect a strong sense of limitations, of what was possible, as well as a grasp of the proper relations of things within the universe.

The discursive imperatives imposed by these limitations was felt so strongly by James Fernald as to lead him to remark in his textbook that no distraction, no matter how beautiful, was to be admitted into a discourse: writers "must have the moral courage severely to cut down or cut out what is good and beautiful, if it leads away from the main theme and plan." To do so, Fernald continued, was to make the necessary "sacrifice to unity" (416).

True enough, rejection of the approved conventional form could produce discourse that was fragmented or digressive. But the authors of many current-tra-

ditional textbooks were concerned with more than wayward discourse. As one set of authors remarked in 1922, "It is desirable to preserve in composition the graces of social life: quietness of manner, moderation in the expression of judgments, the tone of persuasion rather than that of command—in a word, the group of civilized qualities that may be summed up in *urbanity*" (Thomas, Manchester, and Scott 13). The institutional project of current-traditional rhetoric, it seems, was to produce quiescent, moderate, and solicitous student discourse. I suspect that, as with most things in life, current-traditional rhetoricians got just what they asked for.

NOTES

1. The *Grammar of Rhetoric* went through at least twenty-four editions in this country prior to 1844, something over one edition a year. Jamieson was read in many American colleges during the 1820s and 1830s and was used at some schools in conjunction with Blair and Campbell. Jamieson cited Campbell as his authority on style and mentioned Blair and Kames as the mentors of his discussion of taste. Despite these demurrers, Jamieson's text is so thoroughly indebted to Blair that it might fairly be called a summary or redaction of the *Lectures on Rhetoric*—which explains its late appearance in this book, since Blair's rhetorical theory was oriented toward style and arrangement rather than invention.

2. I seem to be alone in connecting Bain's paragraph principles with method. Rodgers argues that Bain deduced these principles by making an analogy between paragraphs and sentences. Shearer disputes this interpretation in "Genesis of Paragraph Theory," arguing Bain's possible indebtedness to Murray's *English Grammar*, as well as other contemporary sources. Kitzhaber discusses Bain's possible indebtedness to Angus' *Handbook of the English Tongue* (245). Lunsford rejects Rodgers' argument that Bain derived his principles deductively.

3. Ong notices a parallel movement in the confluence of printing with Ramus' popularization of method. Ong writes that "the diagrammatic tidiness which printing was imparting to the realm of ideas was part of a large-scale operation freeing the book from the world of discourse and making it over into an object, a box with surface and 'content' " (311). Ong sees this movement as taking the logical concept of "place" literally; that is, a seat or locus of argument became, in the farthest extension of method, a structure on the page.

4. Kitzhaber attributes unity, coherence, and emphasis to eighteenth-century principles of style (183–84). Indeed, the notion that sentences were to represent a complete thought can be traced via associationism to eighteenth-century discussions of style. See, for example, Campbell's discussion of perspicuity in book 2 of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Cautions about the necessity for sentences to display unity appear in current-traditional textbooks written throughout the nineteenth century. But it was only in mature current-traditional theory that all three principles were marshaled into service on all levels of discourse. For another discussion of current-traditional treatments of unity, coherence, and emphasis, see Connors, "Static Abstractions."

5. Some institutions allow some students to exempt themselves from the composition requirement—but this possibility makes the requirement itself nonetheless universal. The universal requirement was suspended in many institutions during the late 1960s and early 1970s, thanks to students' assertion of its irrelevance to their education. However, it was

firmly back in place in many institutions by 1975 or so. The benefits of the composition requirement to the academy are enormous. Because the composition course is institutionalized as freshman English, faculty across the university can ignore their responsibility to inculcate literate skills in their students. If their students' level of literacy is unacceptable, faculty can blame the composition course, which is in place precisely so that they do not have to bother with this supposedly elementary work. Faculty in English departments reap the added benefits of its huge enrollments and cheap labor.

6. Stegner's essay, which was an overt plea for the institutionalization of what is now called creative writing, was a covert diatribe against the structure of English departments and the teaching of writing done in composition classes.

7. I am not arguing that no discursive conventions should be made available to students, nor is Wright. Rather, we are objecting to the current-traditional habit of smuggling middle-class social values into composition instruction by disguising them as inflexible rules for discursive behavior.