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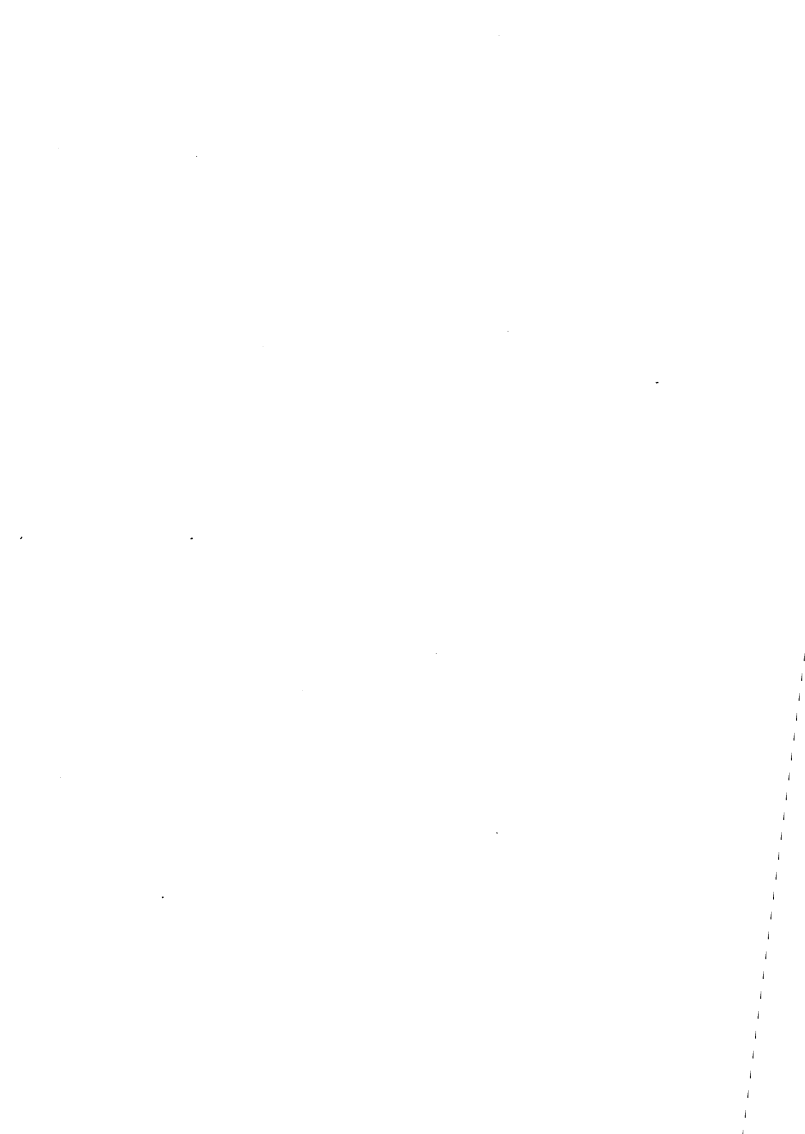in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly
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"What's it going to be then, eh?": Tracing the English paragraph into its second century

Branson, Mark Keith, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1988

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"WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE THEN, EH?":

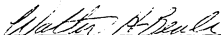TRACING THE ENGLISH PARAGRAPH

INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY

by

Mark K. Branson

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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1988

Approved by

Dr. Walter Beale,
Dissertation Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North
Carolina at Greensboro.

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

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Date of Final Oral Examination

"What's it going to be then, eh?" is borrowed from Anthony

Burgess' novel, A Clockwork Orange. This question appears at the

beginning of each of the four chapters and reinforces Burgess' theme

of choice. Choices are what teachers of writing will have to face as

the paragraphmoves into its second century; these choices will concern

both the theory and the pedagogy of the paragraph.

For over one hundred years, teachers and their students have

had no real choice about what was presented in the writing class about

the paragraph. Though the traditional lore of the paragraph had been

challenged as early as the 1920's, this lore has remained the preemi-

nent practice. This pedagogy, which students hear from the primary

grades through their freshman year, comes from an interesting, but

questionable, psychological model and from a view of language and

discourse woefully uninformed.

The four chapters trace the English paragraph from its beginning

in the 1860's into its second century:

Chapter One shows the pedagogical approach developed and why

it has become the dominant practice.

Chapter Two presents the theory of the paragraphfrom the "proto-

theory" of Alexander Bain and John Genung to the three "standard"

theories of Alton Becker, Francis Christensen, and Paul Rodgers.

Chapter Three moves from theory to practice and argues that

current pedagogy conflicts with the current theories, either by only

giving a nod to what the current theories say or by ignoring current

theory completely. Chapter Three also reports on a challenge to a

study conducted by Koen, Becker, and Young which claimed the "psychological reality" of the paragraph.

Chapter Four follows up the question presented in the Introduction: "What if the traditional paragraph lore is wrong or ineffectual?" This final chapter presents data that show the results of a study comparing the quality of writing of students who received traditional topic sentence instruction with those who received no instruction on topic sentences and paragraph development. The data indicate no significant difference in the quality of writing based on holistic scoring of the essays on a six-point rubric.

"What's it going to be then, eh?" As the paragraph moves into its second century, a clear and urgent need presents itself: the way the paragraph is taught in our schools and colleges needs reevaluation. Teachers may choose to accept the hegemony of the nineteenth century lore. Or they may consider changing their practices as recommended by the current theories. Unlike the first century, teachers do have choices, and the choices are there to be made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The list of people to whom 1 am indebted for their assistance and support in seeing this project through is quite long:

First, 1 must acknowledge the guidance, support and patience of my director, Walter Beale, as well as the rest of my committee: Murray Arndt, Jeutonne Brewer, Donald Darnell, and William Coleman.

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Third, 1 must recognize my family: my wife, Debbie, and my daughters, Tessa and Erin. Over the past ten to twelve months, 1 haven't been much of a husband or father; thanks for being patient.

Mark K. Branson

July 1988

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CAN NOTHING EVER BE BETTER THAN SOMETHING?

"A paragraph is in fact a whole composition in miniature,

. . . . Unity requires that every statement in the

paragraph shall be subservient to one principal affirmation.

This principal affirmation is, of course, the topic sen-

tence, which sets forth the subject of the paragraph. To

this everything that has any right to place in the para-

graph must be related, . . ."

> John G. R. McElroy
> The Structure of English Prose (1885)

"We can think of a paragraph as a topic sentence plus

support. A topic sentence is the main idea of a para-

graph, and everything we have said of thesis sentences

we can also say of topic sentences. . . . They must

announce the subject of the paragraph, tell what will

be said about it, and if all possible, signal the organi-

zation of the paragraph. The supporting sentences are

created by expanding the topic sentence in the same ways

we've looked at expanding thesis sentences. Thus we

think of the paragraph as a tiny essay within an essay

. . . ."

> Daniel Brown and Bill Burnette
> Connections: A Rhetoric and
> Short Prose Reader (1984)

Though these two statements or guidelines about the paragraph are separated by nearly one hundred years, they are remarkably similar: Both speak of topic sentences, both use the model of the paragraph as "an essay writ small." High school teachers or teaching assistants may ask, "But what difference could this make? If the information is correct, it should not matter that time has intervened between the statement of these sound principles?"

The problem, though, is that the principles evident in these two statements have been questioned at different times over the past one hundred years, yet the questions have gone unheeded. Once Alexander Bain and his followers, such as McElroy, set forth the principles of the topic sentence and modes of development, textbooks and teachers have repeated the same lore of the paragraph, even though a growing body of reflection and experience suggest the approach is ineffective or inaccurate.

The present work looks specifically to this question about the effectiveness of topic sentence prescriptions in the traditional paragraph lore. Even though a 1974 empirical analysis of paragraphs from popular magazine articles shows that only 13 percent of the paragraphs in the sample use anything close to the topic sentences prescribed by thousands of teachers year after year (Braddock), the topic sentence remains the focus of much writing instruction found in handbooks and rhetorics. Even today, nearly fifteen years after Richard Braddock's 1974 study on the placement of topic sentences, students read that the topic sentence announces the theme of the paragraph and that the topic sentence must be a preeminent position--

usually the first sentence of the paragraph. These prescriptions occur regardless of Braddock's and others' claims.

Braddock is not the first to ask serious questions about the lore of the paragraph. Fred Scott and Joseph Denny's 1893 <u>Paragraph Writing</u> present a more cautious view of the paragraph and topic sentence than the prescriptions McElroy endorses. Leon Mones, in "Teaching the Paragraph" (1921), asserts, "The English teacher of the old school, nurtured in the rhetorical sunshine of Alexander Bain; succeeded in teaching pages of rhetoric but not much about writing [paragraphs]" (456). The 1958 Conference on College Composition began with the question: "How adequate, from both theoretical and practical points of view, are contemporary views of the paragraph?" (191). This conference was expressly considering the questions of topic sentences and modes of development. In the mid-sixties several articles in <u>College Composition and Communication</u> challenged the traditional theories of the paragraph and established the three major theoretical trends of today--Francis Christensen's notations of the cumulative paragraph, Alton Becker's "tagmemic" approach, and Paul Rodgers' "stadia" of discourse.

Following these theoretical rumblings of the mid-sixties are provocative empirical studies that look hard at the textbook approaches inherited from the nineteenth century. Richard Braddock's 1974 study, "The Frequency and Placement of Topic Sentences" has already been mentioned. Richard Meade and Geiger Ellis' two studies, "Paragraph Development in the Modern Age of Rhetoric" (1970) and "The Use of

Writing Textbook Methods of Paragraph Development" (1971), showed

further that real writers do not follow textbook prescriptions for the

development of their paragraphs. And a 1985 dissertation by Thomas

Utley shows that the tradition of the topic sentence is inadequate in

its account for paragraph structure; this study also claims that of

the three modern theories--Christensen's, Becker's, and Rodgers'--

only Rodgers' stadia of discourse can account for 100 percent of the

paragraphs in the corpus Utley studied.

Given all this research, teachers still find suggestions, such as

Burke and Burnette's, which seem to ignore the questions posed by

Mones, Braddock, or Utley. The pedagogy revealed in Burke and

Burnette's textbook is identical to McElroy's, and before him,

Alexander Bain's.

The following study challenges this traditional approach to the

paragraph with the emphasis on topic sentences and topic sentence

placement which is implicit in Bain's English Composition and Rhetoric

(1870), modified and codified by his followers such as McElroy,

Barrett Wendell, and John Genung, and still preserved in numerous

textbooks today. The challenge may be stated quite simply: Does

traditional paragraph instruction on topic sentences and their place-

ment at the beginning of the paragraph make any difference in the

effectiveness of student writing?

The organization of this dissertation reveals the way I have

chosen to pursue this challenge concerning the effectiveness of topic

sentence instruction. Chapter One reports on the history of this

topic sentence pedagogy and shows that the pedagogy perseveres because of the weight of historical precedent.. "The paragraph has always been taught this way," many teachers claim, "Why change it?"

Chapter Two suggests an answer to this "why change?" question. As Herbert Lewis points out in his 1894 dissertation on the paragraph, the tradition of the topic sentence and the principles of the paragraph are pedagogical in nature, not theoretical. And an analysis of the theory underlying the nineteenth century pedagogy reveals how ill formed the theoretical foundation for the pedagogy is. Bain's principles are shaped by his interest and commitment to associationist psychology and by an uninformed view of the forms and functions of English discourse.

After analyzing the slim theoretical basis of the nineteenth century tradition and tracing modern theories of the paragraph which are far less specious in their assumptions about the human mind and about human language in Chapter Two, Chapter Three shows the implications these modern theories have for classroom practices in contrast to the traditional topic sentence prescriptions. The analysis of these implications considers several issues: (1) What is the tenor of present paragraph instruction—does it hold the line with the nineteenth century prescriptions or does it allow for the theories of Christensen, Becker, and Rodgers? (2) How has this present instruction come about, especially since a growing body of research and theory challenges the topic sentence prescriptions? (3) How—if at all—does the present paragraph instruction differ from actual paragraphs produced by real

writers? (4) Does the present pedagogy regard the evidence about topic sentences, or is the evidence ignored? and (5) Why has the topic sentence instruction survived?

After demonstrating the sheer weight of historical precedents in Chapter One, the theoretical challenges in Chapter Two, and the implications of these challenges in Chapter Three, I present in Chapter Four the findings of a study conducted in 1986 which measures the effectiveness of topic sentence instruction. The study reports on two groups of students at Davidson County Community College who were enrolled in freshman composition. One group received traditional topic sentence prescriptions; the second group received no explicit instruction in the paragraph. This second group was not told about the topic sentence and its placement. The data show that no signif-icant difference appears in the student writing and that no significant difference appeared in the occurrence of topic sentences.

The design of this study (described in detail in Chapter 4) follows, in part, the procedures recommended by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer in Research and Written Composition (1963). In this guide to design and research, we are told that composition research can be structured in such a way as to garner reliable information for statis-tical analysis. Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer tell researchers that a pretest and/or posttest methodology is best suited for compo-sition research. (Since the study reported in Chapter Four is not testing improvement in student writing, but only testing the effective-ness of the topic sentence instruction, I designed the study around a posttest methodology only.)

After eleven weeks of writing, the students were given, as part of their final exam, an in-class essay. These essays were collected and given to a set of readers who evaluated the essays on a six-point rubric used for the holistic scoring of placement essays at the college. [1] Each essay was read and scored independently by two readers. After the readers had evaluated the essays, the students' work was passed to a panel of readers who were directed to look for topic sentences in the paragraphs of the essays. These readers were former high school English teachers and their instructions explained that they were to use the definition of topic sentence that they would have told to their high school classes. The readers simply highlighted sentences that matched what they would characterize as fitting the definition of topic sentence.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis to a statisical reliability of 99 percent accuracy: no significant difference in quality of writing, as measured on a six-point holistic rubric, nor in the number of topic sentences, occurred in the sample. Admittedly, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer concede that researches cannot control for all the potential variables in this sort of posttest study. Time of day for class meeting, class locations, instructors' personalities, and several other environmental factors may affect the students' writing. Nevertheless, this study controlled for overall instruction and methods of scoring, as well as assured an adequate number of students in the population for statistical analysis (a minimum of thirty students in each group). This study is also unique in

that no one (at least through 1985) has attempted to measure quality
of student writing using a holistic rubric and compare this quality to
the occurrence of topic sentences. The closest study, in terms of
topic sentence variance, is Richard Braddock's 1974 "Frequency and
Placement of Topic Sentences in Expository Prose."

The conclusion, which I present in Chapter Four, leaves composi-
tion teachers with two alternatives: either adopt a different approach
to the pedagogy of the paragraph or drop paragraph instruction
completely.

If teachers choose the first alternative, three options present
themselves. The first option is to adopt Frances Christensen's notion
of the cumulative paragraph. This pedagogical model appears in a few
texts[2] and essentially maintains many of the traditional terms (topic
sentence) and prescriptions (TS should be first in the paragraph).
The important difference Christensen offers comes from his designation
of levels of generality. He moves away from the nineteenth century
sentence model which only embraces the subject and the predicate as
structural elements and allows for more complex structural relation-
ships, such as embeddings, in the paragraph structure. Though slow in
garnering support, Christensen's approach seems to be appearing more
and more often in rhetorics and handbooks.

The next option for teachers would be to adopt Becker's tagmemic
approach to the paragraph. His model, which agrees with Christensen's
more complex view of sentence structure, borrows directly from
tagmemic grammar of the sentence and points to both functional and

formal aspects, not just levels of generality. Becker's model uses none of the traditional vocabulary or prescriptions from the nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph. His analysis lends itself to a structural approach that is far less cumbersome than the three or four levels Christensen finds at work in most paragraphs. His work can be found in some textbooks[3], but his model is not as broadly represented in the texts as Christensen's.

The third option teachers have for supplanting the traditional pedagogy is Rodgers' "paragraph blocs" or "stadia of discourse." Rodgers sees discourse as having levels of generality; however, he is convinced that the levels are not always coterminous with the traditional paragraphs discussed in classrooms and in textbooks. These intermediate points, he suggests, are so much left to the whim of the writer that little of substance can be said about their structure except in terms of how the individual paragraphs relate to the larger blocs or stadia. Clearly, this model most radically breaks with the nineteenth century tradition: it does not account for topic sentences nor does Rodgers' concern himself with their placement. My survey of college rhetorics and handbooks revealed that only about two percent of the textbooks allow for paragraphs in keeping with Rodgers[4]. And these two percent treat his stadia or paragraph blocs almost as afterthoughts, for the texts usually present traditional, nineteenth century paragraph pedagogy before acknowledging Rodgers' position.

Of course, if teachers do not want to embrace any of these options, they do have the second alternative listed above--reject the

paragraph altogether as a topic of instruction in writing classrooms.
This position is not found in any textbooks on writing I surveyed for
this dissertation. As mentioned above, the texts may embrace one
modern theorist over another, but all contain some discussion of the
paragraph. Thus, modern textbooks are endorsing the nineteenth century
assertion that the paragraph is a unit of discourse between the sen-
tence and the essay as a whole, simply by preserving the paragraph
prescriptions, even when these "prescriptions" may be inconsistent with
modern theories.

However, after examining the data from the sample collected in
1985, the recommendation I endorse is to delete paragraph instruction
that depends on the nineteenth century model or uses the sentence
model—as do Christensen and Becker. This recommendation comes from
two convictions: (1) the data are too compelling to ignore and (2)
the very nature of the paragraph is so fluid in a classroom environment
that it is better to ignore the paragraph than to contribute to stu-
dents' confusion.

What do I mean by talking about the "fluid" nature of the para-
graph? In any classroom, teachers have to come to terms with at least
three different approaches to paragraphs. The first approach is
labeled "The Rhetorical Approach." This approach looks to the method
of indenting every eight- to ten-typed lines. The Rhetorical Approach,
as Herbert Lewis analyzes it in The History of the English Paragrah
(1894) emerged from a need to mark chunks of discourse for the reader's
eye. This approach is especially fluid because of the impact of

newspaper and magazine printing and business communication on usage.
These areas have significantly influenced our students' sense of
paragraphing.

The second approach to the paragraph my be called "The Struc-
tural Approach." This approach recognizes that paragraphs contribute
in the making of something greater than the sum of the parts. Para-
graphs, regardless of the "rhetorical approach," interrelate in some
manner to create something far more meaningful than each isolated para-
graph. Though marked as a paragraph for "rhetorical" or usage pur-
poses, these paragraphs, when observed from the "structural approach,"
are not self-contained units but belong to larger chunks which are not
always coterminous with five spaces from the left margin.

The third approach to the paragraph, the one most pervasive in
writing classrooms at the secondary and freshman composition levels,
may be called "The Pedagogical Approach." This approach blends the
other two in a curious manner. The ever-changing usage comprehended
in "The Rhetorical Approach" becomes a rigid prescription about para-
graph length. The aspect of invention--discovery of ideas and rela-
tionships while writing--which appears in "The Structural Approach"
becomes reduced to the space of the rhetorical paragraph. In other
words, "The Pedagogical Approach" takes the essence of the other two,
reduces their essence to narrow prescriptions, and then disregards the
other two approaches completely. Paragraphs are self-sufficient units
in the pedagogical approach--units of style or usage and units of
invention. Students are told to be sure their paragraphs are coherent

and well developed, which implies that the other two paragraph
approaches do not exist. The pedagogical approach does not want to
consider the creative intelligence of the student writers nor does it
wish to concede that paragraphs are important only in the ways in which
each paragraph contributes to the making of a whole piece of discourse.

The first two of these three approaches are not mutually exclusive:
writers do think and write in chunks of discourse larger than what
usage allows. The last approach, however, does not tolerate the other
two approaches: it ignores them. Teresa Amabile's recent book on the
creative impulse, The Psychology of Creativity (1983) offers a pro-
vocative gloss on this conflict between approaches to the paragraph and
also illuminates a paradox student writers often find themselves
addressing.

Amabile claims that an essential aspect of creativity is that the
task at hand must be "heuristic rather than algorithmic" (33).
Heuristic, she explains, are tasks "not having a clear and readily
indentifiable path to solution." Algorithmic tasks, on the other hand,
are tasks "for which the path to the solution is clear and straight-
forward." The rhetorical approach and the structural approach to the
paragraph are, by and large, heuristic. No clear solutions offer them-
selves to students as to how often writers should make a paragraph or
how smaller chunks work together to make a meaningful whole. The
pedagogical approach, however, is algorithmic; this approach does lay
out a path for students to follow. That path consists of (1) a topic
sentence in the first position which announces the theme of the

paragraph; after which all paragraphs must (2) be coherent; (3) have adequate development; and (4) address one and only one topic.

The Catch-22 the students encounter in following these prescriptions, however, is that the same teachers who demand this pedagogical or algorithmic approach are the very teachers who bemoan the lack of creativity among their students. Though students are given algorithmic tasks to accomplish, teachers often evaluate the work from a heuristic perspective. This irony and the data presented in Chapter Four compel me to endorse a position which rejects all explicit paragraph instruction in writing classes. Give the students heuristic tasks, this line of reasoning suggests, and they will discover for themselves creative ways to communicate their purposes. They will, through their own reading and writing, come to terms with the rhetorical approach to the paragraph. They will discover what many writing teachers have sought to teach for so long, that writing is liberating and a way of learning, not a drudgery and a penalty.

Thus, the trip through the following four chapters will have brought us to a new beginning. The historical weight of precedent which has aided the survival of the nineteenth century paragraph tradition may be sloughed off by considering the three perspectives the dissertation presents: theoretically, the paragraph can no longer be accepted as a unit of discourse between the sentence and the entire essay; pedagogically, the hegemony of "the pedagogical approach" is slowly giving way to either the other two approaches or some new approach (or non-approach as I would recommend) which is more flexible

and more "heuristic"; empirically, the evidence is mounting to the point where one writer can assert, "I think we can see that concern about paragraphs and their structure is misplaced" (Cooper, 292). Clearly, these conclusions tell teachers that traditional paragraph instruction which focuses on the topic sentence and its placement is at best questionable and at worst, a waste of students' time and instructors' energies.

What will these four chapters contribute to the growing work in composition instruction? Robert Connors' dissertation, "A Study of Rhetorical Theories for College Writing Teachers" (1980), committed a detailed chapter to paragraph pedagogy, and Michael Moran's biblio- graphic essay, "The English Paragraph" (1984) does a superior job of surveying the theoretical developments of the paragraph. Yet both of these works avoid a crucial question for primary teachers, secondary teachers, and teaching assistants at universities throughout the country; What if the traditional method is ineffective or inaccurate? These four chapters work together to answer straightforwardly and unapologetically, "Yes, the traditional method makes no real differ- ence in students' writings."

Is there another method to fill the vacuum if teachers agree to reject the traditional method? Perhaps, but the first and most com- pelling task is to convince teachers that the drill on topic sentence generation and the lectures on topic sentence location do not matter. Other researchers may offer new approaches or be able to modify the traditional approach so that it does make a difference in students'

writing. At this point, however, if teachers can agree that nothing

is better than something, then this dissertation has accomplished

its purpose.

NOTES

[1]The following rubric was developed for holistic scoring of placement

essays at Davidson County Community College (DCCC). This rubric was

modeled after the one used by Miami-Dade Community College for the stu-

dents CLAST essay. Since this rubric was adopted at DCCC, Educational

Testing Service has drawn up a similar rubric for the scoring of essays

for GED equivalency credit.

RUBRIC FOR ESSAYS

6--The essay shows a strong sense of pattern and development from
beginning to end. Assertions are convincingly supported with expla-
nation and/or illustrations that are detailed, concrete, substantial,
and relevant to the purpose of the essay. The writing reflects excel-
lent creativity and/or insights. The word choices are precise, eco-
nomical, and free from cliches or pat answers. The essay as a whole
indicates an outstanding control of edited American English--proper
grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

5--The writing is fluent and has a demonstrable pattern of coherence
where ideas are adequately developed and supported. Connections
between sentences and paragraphs are clear. Sentences reflect a
maturity of style; they are varied in patterns and length and express
the writer's intentions. Word choice is adequate to express the
writer's range of ideas. The writing generally follows the conven-
tions of edited American English. Typically, the essay will contain
only a few "major" errors (s/v disagreement, comma splice, run-on)
and perhaps some of the "minor" errors (pronoun/antecedent disagree-
ment, comma errors, spelling errors, etc.).

4--The essay responds to the assignment and has some discernible pat-
tern of organization. The central idea is apparent, but it is common-
place or too general. Assertions are only minimally supported. The
writing exhibits more of the "major" errors, yet the errors do not
interfere substantially with what the writer is trying to say.

3--The principal idea or point is suggested but is undeveloped or is
treated superficially or in a stereotyped manner. The writing
responds only to part of the assignment and/or doesn't exhibit control

of the assignment. Though the essay may demonstrate a fair under-
standing of the sentence, most of the sentences are short and/or
repetitious. Lapses in edited American English are present and
occasionally interfere with the reading. The vocabulary is often
inadequate for accuracy of expression.

2--The essay is somewhat incoherent and contains irrelevant statements.
The writing does not exhibit clear support for assertions or an
understanding of the importance of linking ideas. The essay doesn't
stay on the topic. Sentences are so tangled that clarity of expres-
sion rarely occurs. Punctuation errors lead to misreading and common
words are spelled with little or not accuracy.

1--The essay suffers from general incoherence and has no pattern of
organization. There is a high frequency of errors--enough to confuse
the reader. There seems to be some general misunderstanding as to what
the assignment asked. The essay is far too brief for an accurate
evaulation.

[2]The following texts make specific reference to Christensen's

rhetoric of the paragraph (the total of texts surveyed was 29):

Adelstein, Michael E. and Jean G. Pival. The Writing Commitment.
     Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1976.

Beale, Walter, Karen Meyers, Laurie White. Stylistic Options:
     The Sentence and the Paragraph. Glenview, IL: Scott
     Foresman, 1982.

Cavender, Nancy and Leonard Weiss. Thinking/Writing. Belmont, CA:
     Wadsworth, 1987.

Howard, C. Jeriel and Richard Francis Tracz. The Paragraph Book.
     Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1982.

Leggett, Glenn, et al. Handbook for Writers, 9th edition.
     Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985.

Lannon, John M. The Writing Process: A Concise Rhetoric. Boston:
     Little Brown, 1983.

Neman, Beth. Writing Effectively. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill,
     1983.

Reinking, James A. and Andrew W. Hart. Strategies For Successful
     Writing: A Rhetoric, Reader, and Handbook. Englewood Cliffs:
     Prentice-Hall, 1988.

West, William W. Developing Writing Skills, 3rd edition.
    Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Windler, Anthony C. and Joe Ray McCuen. Rhetoric Made Plain,
    4th edition. Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1984.

[3]The following texts make use of Becker's tagmemmic theory by encour-

aging students to organize paragraphs using TRI (or some slight modi-

fication) and PS strategies.

Adelstein, Michael E. and Jean G. Pival. The Writing Commitment.
    Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1976.

Corder, Jim W. Contemporary Writing: Process and Practice.
    Tucker, GA: Scott Foresman, 1979.

Duncan, Jeffery L. Writing From Start to Finish: A Rhetoric With
    Readings. Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1985.

Levin, Gerald. The McMillan College Handbook. New York: McMillan,
    1987.

Neman, Beth. Writing Effectively. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill,
    1983.

[4] The following two texts use "paragraph bloc" in much the same way

that Rodgers describes "stadia":

Irmscher, William F. and Harryette Stover. Holt Guide to English:
    The Alternate Edition. New York: Holt, 1985.

Neeld, Elizabeth Cowan. Writing Brief, 2nd edition. Glenview, IL:
    Scott Foresman, 1986.

CHAPTER I

THE WEIGHT OF HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

In his bibliographic essay, "The English Paragraph," Michael
Moran asserts that the "concept of the paragraph is ancient" (425),
citing as evidence the Greek manuscript tradition that segregated
chunks of discourse for various purposes. However, Moran fails to
make two important distinctions between the manuscript tradition and
the English paragraph tradition which emerged in the latter part of
the nineteenth century: First, though the paragraph may have been
around for thousands of years, it was not one of the central elements
of rhetorical instruction--Greek or English--until the last one hun-
dred years. Today, nearly all rhetorical instruction features some
significant discussion of the paragraph. Second, though Moran's
evidence suggests that the essential nature of the paragraph is func-
tional, only in the last two decades have scholars begun to look to
the paragraph's function instead of its form. The insistence on form
arose from the great amount of work produced in the last quarter of
the nineteenth century, and the sheer weight of the work itself along
with the added weight of historical precedent locked rhetorical
instruction into a "pedagogical approach" to the paragraph.

As explained in the introduction, two approaches present them-
selves in the discussion of the paragraph--the rhetorical and the
structural. Both of these approaches are implicit in Moran's

manuscript evidence and in the early writers on the English para-
graph. However, when rhetorical instruction shifted from oral to
written, the paragraph suddenly took on a different and significant
role--a way to teach extended discourse to a heterogeneous group of
students who did not share cultural and literacy experiences. This
practical necessity, coupled with a shaky theoretical premise about
the paragraph being a unit of discourse between the sentence and the
essay as a whole, gave birth to the "pedagogical approach" which sees
the isolated rhetorical paragraphs as units for illustrating methods
of invention. Thus, the isolated paragraphs, the "pedagogical" para-
graphs, became central to instruction in writing.

    This chapter will trace the birth of the "pedagogical paragraph"
and follow the shifting emphasis on form and function. This third
approach, the pedagogical approach, thrives today, even though theo-
retical and empirical evidence increasingly reveals its limitations.
Yet, by the end of the chapter, the reader will understand why this
approach has survived--simply because of the weight of historical
precedent .

Lindley Murray

    One of the earliest writers on the English paragraph was Lindley
Murray, whose reputation was made on his textbook, An English Grammar,
(1816) which went into multiple printings in England and the United
States. It is in An English Grammar that the earliest discussion of
the paragraph appears.

In volume two under the heading "Punctuation," Murray writes two
sentences about the paragraph mark (¶), which "denotes the beginning
of a new subject or a sentence not connected with the foregoing" (412).
A little later in the same section, he discusses the paragraph and sets
forth "rules" that will "afford the student with some instruction."
The four rules are:

   (I) A different subject indicates a need for a paragraph inden-
tion "unless [the paragraphs] are very short, or very small
in compass . . . ."

  (II) Larger divisions of the same subject which are continued "to
a considerable length" should be indented or otherwise
marked as a paragraph. Murray hastens to caution: "And it
will have good effect to form the breaks, when it can prop-
erly be done, at sentiments of the most weight, or that call
for particular attention."

 (III) "The facts, premises, and conclusions, of a subject, some-
times naturally point out the separations into paragraphs:
and each of these, when of great length, will again require
subdivisions at their most distinctive parts."

  (IV) Students should be careful to make their connections between
paragraphs clear so as to "give beauty and force to the
division." Murray illustrates this rule with phrases such
as "this idea was, indeed, no more than conjecture: but it
was confirmed by . . ." (416-17).

Murray's position leans toward the functional aspect of the
paragraph. His rules are designed to aid the writer's generating and
the reader's understanding of prose. If nothing else, Murray's place-
ment of the paragraph rules in the punctuation section of his text
suggests a more functional understanding of the paragraph, for punc-
tuation can only be understood in terms of its function. Murray's
rules also reveal his understanding of both the rheotrical and the
structural approach to the paragraph. On one hand, his Rule (I)
suggests the structural bloc which aids invention, yet on the other
hand, Rule (II) reflects his awareness of the need to "paragraph" as
a way to break larger chunks of discourse into more manageable "bites."

John Angus

After Murray's brief comments in An English Grammar, the next
oldest source on the English paragraph is John Angus' Handbook of the
English Tongue (1866)[1]. Angus indicates in his preface that he has
been unable to find any work that met the "necessities of students
desirous of becoming acquainted with the history of our language, the
principles of its grammar, and the elements of composition" (i). No
other text, he continues, seems adequate in its training of "young men
to speak and write the English tongue with accuracy, clearness, pro-
priety and force." And these "young men," if they wanted training
about the paragraph, could find that training--between the sections
on "Harmony" and "Style." There, Angus sets down his guidelines for
producing accurate, clear, proper, and forceful paragraphs.

Rule 730 in Handbook defines the paragraph as "a combination of sentences, intended to explain, or illustrate, or prove, or apply some truth; or to give the history of events during any definite period of time; or in relation to any one subject of thought" (411). What he has listed are the precursors of the modes of discourse which are found in most composition texts today--narration, example, cause and effect--as well as suggested what the focus of paragraph instruction should be--exposition.

Rule 731 introduces two critical aspects of Angus' paragraph instruction: his insistence on unity and the model of the sentence for the paragraph. Then, in Rule 732, Angus hints at what would become a crucial aspect the English paragraph tradition--the prescription of a topic sentence.

Though the "topic sentence" does not come about until John McElroy's The Structure of English Prose in 1895, Angus points in its direction when he instructs his young men: "A paragraph has one theme, which may be stated at the margin, or at the beginning, or at the close, or at both the beginning and the close" (401). He warns that paragraphs which lack a clear statement of theme, those that depend solely on an implied topic sentence, " . . . generally [are] defective in clearness."

The bulk of what remains in Angus' instruction on the paragraph is a discussion of the placement of the subject (or theme) of the paragraph by using examples from seventeenth century sermons and by close readings of acknowledged masters of style, such as Addison and

Milton. His discussion strives to make two points for the students:
(1) the paragraph may be excerpted and treated as an isolated unit;
therefore, the theme must be clearly stated to avoid lack of clarity
and confusion over unity, and (2) the paragraph is typically part of
a larger discourse; therefore, transitional devices or "connections"
are important for allowing the " . . . logical order of the [writer's]
thoughts" (412).

Angus' fourteen or so pages figure into the history of the English
paragraph in several important ways:

(1) He places his discussion of the paragraph within the rhetor-
ical category of Style.

(2) He establishes the model of the sentence for a discussion of
the paragraph.

(3) He looks to a central theme somewhere at a prominent place
in the paragraph which prefigures the topic sentence.

(4) He lays the foundation for paragraph study that will follow
for the next 120 years--a close analysis of isolated para-
graphs which have been excerpted from larger works by
acknowledged "masters."

Angus, in contrast to Murray, takes the formalist approach to the
paragraph. His rules on the location of the paragraph's central theme,
his definition that looks to how paragraphs are formed (i.e. to explain,
to illustrate, to prove, to "give the history of events," and so on),
and his analysis or focus on isolated paragraphs instead of seeing them
in larger contexts lead to this formalist conclusion. Yet Angus, like

Murray, is aware of the two approaches to the paragraph. His placing

the paragraph in the rhetorical office of Style shows his understanding

of the rhetorical paragraph, and his insistence on the paragraph's

central theme underscores his vision of paragraph blocks. However, his

work points to the prescriptivist, pedagogical approach which is born

in the work of Alexander Bain.

Alexander Bain

A writer on psychology and a friend to educator and philosopher

John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain was named the chairman of rhetoric at

Aberdeen University in the early 1860's[2]. His focus on the paragraph

came because he "saw a hierarchical structural relationship between

words, sentences, paragraphs, and entire compositions, and he filled

out what was a noticeable gap in the theory of the paragraph"

(Shearer 417). It was Bain's ability to fill this "noticeable gap,"

in 1870 with his publication of English Rhetoric and Composition,

that made him the focus of rhetorical instruction for many decades to

follow.

Bain's method for filling the gap in the theory of the paragraph

depended on two things: his ability to pull ideas from both Murray and

Angus and then add to this mixture his commitment to association psy-

chology[3]. The prescriptions that emerged in English Composition have--

with only slight modifications--shaped instruction in the paragraph

ever since.

Bain's concern, it seems, is reasonable. There must be some form

of discourse that lies between the level of the sentence and the

composition as a whole. Smaller words (what modern linguists call morphemes) make bigger words and these words go on to shape sentences. But there is nothing after the sentence, save the essay itself. Bain takes the paragraph as the obvious answer to his problem in no uncertain terms: "The division of discourse next higher than the sentence is the paragraph: which is a collection of sentences with unity of purpose" (142). Thus he weds the functional thrust of Murray (a collection . . . with unity of purpose) with the formalism of Angus (a division of discourse . . .).

After establishing his theoretical claim for the paragraph, Bain goes on to discuss the paragraph within the context of six principles:

(1) All paragraphs should have clear and explicit references.

(2) All paragraphs should employee parallel construction for sentences that share similar ideas.

(3) All paragraphs should have an opening sentence that is "expected to indicate with prominence the subject of the paragraph."

(4) All paragraphs should demonstrate consecutive arrangement of matter, no "dislocation" or digression.

(5) All paragraphs should exhibit overall unity.

(6) All paragraphs should place due proportion between principal and subordinate statements. (Shearer 413)[4]

Bain lends credibility to these principles by taking excerpts from the work of "masters" and showing the student how the principles are used.

Besides setting forth the principles and arguing for the existence of a form between the sentence and the essay, Bain spends a great deal

of space in English Rhetoric looking at how relationships are established within the paragraph. He produces classifications and long lists of the types of conjunctions which add unity and assure his principle of explicit reference. His types hinge on two major classifications—coordination and subordination—which still inform work on the paragraph, as in Frances Christensen's "A Generative Rhetoric of the Paragraph" (1965).

Bain's pedagogy has been challenged in such works as Paul Rodgers' "The Rise of the Organic Paragraph" (1965), because his analysis seems too rigid with its insistence on topic sentences and too dogmatic with its claim that the paragraph is, indeed, a logical unit. Bain's work, on the other hand, has been defended as in Ned Shearer's "Alexander Bain and the Genesis of Paragraph Theory" (1972) for its insightfulness and its consistency with association psychology. Regardless of the dogmaticism and rigidity or the insight and consistency, Bain and his English Rhetoric was, and is, influential in the growth of the English paragraph tradition and the birth of a third approach to the paragraph, the pedagogical approach.

By the time Bain is writing, the shift from oral discourse to writing in rhetorical instruction is nearly complete. His emphasis, as Herbert Lewis points out in The History of the English Paragraph (1894), is purely pedagogical, even though Bain tries to dress up the pedagogy in theoretical trappings. His analysis is deductive, disregarding observations that counter his principles. Thus, Bain does not consider the rhetorical nor the structural approaches to the paragraph.

He gives ambiguous signals about the office of the paragraph and his prescriptions about the unity of the paragraph work most successfully in isolated paragraphs instead of for paragraphs in context. However, Bain offers answers to the difficult question of how to teach writing to large numbers of students who--for Bain's time and from his perspective--were "culturally illiterate." The confusion in higher education brought in by the democratization of colleges and universities called out for quick answers. Bain's answers were embraced by so many other writers that the pedagogical approach became the approach to the paragraph in spite of other approaches. And with Bain's pedagogical approach's acceptance, the weight of historical precedent began.

John Genung

After Alexander Bain established the basic principles--both theoretical and practical--several followed who helped to codify his principles. One of the first works to move towards welding Bain's principles into a paradigm of the rhetorical paragraph was John Genung and his The Practical Elements of Rhetoric (1886).

Genung's approach to the paragraph immediately attempts to place it within the context of classical rhetorical study. He writes:

> In the construction of a work of literature we discern
> two lines of mental activity, which, starting from widely
> separated points, converge at a common result in the
> completed product. The one is the line of thought, or
> matter; the other, the line of expression or manner . . . .
> The principles of rhetoric, therefore, group themselves
> naturally around two main topics: style, which deals
> with the expression of discourse, and invention, which
> deals with the thought. (7)

And, in between these two "naturally grouped" topics of Style and Invention, Genung places his discussion of the paragraph.

Genung's first concern is to establish the appropriate model for his analysis of the paragraph. He accepts with Bain the inevitable-- the paragraph is a natural level of discourse between the sentence and the composition as a whole. However, when he looks for a model, he breaks with Angus' and Bain's position that the paragraph is modeled on the sentence. Genung goes to the other end of the hierarchy and claims, "The general laws, of selection, arrangement, and proportion, which govern the construction of the paragraph, are so similar to those governing the composition of an entire discourse, that, as we call the sentence the unit of style, so we may regard the paragraph as the unit of invention" (194).

A second element Genung discusses is the "subject sentence." Here he follows Angus' lead and allows that each paragraph contains some "subject" which is "often indicated in the opening sentence. . . ." (196) Though adopting the idea of the topic sentence, Genung is less flexible in telling his students where the "subject sentence" can be located. Angus allows the beginning, the middle, the end--or even an implied "subject sentence," though paragraphs with implied subjects may be defective. Genung, on the contrary, asserts that the subject, though "preceded . . . by a few words, obviously connective and prepa-ratory," must appear at the top of the paragraph so that the paragraph as a whole can "manifest a logical progression of thought [which develops] the suggestions of the subject, from point to point, and without dislocations" (198).

The third aspect of _Elements_ is Genung's analysis of paragraph types. Whereas Angus looks at how paragraph types are made (narration or cause and effect), and whereas Bain looks to ways paragraphs inter- relate along lines of coordination and subordination, Genung wants "to name those leading types wherein the office of the paragraph is apt to cause fundamental modifications of the structure" (210). The three types he points to are:

(1) The propositional paragraph. According to Genung, this type is the most common and has the structure of a subject sen- tence in the form of an assertion whose suggestions are developed by "proof or illustration or some form of repetition."

(2) The amplifying paragraph. The amplifying paragraph is more likely to be used with description or narration. The "office" of the amplification paragraph is "to particularize . . . or to enumerate . . . details" (211). This type, Genung states, is "peculiar" in that the amplifying para- graph does not have a "definitely expressed" subject sen- tence; instead, the subject "has to be gathered from the general bearing of the whole."

(3) The preliminary and transitional paragraphs. Genung classes these two types together because they are best known by their function, instead of their form. The preliminary paragraph does just what the name suggests; it "gives merely the gen- eral theme of a chapter, essay, or section; or lays out the

plan of a succeeding course of thought." Curiously, Genung
claims that "Paragraphs of amplification naturally follow"
preliminary paragraphs (211f). And transitional paragraphs,
also functional, are "introduced between the principle
divisions of a discourse" (212).

Genung's contributions are several:

(1) He helps to popularize Bain's conviction that the paragraph
is a legitimate theoretical entity worthy of study and whose
form must be mastered by beginning writers.

(2) He shifts the analogy by which the paragraph had been under-
stood. No longer was a paragraph seen as a "subject/predi-
cate" relationship (Angus) but as a composition "writ
small."

(3) He furthers the cause of the topic sentence.

(4) He begins the process of classifying paragraphs. The most
"natural" paragraphs are known by their forms (amplifying
and propositional), whereas the less significant types are
known by their function (transitional and preliminary).

Genung, though breaking with Bain's model of the sentence, goes
far in adding the weight of precedent to Bain's principles. Both men
are concerned, not with what writers need to know about the paragraph,
but how to remedy the problems of student writers, especially the
"leaving [of] the topics of paragraphs indeterminate or too dif-
fusive" (195). These men begin the pedagogical approach because of a
distrust of student writers and because they are more concerned with

problems of coherence, relevancy, logic ("Alexander" 401) instead of
wanting to make writers. Bain and Genung, instead of allowing a truly
heuristic approach to writing, are content to give students algorithmic
tasks that produce structurally sound, but contextless, academic prose
which does little to reach students about the process of writing for
real audiences and real purposes.

This result of "writing for the teacher" has plagued the peda-
gogical approach since its inception; however, few writers on the
paragraph--and fewer teachers of writing--have wanted to tamper with
Bain's and Genung's prescriptions simply because the paragraph has
always been taught with emphasis on topic sentences, their placement,
and the principles of unity and coherence. Also, the other two
approaches--the rhetorical and the structural--are difficult to reduce
to a set of rules, and as long as teachers approach writing as an
algorithmic task, they will continually seek out methods that present
clear cut paths to the goal of producing prose which gives the sem-
blance of an educated writer, even though the thoughts or ideas
expressed in the writing is untutored. Ironically, one of Bain's and
Genung's concerns is students' writing being pointless; yet, the
pedagogical approach, which they developed and which lasts simply
because of the weight of history, assures that students' writing
remains pointless, for students learn the "rules" of paragraph-making
in arid paragraph exercises, and they are rarely led to the "fertile"
land of thought--which is at the center rhetoric and rhetorical
instruction.

Barrett Wendell

In 1891, Barrett Wendell added to the growing precedent of the pedagogical paragraph with a collection of eight lectures, which he had prepared for the Lowell Institute, titled English Composition. When he comes to his discussion of the paragraph, he immediately takes issue with definitions of the paragraph, such as Genung's, which liken the paragraph to "a whole composition in miniature" or which simply say a paragraph is "a connected series of sentences constituting the development of a single topic" (119). He returns to Angus' model of the sentence for his understanding of the paragraph: "The principles which govern the composition of sentences are the same which govern the composition of sentences are the same which govern the composition of paragraphs" (117).

Beyond his shifting of the model of the paragraph from the essay back to the sentence, Wendell's rhetoric of the paragraph presents two changes: one change deals with what Wendell calls "prevision" and the second reduces Bain's six principles of the paragraph, by combining several, to a more manageable list of three principles.

Wendell's "prevision" grows from an apparent affinity with Bain's assertion that the paragraph was the logical unit between sentences and the composition as a whole. This affinity is evident when he makes this assertion: "Words and sentences are subject to revision; paragraphs and whole compositions are subjects of prevision" (118). By "prevision" Wendell means paragraphs and compositions must be planned, consciously and thoroughly, and that the plan is accomplished

by the writer's sitting down with a sheet of paper and a pen and
"prudently [writing] down a scheme of the work he wishes to execute,
phrased in as many independent sentences as he would ultimately have
paragraphs in his composition; and in filling out this scheme he may
wisely confine each of his paragraphs to one of the aspects of his
subject which he has provisionally phrased in a single sentence" (126).
With prevision, Wendell adds more weight to the pedagogical approach
by convincing students that essays are built--not from the top down--
but by laboriously developing isolated paragraphs which, when added
together, will make an essay. Wendell's prevision assumes that the
whole is equal to the sum of the parts and his prevision, or sentence
outline, where a sentence from the outline becomes the "subject sen-
tence" for each of the paragraphs of the composition, reveals this
questionable assumption.

His rationale for establishing "prevision" is twofold: first,
he makes it clear that without a plan the writer courts disaster:
"To pause in the course of work, wondering whether we are on the right
course, is most certainly a blunder" (115). Second, he argues that
since the paragraph fills the gap between the sentence and the whole
composition, a writer must be careful not to confuse the paragraph's
function with what precedes or follows it in the hierarchy. He warns
that if "we break up discourse into needlessly small fragments . . . ,
[we are] confusing the function of the paragraph with that of the sen-
tence." On the other hand, "we may accord into a single unit of com-
position incongrous matters . . . , confusing the function of the
paragraph with that of the whole composition" (125).

Though this issue about the true function of the paragraph suggests Wendell's functional interest, he never clarifies for his students what he believes that true function to be. The best that can be gleaned from his statements in _English Composition_ is that the function of the paragraph relates in some manner to style, for he writes, "the words in which I have stated [the paragraph's principles] sound dangerously like absolute values of style" (146). Thus, whereas the paragraph seemed the bridge between style and invention for Genung, Wendell comes down, hesitatingly perhaps, on the paragraph as having a stylistic function.

When Wendell sets forth his four principles of the paragraph, one understands how the paragraph's stylistic function, from Wendell's point of reference, can be realized. The first principle is unity, which can be measured "when you can state [the paragraph's] substance in a single sentence; otherwise [the paragraph] is very apt to lack [unity] (124). The second principle Wendell calls mass or emphasis (134). Simply, effective paragraphs must have adequate details to be effective. Wendell's discussion of emphasis sets the stage for the third principle: due proportion. Here, Wendell encourages careful selection to assure that sentences follow one another in such a manner as to assure that the "eye naturally lingers" at the appropriate places of the discourse (119). Also, due proportion further encourages the role of prevision, for due proportion can be understood only when the writer has established the scheme for the composition along the right course. And lastly, the fourth principle which comes from due proportion

and the activity of prevision is coherence which assures that "the

relationship [of one sentence to another] is understandable" (134).

Wendell's principles of the paragraph and the establishment of

prevision as an essential part of preparing a composition shape

writing instruction into the twentieth century. The four principles

are easier to present than Bain's six (though the four will eventually

be reduced to three: Unity, Coherence, and Mass).

Prevision, or sentence outline, reveals a connection of the para-

graph to the whole which Bain and Genung refused to develop adequately.

Yet Wendell's assumption that isolated paragraphs could be added

together to make a complete essay is, at best, misguided. This

bottom-up approach simply does not fit with what writers report in

terms of their writing processes. However, this bottom-up approach

can work in a pedagogical context where the instructors doubt the cog-

nitive skills of their students and where instructors depend on algo-

rithmic tasks instead of heuristic ones. Thus Wendell presents

teachers of writing with another method for teaching unlettered

students about writing. His system preserves Bain's and Genung's

emphasis on principles and "subject sentences" then moves beyond the

isolated paragraphs that Bain and Genung emphasize to show that these

paragraphs, when added together, do make a whole neither greater than

nor less than the sum of its parts.

Nowhere does Wendell suggest the other approaches--structural or

rhetorical. He has bought Bain's pedagogical approach completely;

therefore, no other approaches can exist. Wendell's prevision

suggests the structural approach by implying that paragraphs are units of invention; however, his scheme is far too rigid. His prevision suggests a vestige of rhetorical paragraphing--even to the point of allowing paragraphs to be an element of style, yet his prevision insists too much on an absolute value of the paragraph to truly allow for the rhetorical paragraph, which is too plastic to be an absolute.

Scott and Denny

In the same year, but some months after Wendell's text, Fred Scott and Joseph Denny published an expanded version of their pamphlet on the paragraph. This new and larger version was simply titled Paragraph Writing. Scott and Denny make clear their purposes in the preface: "to make the paragraph the basis of a method of composition [and] to present all the important facts of rhetoric in their application to the paragraph" (iii). As they begin to make their case for the paragraph as a method of composition, Scott and Denny acknowledge Bain's influence by asserting that writing presupposes three units of discourse: the sentence, the paragraph and the essay or whole composition (iv).

However, after making this acknowledgment, Scott and Denny ask a question that no other writer up to their time had considered: "Which of these three [units of discourse] is best adapted, psychologically and pedagogically, to the [instruction of students]?" They argue against the sentence as the basis for instruction in writing because it is inadequate for Wendell's notion of prevision. They concede that the essay as the whole "is theoretically the more proper unit of discourse" for students to study if they want to learn writing. Yet

Scott and Denny counter this position by asking, "But is [the essay as a whole] always [the best] in practice? Is it not true that for students at a certain stage of their progress the essay is too complex and too cumbersome to be appreciated as a whole?" They support what, by now, is the obvious solution to their dilemma by pointing out:

> If students who have written essays for years have
> with all their labor developed but a feeble sense
> for structural unity, may this reason not lie in the
> fact that the unit of discourse employed has been so
> large and so complex that it could not be grasped
> with a single effort of the mind? (v)

Of course, the only solution to the problem of the essay's being "too large and too complex" a unit of discourse for classroom use is to consider the next smaller unit; thus the paragraph became the focus of composition instruction simply because it was manageable enough for students to learn the principles of rhetoric.

Scott and Denny make their case for the paragraph in this manner:

(1) The paragraph, Barrett Wendell notwithstanding, is practi-
cally identical with the essay and "exemplifies indentical
principles in structure."

(2) The principles, when observed in a paragraph, are "in small
and convenient compass so that they are appreciable by the
beginner."

(3) Isolated paragraphs allow for more writing; the student "can
write more paragraphs than he can write essays . . . ; hence
the character of the work may be made for him more varied,
progressive, and interesting."

(4) Since "the bugaboo of the teaching of rhetoric is the cor-
recting of essays [and] since the student, within the limits
of the paragraph, makes the same errors which he commits in
the writing of a longer composition, . . . the written work
may profitably be shortened from essays to paragraphs."

(5) Again, because of the more practical length of the paragraph,
students can be encouraged to rewrite their work "from begin-
ning to end, and most important of all, when completed [the
revised paragraph] is not too long for the teacher to read
and criticize in the presence of the class" (vi).

(6) The unique position of the paragraph between the sentence
and the essay makes it "a natural introduction to work of a
more difficult character."

Having presented their evidence as to why the paragraph ought to
be the basis of instruction in composition, Scott and Denny move into
their text proper and establish the model for the paragraph (an essay
in miniature) and set down their "general laws" of the paragraph:
unity, selection, proportion, sequence, and variety (4). After
expounding on the general laws, Scott and Denny turn to the form of
the paragraph and tell their students that the subject of the para-
graph "is usually expressed definitely and unmistakeably in one of the
sentences of the paragraph, called the topic sentence" (21). Then
Scott and Denny show their students where the topic sentence can be
placed: either first, first and last, or last--the same locations Angus
pointed out in Handbook of the English Tongue some thirty years
earlier.

Scott and Denny's little book looms large in influencing the way composition has been taught over the past one hundred years. Their rationale for limiting beginning writers to the length or scope of the paragraph has become axiomatic. They further the cause for the term, "topic sentence." They point out a crucial aspect of writing instruction that is taken as given today: students must write and re-write if they are going to master the principles of composition. They unapologetically voice the complaint most teachers have when evaluating students' work--correcting students' errors. This last concern about students' errors comes from two assumptions shared by ᒷ .in and all the others: students are unlettered and, therefore, make errors which must be corrected if their writing is to appear the work of an educated person and errors (both usage errors and paragraph faults) are easier to correct than larger compositional concerns. After all, the goal of writing instruction implicit in the works of these early writers and explicit among many writing teachers today is to assure continuity in the prestige use of English, and not, neces-sarily, to make efficient and effective writers.

But Scott and Denny also deserve attention because their book begins a process, which Edwin Herbert Lewis is to complete in 1894 when his dissertation, The History of the English Paragraph, is pub-lished. This process is the synthesizing of the accumulated lore of the paragraph and putting it into one place. Scott and Denny's Paragraph Writing does this job by furthering Bain's six principles (though reduced to five by Scott and Denny), by recommending Wendell's

prevision, by choosing McElroy's term--"topic sentence," and by
endorsing Angus's three locations for the topic sentence. By doing
all of this, Scott and Denny's book establishes that there will be an
English paragraph tradition, the text codifies the pedagogical approach
of Bain and Genung which essentially erradicates the other approaches
to the paragraph, and it begins, though sketchy, to preserve the
history of the paragraph.

    Thus, Scott and Denny's Paragraph Writing stands at the end of
the century, looking back at how the pedagogical approach to the para-
graph had supplanted the other two approaches and become the basis for
writing instruction. Instructors lecture the students on the form of
the paragraph: what does a paragraph look like--topic sentence +
development--(McElroy 214) and what are the types of paragraphs:
propositional, amplyfying, preliminary, and transitional (Practical
210-11). Students are told that the paragraph is a natural unit of
discourse which fits into a heirarchy--words to sentences to para-
graphs to essays (Bain 142). The students, however, may be confused
by the shifting models: is the paragraph to the sentence the way the
sentence is to the word (Wendell 119), or is the paragraph " . . . in
fact a whole composition in miniature" (McElroy 196)? Another point of
confusion may arise when students look to the rhetorical office of the
paragraph--does it belong to style, as Bain claims or to invention?

    All of these points of contention are only minor annoyances.
Students are busily reading isolated paragraphs which illustrate the
principles of a good paragraph--unity, mass, coherence (Outlines 228-29)

and then writing isolated paragraphs. Instructors are marking the
students' errors in the paragraphs, returning them to the students
(perhaps after reading the paragraphs aloud to the class), and the
students are re-writing their paragraphs. This method of teaching
writing is the only method found in textbooks and in most classrooms
at the end of the nineteenth century. And Scott and Denny's Paragraph
Writing reflects this pedagogy, even though some of the principles are
ill-founded and the theoretical premise is questionable. The weight
of precedent is sufficient reason for the pedagogy to exist.

Edwin Herbert Lewis

Also in 1894, the same year Paragraph Writing was published,
a dissertation was submitted to the faculty at the University of
Chicago by Edwin Herbert Lewis, The History of the English Paragraph.
Though not as widely read as Bain's two volumes of English Composition
and Rhetoric nor reprinted as many times as Murray's two volumns of
An English Grammar[5], Lewis' single volume is the only work from either
the nineteenth or the twentieth century that seeks to look at the
complete history of the paragraph in two ways: (1) where did it come
from and why and (2) how do writers use the paragraph, instead of how
the paragraph should be used.

Lewis begins where no one else had, looking at where the para-
graph started. In his preface, he writes:

    Historically considered, the word paragraph means
    (a) a marginal character or note employed to direct
    the attention to some part of the text; (b) a charac-
    ter similar to (a), but placed in the text itself;
    (c) the division of discourse introduced by a

paragraph mark or by indentation, and extending
to the next paragraph mark or the next indentation;
(d) the rhetorical paragraph, that is, (c) developed
to a structural unit capable of organic internal
arrangement. (5)

Thus, in a somewhat cumbersome--but, nevertheless, thorough--

manner, Lewis sums up the history of the paragraph as it had come to

him. He looks first to the function of the paragraph which is to

focus the reader's attention. Next, he considers the proto-

theoretical work of Bain. And lastly he indicates the most recent use

of the paragraph, the pedagogical paragraph, as a model for instruction

in producing larger forms of discourse which unlettered students are

incapable of mastering. Thus Lewis, after all the other writers have

dismissed them, attempts to preserve the two other approaches to the

paragraph--the rhetorical and the structural--as well as indicate what

new approach had supplanted them.

The first chapter of Lewis' dissertation offers a historical

survey of the mechanical marks found in manuscripts which indicate

paragraph breaks. He looks at ancient Greek manuscripts, such as

Res Gestae Divi Augusti, as well as modern works, such as the eigh-

teenth century De Prima Scribendi Origine, to show how the mechanical

marks have evolved. Lewis even argues, for two pages, that the

"so-called section mark [§], . . . is developed, not from the gamma,

but from the old P . . . ." (15 and 17).

In Chapter II, Lewis reviews the proto-theoretical developments

of the paragraph. He asserts, "Until 1866, when Bain published his

Manual of English Composition and Rhetoric, the paragraph as a

structural unit had received from writers on rhetoric no serious
attention" (20). He turns to the significant writers on the para-
graph--Angus, D.J. Hill, John McElroy, Wendell, and so on--and groups
them based on whether a writer claimed the paragraph was more like
a sentence or more like an essay. After this classification, Lewis
adds, "All the definitions thus far given [by these men] were framed
primarily for purposes of pedagogy" (22). Lewis wants to clarify the
muddled theoretical issues and the pedagogical methods. Though Lewis
does little to contribute to the theory of the paragraph, he does
insist that the lore which has come to him is theoretically vague and
more concerned with teaching methodology than a clear theory.

What Lewis does accomplish--in terms of theory--is to guard
against the disappearance of the two other approaches to the para-
graph which are ignored by all the others, from Bain to Scott and
Denny. Lewis writes:

> It hardly need be said that one of the trials of
> the teacher is this,--that when a young mind is told
> to make paragraphs it begins to paragraph each sen-
> tence. It proceeds by what might be called impartial
> analysis, failing to distinguish the larger stadia of
> the thought from the smaller. (22)

This observation contradicts what the other writers have devel-
oped. Lewis wants to show that students have some sense of the
rhetorical and the structural approaches; however, they are unschooled
in the essential difference of the two. Thus, beginning writers
"impartially analyze" their writing and confuse the larger stadia, or
structural paragraph blocs, with rhetorical paragraphing.

Lewis does not recommend the same remedy as those who preceded him. He apparently recognizes the flaws in the pedagogical approach and his overview of the history of the paragraph demonstrates that the pedagogical approach is some hybrid--it simply does not appear in real writing. However, Lewis' voice is small when compared to the weight of precedent. Instead of conceding that students are simply untutored in the writing process, the assumptions shared by Bain and his disciples are that students are deficient and need to be remediated. This assumed "deficiency" leads the textbook writers at the end of the nineteenth century--as well as in the twentieth--to believe that writing a full essay is simply beyond the capabilities of their students. Instead of addressing the possibility of different reasons for paragraphing, textbook writers are content to maintain the traditional lore and to perpetuate the notion that students are simply "too dumb" to deal with writing instruction that is more than simple rules and prescriptions.

After acknowledging the shaky theory of the paragraph and making an attempt to preserve the structural and rhetorical approaches, Lewis presents in Chapter III the methodology for his diachronic study of the paragraph: a careful analysis of paragraph length and sentence length. His reason for selecting these two points of reference is explicit:

> . . . we are not sanguine at the start that a unit so
> subject to the will of the writer as the paragraph
> apparently is, can be expected to show close rhythmical
> constancy . . . . We arrange [our] investigation in
> list form, ... The name of the author is first
> given, then the number of paragraphs counted . . . ;

> following this comes the average length of the para-
> graph in words . . .; then the average paragraph
> length in sentences; then the average number of words
> in the sentence. (34)

Clearly, Lewis' methodology concedes the rhetorical approach to

the paragraph, for when he asserts that the unit of the paragraph is

"subject to the will of the writer," he must surely have had in mind

the actual process of indentation. He tells his readers that he will

trace what appears within the bounds of indentation through seventy-

three "English prosaists" from Milton's "Areopagitica" and Hobbes'

Leviathan to Dickens' Old Curiosity Shop and a letter by Abraham

Lincoln.

His analysis confirms his intuition concerning the evolution of

the English paragraph, " . . . great changes in the structure of our

prose have taken place within the paragraph," yet these changes have

not, in "four hundred years, materially affected the length of the

paragraph. Probably no reputable English writer who wrote para-

graphs at all has risen above an average of seven hundred words, nor

has any fallen below fifty [words]" (37). One such structural change

he points to is that even though the length, in terms of words per

paragraph, is about the same over four hundred years, "the number of

sentences per paragraph will [have increased] more than one hundred

percent in three hundred years" (42).

After making this observation about the changes in the paragraph,

he begins his analysis on why change occurred: "Evidently there has

been from the earliest days of our prose a unit of invention much

larger than the modern sentence, and always separated in the mind of

the writer from the sentence unit, of whatever length: (43). In making

this statement, Lewis seems to be corroborating through his "empirical

investigation" what Bain had claimed: the paragraph is the logical

unit of discourse that lies between the sentence and the essay as a

whole. However, he seems to take issue with Bain over the office of

the paragraph: Bain had placed the paragraph in style; Lewis, however,

is aware of the dual approaches of the paragraph. And when he places

the paragraph under invention in Chapter III, he means the structural

approach or paragraph bloc, which he--and Paul Rodgers--calls "stadia."

The fourth chapter briefly covers "recent investigations" of the

prose form. Basically, this chapter allows Lewis a chance to

re-define some terms he had found problematic (oral style, aggregating

style, redintegrating) and to make predictions about the "future style"

which "is likely to be yet more informal and easy than the best exam-

ples . . . now extant" (62). After the close of Chapter IV, the rest

of the dissertation, save the concluding chapter which summarizes all

the preceding chapters, breaks English prose into historical periods

and then analyzes representative prose works in terms of paragraph

length, sentence length, and use of connectives (conjunctions).

Edwin Herbert Lewis' The History of the English Paragraph,

though not influential, serves a pivotal role in the development of

the paragraph tradition. First, he condenses massive works such as

Scott and Denny, and less influential works, such as Carpenter's

Exercises in Rhetoric and Composition (1893), John Earle's English

Prose (1890), William Minto's Manual of English Prose (1892), and

L. A. Sherman's Analysis of Literature (1893). Besides compiling a great deal of the history of the paragraph, Lewis prefigures contemporary quantitative analyses of prose when he counts words per sentence and sentences per paragraph. Implicitly in his counting and explicitly in his discussions in Chapter IV, Lewis addresses the importance of a text's readability. He talks about writing as a process of discovering what a writer wants to say. He accurately predicts what the dominant prose style of this half of the twentieth century will be. He insists on a clear distinction between the theory of the paragraph and its pedagogy. He recognizes that the paragraph works in two ways: stylistically in the act of rhetorical paragraphing and structurally within the "stadia" or thought blocs.

Lewis' work in History stands in marked contrast to Scott and Denny's Paragraph Writing. Scott and Denny are able to synthesize what has come before them and to endorse the pedagogical approach. Lewis, on the other hand, also synthesizes, but instead of being content to hold the line on what the current trend is, Lewis attempts to break with the weight of precedent and show its limitation and oversights. Though few seem to have looked to Lewis' work, it stands, poised at the end of the nineteenth century, and unlike Scott and Denny who look backward, Lewis is steadfastly pointing out new directions for the future.

C. J. Thompson

From Lewis' A History of the English Paragraph in 1894, no substantive commentary can be found about the paragraph until 1916

when C. J. Thompson's essay, "Thought-Building in the Paragraph," is published in the English Journal [6]. Thompson's essay requires attention because it seems to support Bain's model of the sentence for the paragraph. Also, Thompson seems to acknowledge Wendell's notion of "prevision." However, Thompson takes from these nineteenth century writers only enough to keep him as a part of their tradition. He adds his own thoughts and shows that he and the paragraph have moved into the twentieth century.

His essay begins straight from the nineteenth century pedagogical approach: a thought is like a sentence and consists of two parts: "the grammatical subject . . . and the assertion, the particular thing . . . said about the subject" (611). He mentions this sentence analogy to further a point he attempts earlier in the essay, "A topic . . . is always a thought; the development of it, a paragraph" (610). Thus, Thompson seems to want the reader to make the same theoretical connection that most of those in the nineteenth century made--the "subject-predicate" relationship at the sentence level is mirrored by the "topic sentence-development" relationship at the paragraph level.

The second part of his essay presents five points that the students need to address if they are to be led into a "self-cultiva-tion of English":

(1) Students must first "formulate a working thought . . . ."

(2) They must "call to mind and tabulate all the ideas, thoughts, facts, experiences, illustrations, analogies . . . that relate to the central purpose . . . ."

(3) Student writers should "examine the materials in the light
     of a common element . . . in order to secure unity."

(4) The students should "choose only the best materials . . . ."

(5) After "having determined what method of paragraph is best
     suited to the materials and the purpose, [the students
     should] set forth the working thought in terms of a fit-
     ting topic statement" (610-11).

These recommendations appear to echo Wendell's assertions on
prevision and Scott and Denny's prescriptions about the topic sen-
tence's development and location. Yet by the end of the essay,
Thompson writes, "Let it not be understood that the pupil is always
to begin his paragraph with a topic statement, or that it is necessary
for him to incorporate it bodily anywhere. It would be, of course, too
mechanical and would show the pupil to be sadly lacking in resource-
fulness" (617).

Thompson's essay, though certainly not influential, does break
significantly with the paragraph tradition he inherited from the
previous century. Though he is aware of the pedagogical paradigm of
the paragraph (topic sentences that come from a sentence outline
during "prevision"), he acknowledges that this approach is mechanical
and does not lead to prose that teachers would value. Thompson
suggests that writing is a growth process. He points to three stages
in the growth of a writer: imitation (both of professional models and
drills in class), suggestion, and originality (612). Lastly, Thompson
places himself on the invention side of the "office-of-the-paragraph"

debate. The title of the essay, "thought-building," indicates

Thompson's conviction that the paragraph is the locus for discovery,

not style. And he implicitly breaks the algorithmic mold of the

nineteenth century tradition by suggesting originality as a way for

student writers to grow and by describing in his five steps a

heuristic task. He does not prescribe placement of topic sentences;

Thompson encourages writing that is truly discovery, writing that is

greater than the sum of its paragraph parts. And these shifts are

in marked contrast to Bain, Genung, and Scott and Denny.

Manly and Rickert

In 1920, John Manly and Edith Rickert published a composition

text, The Writing of English. It saw several editions[7], and their

instruction on the paragraph seems to echo some of the notions evident

in Thompson. They, like Thompson, acknowledge their debt to Bain by

agreeing that the sentence is the best way to understand the structure

of the paragraph (82) and that the paragraph must be a unit of dis-

course because it is "the next larger unit" of discourse above the

level of the sentence.

But after making these nods to the nineteenth century tradition,

Manly and Rickert go further than Thompson's claims that topic sen-

tences make for mechanical writing. First, they want their students to

know that a paragraph can be understood in two ways: "Externally, as a

component part of an organized piece of writing . . . [and] inter-

nally, as in itself an organization of which the component parts are

sentences." This two-leveled view of the paragraph is unique to

Manly and Rickert at this time in the evolution of the English paragraph and seems to acknowledge, far more explicitly than Lewis, the existence of the rhetorical and and the structural approaches to the paragraph. Bain and Genung are content to look only at isolated paragraphs. Scott and Denny argue that isolated paragraphs are the only practical way to teach writing. Wendell only allows for paragraphs as they add together to make a whole composition. But Manly and Rickert make it clear from the beginning that the paragraph must be considered as a component of something beyond itself, while at the same time exhibiting some internal structure of its own which demands that the paragraph be marked off in some manner. Thus, Manly and Rickert describe the structural and the rhetorical paragraph.

They do echo Bain: "In a short piece of writing . . . each paragraph would usually contain all that is said about one main section or phase of the subject"[8]. However, they will not let their students lose sight of the dual role of the paragraph. They add, "But in a longer, more complex composition, this simple relationship does not answer" (83). Then, Manly and Rickert end their sub-section on organization by reminding the students, "the point to be remembered now is that any piece of writing, considered as a unit, should consist of a series, or a series of clusters, of organically related paragraphs" (84). Where Thompson cautions about writing which may sound too mechanical, Manley and Rickert continue the thought by pointing to an "organic" relationship between paragraphs. And this relationship exists between paragraphs, not just within the paragraph as Bain

asserts[9]. After covering the paragraph's organization, Manly and

Rickert have to address the question many students ask today: how long

should the paragraph be? Lewis had determined that the length should

be no less than fifty words and no more than seven hundred (37). In

The Writing of English, Manly and Rickert make a more practical assess-

ment of the issue: "What is the effect upon your mind of looking at

two pages of print in which not one   single paragraph indention

appears? A paragraph that extends over two or more pages of printed

matter, although it may be perfectly unified in thought, will involve

a great strain upon the attention of the reader" (85). McElroy, in

The Structure of English Prose (1895), cautions writers about "method"

in a similar vein--" . . . a want of method embarrasses [the reader]

by unnecessarily taxing his attention" (215). However, McElroy's

concern is with having clearly defined form, a topic sentence and

development. Manly and Rickert are not concerned with form, but with

the appearance of the printed page and how the overall appearance on

the page makes the whole clearer and more readable. Clearly, Manly

and Rickert are describing for their students the rhetorical approach

to the paragraph which contrasts with the pedagogical approach inherent

in McElroy's caution.

When it comes to prescriptions about length, Manly and Rickert

are a bit less dogmatic than actual word counts pointed out by Lewis:

"[For] the writer who habitually thinks in long paragraphs . . . it

is a good rule to have usually at least one paragraph indention on each

page of manuscript" (85). Of course, Manly and Rickert have advice

for those whose paragraphs include only two or three sentences: "For
him a good rule is not to allow more than two or three paragraphs on
a page" (86).

The third section of Manly and Rickert's discussion of the para-
graph looks to the paragraph's internal organization. This section is
the most provocative for several reasons. First, its location at the
end of the paragraph discussion indicates that internal organization
is not a primary concern; indeed, Manly and Rickert's position all
along has been to see the paragraph as part of a larger whole. Thus
internal structure, though effective, is not the crucial focus, which
contrasts with the nineteenth century pedagogical approach. Secondly,
they point out the function of the internal organization is "movement."
By movement, they mean that the "thought must progress from the first
sentence to the last; the reader must feel that he is going forward,
not round and round in a circle. It is not enough merely to tie
together a group of sentences all relating to the same topic; they must
be placed so that each makes a definite advance toward a goal that the
writer has in mind from the beginning" (87f). Manly and Rickert, in
setting forth their idea of motion as the organizing principle in a
paragraph, avoid the traditional points of mass (development), propor-
tion, and arrangement (unity) [10]. Instead, they suggest something far
more difficult to address theoretically or pedagogically but which
more truly reflects how readers read. If the paragraph does not build
a sense of expectation, and then fulfill the expectation, the paragraph
simply isn't readable--regardless of its having mass, proportion or
unity [11].

Though Manly and Rickert acknowledge the topic sentence in their section on internal organization, it does not take precedence in the discussion the way it does with Scott and Denny or McElroy. They have only one paragraph where they concede that topic sentences may "make for clearness" (88). Their emphasis, however, is more on their notion of movement or progression which, they claim, "is to a considerable extent determined by the subject itself."

After suggesting ways for analyzing the subject (whether concrete or abstract), they tell their students that "movement, progress, . . . can be maintained by two general methods:

(1) You may arrange your details, examples, or repetitions in the order of climax . . . .

(2) You may, . . . , zigzag by the use of comparison, which shows analogy or contrast between the thought of a paragraph and another thought introduced into the paragraph . . . ." (89). Either method--building to climax or "zigzagging" with comparison--assures that the reader moves through the para- graph and from that individual paragraph to the entire work.

Manly and Rickert, in The Writing of English, break more clearly with the nineteenth century paragraph tradition than Thompson. Their chapter on the paragraph suggests an organic notion quite removed from the "organic paragraph" which is implicit in Bain and explicit in Scott and Denny[12]. Manly and Rickert's notion of organic always keeps the whole composition in mind; whereas, Scott and Denny, A. D. Hepburn, and others only look for the organic quality in isolated paragraphs.

Manly and Rickert violate other "rules" of the paragraph: they dispense too quickly with the role of the topic sentence. Their advice on methods of development does not adequately reflect Wendell's pre-vision. They are pleased to look at the paragraph as part of a larger unit. Though Bain and his followers start with the same premise that the paragraph fits into a hierarchy between the sentence and the essay, they never address how the paragraph interacts with the larger unit. Scott and Denny, as seen earlier, go so far as to argue that isolated paragraph instruction is more than enough for students to learn the full range of compositional skills; Manly and Rickert refute this notion of Scott and Denny.

Herbert Winslow Smith

As may be evident, Manly and Rickert's book posed problems. By 1920, when the first edition appeared, writing isolated paragraphs, as dictated in Paragraph Writing, was the heart of composition instruc-tion. The topic sentence was embraced by writing teachers as a sure technique to better students' writing skills. And in defense of these values, Herbert Winslow Smith mounted an attack against Manly and Rickert in his essay, "Concerning the Organization of Paragraphs" (1920).

Smith attacks Manly and Rickert's approach to the paragraph as both "unusual" and "unorthodox" (390). He builds his challenge upon Wendell's English Composition (1891). Smith is convinced by Wendell that the paragraph is "a matter of prevision." Smith goes on to insist that, "Instead of composing sentences as they come, the writer

plans first a logical structure of thought. With this conception, the treatment of Manly and Rickert is not in accord" (390).

His evidence for blaming Manly and Rickert's treatment comes from Smith's experiences in the classroom. He points out that "it is no unforgivable sacrilege to blaspheme against the gospel according to Wendell." However, he tells the readers of the English Journal, " . . . let a class of secondary-school pupils only normally scatter-brained try to learn paragraph structure by the method of Manly and Rickert, and you can hope for no better results than the following . . . ." (392). And, to support his challenge, Smith includes one isolated student paragraph which is poorly organized.

After presenting his counter example which he believes refutes Manly and Rickert, Smith continues his attack by questioning their "presuppositions." The Writing of English, Smith contends, "pre-supposes as already established a literary power of correlating ideas which is by no means instinctive, but must be developed by the teacher of composition" (393). Thus the role of teacher, from Smith's point of view, is far more complex than simply marking papers. The teacher's role is to develop certain analytical skills which are not "instinc-tive" and which Wendell's prevision cultivates.

Then, Smith launches into some psychological considerations. The student, he claims, "does not think in one of three ways [Manly and Rickert's notions of details, examples, repetition] about any subject he is going to discuss. Instead, he follows the law of association of ideas--what [William] James calls the law of neural

habit" (393)[13]. After establishing this psychological "high ground,"
Smith continues with the implications of "association" and the function
of education: "Education consists largely of liberating thought from
such complete subservience to the accident of two experiences having
occurred together . . . ."

Manly and Rickert's book, Smith asserts, is to blame for not
offering "any other adequate check against vauge, purposeless think-
ing." Thus, he recommends:

> Tie students down to a topic sentence in the old
> fashioned sense of a simple proposition that every
> statement to appear in the theme must directly or
> indirectly either explain or prove. Require them to
> indicate by the appropriate conjunctive expression
> the exact relation of main head to subhead. Require
> them to correlate all this material before they even
> consider the question of presentation to another
> mind . . . (398)

Smith assures his audience that by following his method, " . . .
and in that way only, have most of us found that the vagrant mind of
adolescence can be held to the task at hand."

Smith concludes his criticism of Manly and Rickert by pointing out
the burden composition teachers must shoulder. He claims that English
composition is central to the secondary curriculum because of "its
value in making a child extend to the whole field of all his experi-
ence the principles of orderly thinking" (400). This trust thrust upon
the composition teacher is betrayed, according to Smith, if English
composition teachers do not try their utmost "to convert fumble-
witted boys and girls into rational men and women." With the rigid
or "ponderous" method of paragraph organization recommended by Smith,

teachers can accomplish this goal of training rational men and women and avoid Manly and Rickert's method which "tends to substitute, instead of organized unity, a vague and specious fluency."

Smith's essay, certainly strident in tone, and Manly and Rickert's chapter on the paragraph indicate subtle but important shifts from the nineteenth century paragraph tradition. Smith's last sentence broaches the issue of fluency--the ability to put words on a page. No one in the previous century considered the role of fluency as they were writing about the paragraph. Both Manly and Rickert's book and Smith's essay seem to place the paragraph under invention--a growing trend early in the twentieth century and a marked contrast to the earlier writers who saw the paragraph as an aspect for style. Perhaps the key difference between Smith and Manly and Rickert is their attitude toward the student. Smith's diction--scatter-brained, fumble-witted, vagrant--seems to tie him to Scott and Denny's position that students simply cannot deal with the complexities of producing a whole essay. Manly and Rickert and C. J. Thompson do not seem to have this distrust of the students' abilities. These writers feel, rightly or wrongly, that writing can be presented in such a way "that [the students] should master [the principles of writing] naturally; . . . ." (Thompson 610).

Leon Mones

Though subtle, all of these early twentieth century works-- The Writing of English, Thompson's essay, and--to some extent--Smith's essay--reflect a drift from some of the essential elements of the

pedagogical approach to the paragraph and a reassertion of the struc-

tural and rhetorical approaches. But when Leon Mones published

"Teaching the Paragraph" in 1923, the drift is no longer subtle. Mones

recommends revolution.

As to Bain and "the old school," Mones writes:

The English teacher nurtured in the old school,
nurtured in the Rhetorical sunshine of A. Bain,
succeeded in teaching pages of rhetoric but not
much writing. [Bain] gave an abundance of atten-
tion to rules of writing and not enough to the
habits of writing; he never realized that creative
work precedes and frequently scorns critical work.
He never succeeded in getting his students to write
freely and naturally, but did succeed in creating an
over-decorated kind of exotic and flowery jargon, known
as "high-school English." (456).

Mones is not content to charge Bain with producing the language

used in teaching "high-school English"; he launches an attack that cuts

to the core of Bain's claims about the paragraph: Bain "was diver-

gent," according to Mones, when his instruction on writing should have

been "convergent"; Bain insisted on being "analytic instead of syn-

thetic"; and in the most vicious charge Mones musters, Bain "taught

from instead of to . . . ." (457). Mones expands this last charge and

states unequivocally that Bain "never helped [his students] to find

something to say by showing them that they had something to say.

Thought and ideas meant little to him. Rule and form and convention

governed his microcosm."

Mones' position on the paragraph and its pedagogy is straight-

forward:

> The pupil has written a paragraph. Can he define
> topic sentence? Probably not, but he has one. Can
> he define unity? coherence? mass? selection? No!
> But has he violated them? Does he know that he
> developed the paragraph by the method of "giving
> particulars"? Why should he? The young student
> wants to learn writing, not metaphysics. He wants
> to form habits, not to memorize definitions. Give
> him a thought, a vital thought, one which calls to
> him, "Here I am, complete me!" and he will develop
> it in spite of his ignorance [of the modes of devel-
> oping a paragraph]. (458)

Thus, a writing teacher's task is to offer students those topics which are vital and which suggest the method of development.

At the end of his essay, Mones summarizes his position on writing and the paragraph in seven steps:

(1) Offer to the students "a fundamental thought."

(2) Allow the students to explore the thought "from many points of view."

(3) Let the students "clarify . . . and unify" the thought through a class discussion or a conference with the teacher.

(4) After clarifying and unifying, the students should introduce the thought they are considering with a sentence.

(5) Assure the students that their outlines may "be simple" and just an "informal jotting down of facts and ideas."

(6) Give the students time to complete the thought in writing.

(7) And lastly, criticize the students' writing "with the employment of a minimum of technical, rhetorical nomen- clature" (459).

Mones' essay markedly contrasts with the nineteenth century writers. First, he cares little, if at all, about the form of the paragraph or its types. Yet, from Angus through Lewis, classifying and stressing the importance of paragraph structure has been an ever increasing concern. Mones disallows the vocabulary which the tradition had developed. Mones has unquestioning trust in the students' natural ability to discover the approapriate mode for developing a thought--if the thought is "vital."

Mones' essay has to be considered (but rarely is) because he questions assumptions about the methods of teaching both the paragraph and writing. But even though his questions seem so basic, these questions are not considered, to any great extent, until the College Composition and Communication conference at Philadelphia in 1958, twenty-five years after Mones' article.

Charles Whitmore

Mones is not alone, however, in his questioning of the paragraph tradition, though he may have been the most outspoken. Also in 1923, Charles Whitmore's article, "A Doctrine of the Paragraph," challenges one of Bain's leading disciples, John Genung. Whitmore's essay looks to Genung's definition of the paragraph: "A paragraph is a connected series of sentences constituting the development of a single topic" (Practical 193). Whitmore asks his readers to consider what this definition suggests, "Such a definition leads us to infer that in any good paragraph the topic can readily be found, and that it will always be developed, that is unfolded or carried to a conclusion . . . ." (605).

Whitmore then asks his readers to consider actual practice: "In actual practice, however, we soon discover that the topic is often nowhere expressed in the paragraph, and that, whether it is or not, the main idea is often not 'developed' at all. Yet paragraphs to which both statements apply [no clearly evident topic and no thorough sense of development] may be good paragraphs, and serve their purposes excellently." Whitmore has uncovered a dilemma. Textbooks tell students that their paragraphs must look a certain way, must have a specific form. But anyone who reads knows that there are excellently written paragraphs that do not fit the pedagogical model. How can this dilemma be solved?

Whitmore says that a good paragraph is one that does more than just reflect the prescribed form. The paragraph must be evaluated in terms of its function and one should avoid the fallacy that "differences in structure ultimately depend on differences of function" (610). Whitmore makes a provocative and explicit point which is ignored in the nineteenth century pedagogical lore of the paragraph and is implicit in Manly and Rickert's discussion of the organization of the paragraph. Writers have options and may, if they wish, use different forms, select from several options—and still accomplish the same job. And these options Whitmore points to are what we call the rhetorical and the structural approach to the paragraph.

With this assumption about options in mind, Whitmore asks what makes a good paragraph, and he answers, "[it] is not the presence or absence of a statable topic, but the presence of a single motive, which

finds expression in different ways, according to the nature of the material, and which appears as a topic only in paragraphs of a more or less intellectual cast" (609).

Brooks and Warren

With Mones' and Whitmore's articles in 1923, work on the paragraph seems to disappear. No articles are published which deal with the paragraph in the manner that Thompson's or Mones' article does, nor do any new textbooks cause a stir the way Manly and Rickert's did. Thus, the pedagogical approach of Scott and Denny remains essentially intact. The nineteenth century tradition, though challenged, survives and marches through the twentieth century.

The best example of how this nineteenth century tradition not only survived but flourished is in Brooks and Warren's Modern Rhetoric (1949). Because of the success of their Understanding Poetry, the two collaborated on this college composition text and the reviewers were nearly unanimous [14] in their praise: "The text itself is an example of good writing," lauded D. A. Stauffer (21). Wallace Stegner responded to the text's "meticulous thoroughness and [its] excellence in illustrative matter" (5). Stegner's review bestows on Modern Rhetoric what the author obviously believes to be his highest praise: "[Modern Rhetoric] is traditional as all good pedagogy is traditional." And in terms of the text's overall organization and in terms of its comments on the paragraph, Brooks and Warren are surely in keeping with the paragraph tradition that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Instead of looking to the twenties, as Stegner suggests,

Brooks and Warren return to the rhetorics and to the pedagogy of the paragraph of Bain, Genung, and Wendell.

Stauffer's review points to two strengths in Modern Rhetoric: first it is a carefully selected anthology--both in its good examples and in its "invented or reproduced examples of how not to write" (21); and second, the argument of the text, "in a capsule," is that writing can only come from "thinking straight." Both of these points echo significant developments of the nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph.

The anthology aspect of Modern Rhetoric comes from the work of Scott and Denny, McElroy, and Bain himself. All of these nineteenth century writers included examples from the "prose masters." Also, the notion that Stegner underscores: "To write well is not easy for the simple reason that to write well you must think straight," recalls Barrett Wendell's "prevision."

Our interest here is what Brooks and Warren have to say about the paragraph. They place their discussion of the paragraph in Part Three--Special Problems of Discourse. The first "problems" the students find are sentences and paragraphs. After acknowledging that the smaller parts of the composition--the sentence and the paragraph-- are "easier to deal with . . . when one keeps the larger architecture in view," Brooks and Warren add:

> Nevertheless, the smaller elements should be studied
> apart from the whole composition. As a unit of thought,
> for example, a paragraph has a certain structure,
> achieved through unity, coherence, and emphasis. (267)

Brooks and Warren point to the paragraph as a "unit of thought." Their assertion echoes many of those who shaped the pedagogical approach to the paragraph over fifty years before Brooks and Warren: Lewis, in his History of the English Paragraph, asserts that the paragraph is a unit of thought; Genung's Practical Elements points out that the paragraph is a "unit of invention" (194) or thought; and the values a "good paragraph" possesses--unity, coherence, and emphasis-- are found, though not as succinctly, in Bain's six principles.

Brooks and Warren continue by looking at the conventions of para- graphing--indention or the actual punctuation points as described by Lewis. Then they add:

> For the reader this marking off of the whole compo-
> sition into segments is a convenience, though not
> a strict necessity. A truly well-organized,well-
> written piece of prose would presumably be no worse
> as a piece of prose if it were printed with no para-
> graph divisions whatsoever (268).

In this comment, Brooks and Warren seem content to reject utterly the role of the rhetorical paragraph. After a brief discussion of paragraph length (use common sense to establish the proper length), Brooks and Warren move to their statements concerning the rhetorical office of the paragraph.

They point out that the paragraph "undertakes to discuss one topic or one aspect of the topic." This assertion echoes Bain's definition, "a paragraph handles and exhausts a distinct topic" (142). This function of the paragraph to exhaust or to discuss one topic is realized by the structure of the paragraph, which is a topic sentence that "states the central thought of the paragraph" (Brooks and Warren 269) and the development of the topic sentence. Again, Modern Rhetoric

reveals its indebtedness to the nineteenth century paragraph tradition, for this claim, notwithstanding the concerns of Manly and Rickert or Leon Mones, mirrors Scott and Denny's position on paragraph structure. In fact, after a brief example, Brooks and Warren continue by pointing out that the topic sentence may appear as the first or last sentence of the paragraph which are two of the three positions Angus notes as the location for his "one theme"--topic sentence--of the paragraph (401).

The rest of the section on paragraph structure tells students how to develop their topic sentences--classification, comparison and contrast, illustration, and so on. Thus, Brooks and Warren's paragraph pedagogy--write a topic sentence and then develop it along specific lines or modes--was written in 1866 in John Angus' Handbook of the English Tongue, yet it is certainly ironic that in 1949 (and again in the second edition in 1958) this pedagogy is called modern rhetoric!

Brooks and Warren's Modern Rhetoric is important in this overview of the paragraph tradition, not because it breaks any new ground, but because it simply does not. Nearly one hundred years after Angus, the essential nature of telling students how to produce paragraphs is unchanged. Brooks and Warren take without question the theoretical claims that the paragraph is, indeed, a legitimate level of discourse perched between the sentence and the whole essay. Brooks and Warren quibble over the notion of implied topic sentences, but otherwise, their instruction ignores Manly and Rickert, Leon Mones, and

C. J. Thompson. At this point, perhaps one needs to return to Stegner's unapologetic assertion about the pedagogy in Modern Rhetoric: good pedagogy is traditional. However, as soon as the notion is considered, one must ask, "Can such a statement be accepted on its face?"

The 1958 College Communication and Composition Conference on the Paragraph

The answer to this question can be found in a 1958 conference of college composition teachers. For 1958 not only saw a second edition of Modern Rhetoric; it also saw an important conference at Philadelphia--The College Composition and Communication Conference on the Rhetoric of the Paragraph. The report from his conference starts with a provocative question: "How adequate, from both the theoretical and practical viewpoints, are contemporary definitions of the paragraph" (191). It is ironic that this question is being asked in the same year that hundreds of textbooks were published--such as Modern Rhetoric--where no one seems to have considered the adequacy of the paragraph instruction.

This irony is compounded when another statement from the Philadelphia conference is found: the consensus of those attending was that the paragraph "is not an isolated unit of thought, but is part of a larger structure, a larger context, and even a larger rhythm." Thus, with this concensus, the conference recommended that the study of the rhetoric of the paragraph should always emphasize the whole composition and avoid such "safe" methods as focusing on topic sentences and relying on isolated paragraphs (192).

Here, at the end of the 1950's, a trend finally makes itself evident. When one looks for information about the nature of the para- grpah there are two distinct and, often, conflicting sources. On the one hand, professional conferences, such as CCCC, and professional literature, such as the articles published in the 1920's in the English Journal, look critically at the nineteenth century English paragraph tradition and question the assumptions which birthed the pedagogical approach to the paragraph. On the other hand, however, the masses of textbooks, exampled here by the successful Modern Rhetoric, readily embrace, without hesitation or question, this pedagogy of the paragraph, which is questionable at best.

In 1958, then, this "schism" between theory and practice seems complete. The reasons for this break come from a growing understanding of the nature of language and discourse and a growing awareness that what the textbooks preach cannot be found in the real world of writing. This break is amply exemplified when the conclusions of the CCC confer- ence are juxtaposed with the pedagogy in Modern Rhetoric. This break between theory and pedagogy, between professional and scholarly work and what is published in textbooks still exists today, thirty years after Philadelphia and Brooks and Warren.

1958--The Break Between Theory and Practice

Because of this clear break in 1958 between theory and practice, the rest of this dissertation is organized as it is. Until 1958, theory and pedagogy developed alongside one another. Yet, in 1958, when CCC conference reaches its conclusion about the inadequacy of

paragraph instruction at the same time _Modern Rhetoric_ is coming out in a second edition, the history of the paragraph significantly changed. Theory is discussed in professional journals; pedagogy continues, with only minor modifications, in the pedagogical approach as exampled in Brooks and Warren. Thus, the next two chapters look at how the theory and the pedagogy evolved until 1958 and then traces how the two developed after 1958 independently of one another.

At this point, however, before tracing the theory and the pedagogy of the paragraph, one issue should stand out about the history of the paragraph: much of what is taught today is found in the words of a few men in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Why have so few affected so many, especially when one considers the obvious gap between what is taught and what real writers produce? The answer is simple-- the weight of historical precedent. Even though only a few wrote about the paragraph, they influenced others and established a tradition, which, questionable and even faulty, dominates instruction today because--"this is the way it's always been."

NOTES

[1]Though the edition used here suggests that Angus and Bain were nearly contemporary, the Handbook of the English Tongue first appeared in 1869.

[2]Bain stands at a point of intersection in the history of psychology. Watson points out that his significance comes from "the nature of Bain's position. Is he the last of the old psychologists or the first of the new?" (213) What Bain did was help to popularize the psychology of J. S. Mill and have a credible methodology supporting his two books: The Senses and the Intellect (1855) and The Emotions and the Will (1859). Watson, in summing up Bain's influence on the history of psychology, offers this appraisal of Bain's work: "[His books are] full of 'seminal ideas' that he failed to develop . . ." (214).

[3]Associationism was born from the time when philosophy and psychology were still wed. Marx and Hillix begin their essay on associationism and underscore this connection whey they say, "The principle of association derives from . . . the epistemological question, 'How do we know?'" (107).

From this starting point, the theory of associationism evolved as a way to account for "learning." According to Woodworth, there are no nineteenth century discussions of "learning," not enough in William

James' 1890 opus, The Principles of Psychology; however, the nine-
teenth century writers do spend time talking about "remembering" (59).

Bain stands at the end of his approach to explaining how people learn.
His writings on associationism culminate a tradition beginning with
Hobbes, coming through Berkely and Hume, and stopping with James and
J. S. Mill (60-5 passim).

Bain's views of associationism embraced two principles: that the mind
made connections by "contiguity"--two or more things literally touch-
ing, what J. S. Mill perceived as "mental chemistry (Marx and Hillix
112), and "similarity"--a reinforcement of contiguity which makes
note of "likeness and difference, cause and effect, utility and other
relations" (Woodworth 65f).

Also, Bain suggested that humans "learn" through a summation effect
"whereby 'associations that are individually too weak to operate the
revival of a past idea, may succeed by acting together'" and through
a principle of creativity "whereby 'by means of Association, the mind
has the power to form new combinations or aggregates, different from
any that have been presented to it in the course of experience'"
(Marx and Hillix 113, from Bain's The Senses and the Intellect).

Associationism marks the end of philosophy's marriage to psychology,
it looks to physiological connections for memory, and it points to a
new area of psychology, the psychology of learning.

[4]Bain's discussion of these six principles runs ten pages in _A Manual_ (142-152). For the sake of clarity and brevity, Shearer's summation of the points are used here.

[5]In contrast to Lewis' single printing of _The History of the English Paragraph_, Murray's _An English Grammar_, with his comments on the paragraph housed under his discussion of punctuation saw thirty-five editions or fifty-eight imprints between 1795 and 1810. Bain's _English Composition and Rhetoric_ was published twenty-three times between 1866 and 1910.

[6]Two brief notes about the paragraph do appear in _English Journal_ before Thompson's essay in 1916: L. W. Crawford, Jr., "Paragraphs as Trains," _EJ_ 1 (1912): 644 and J. M. Grainger, "Paragraphs as Trains-- The Caboose," _EJ_ 2 (1913): 126.

[7]_The Writing of English_ was first published in 1920; however, the edition cited here was the third, published in 1923. No significant changes in the chapter "The Organization of Paragraph" occurred.

[8]See Bain's _English Composition and Rhetoric_, 182.

[9]For a thorough discussion of Bain's convictions about the organic nature of the paragraph, see Paul Rodgers', "Alexander Bain and the Rise of the Organic Paragraph." _QJS_ 51 (Dec. 1965): 399-408.

[10]See Genung's _Practical Elements_, 194 and Lewis' _History of the English Paragraph_, 170.

[11]For a provocative analysis of the connection between readability and building expectations in writing, see M. J. Adams and Allan Collins' report, A Schema-Theoretic View of Reading. Technical Report No. 32. Urbana: Center for the Study of Reading, 1977.

[12]See Scott and Denny's Paragraph Writing, 95.

[13]Though Smith seems to be connecting himself with the nineteenth century paragraph lore, his comments on "association" seem to reflect his misunderstanding of the theoretical milieu Bain was working from. Compare Smith's comments to note 3 above.

[14]There was one negative review found concerning Modern Rhetoric. Shirley Baker, writing for The Library Journal, complained of the "badly organized" nature of the text, after conceding, however, that the "subject matter . . . [is] true and essential . . . " (975). Overall, in assessing Modern Rhetoric as a book for a library to purchase, Baker simply says, "Not essential."

CHAPTER II

MOVING INTO THE SECOND CENTURY--"PROTO-THEORY

TO AN EMERGING THEORY OF THE PARAGRAH

The past thirty years have seen remarkable change and remarkable
aversion to change in the way professionals consider the paragraph.
Change has occurred mostly within the theoretical area: Kellogg Hunt's
"Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels" (1965) gave
professionals a different method for evaluating the base unit of prose;
the T-unit (essentially a clause) supplanted the sentences which were
so painstakingly counted by Lewis in 1894. Francis Christensen devel-
oped a "Generative Rhetoric of the Paragraph" (1965) that, even though
preserving the topic sentence's role and location at the top of the
paragraph, demonstrates levels of development quite removed from the
topic sentence + development model which was (and in many cases still
is) the focus of traditional paragraph study. Becker suggested
"tagmemes"--a blend between functional parts and suitable forms--as
base units for analyzing paragraphs. Paul Rodgers' "A Discourse-
Centered Rhetoric of the Paragraph" (1966) picked up Lewis' term,
"stadia," to inform his view of the paragraph. Meade and Ellis in
1970 and Richard Braddock in 1974 challenged the underpinnings of the
nineteenth century tradition when their empirical work showed that
"real" writers' paragraphs are not at all like the paragraphs the
pedagogical approach   teaches beginning writers to make.

The pedagogy, on the other hand, seems to have resisted any major change. Hunt's work and John C. Mellon's "Transformational Sentence Combining" (1969) did influence the rhetoric of the sentence to some extent. Writers such as William Strong produced books of sentence combining to encourage syntactic fluency[1], but his texts rarely consider fluency beyond the level of the sentence. Francis Christensen's "generative" rhetoric produced some pedagogical responses; textbooks, on occasion, showed the "steps" which culminated in a paragraph[2]. Becker's tagmemes informed the text he co-authored with Richard Young and Kenneth Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, yet the book was not widely used[3] and tended to appear only for teachers. The textbooks for college composition remained essentially the same as Brooks and Warren's Modern Rhetoric.

This discrepancy between the discoveries and suggestions in articles and at conferences and what has been and continues to be published in textbook after textbook is noted by Charles Cooper in "Procedure for Describing Written Texts" (1983). In his essay, Cooper summarizes the theoretical work over the past thirty years and reflects: "Viewing all of this research in the context of current discourse theory, I think we can see that concern about paragraphs and their structure is misplaced . . . . The starting point for discourse analysis should not be paragraphing and paragraph structure. And what is really interesting in written discourse and what can be discovered . . . seems to be both smaller than a paragraph and larger than a paragraph" (292). In saying this, Cooper is challenging the basic

assumption of the nineteenth century paragraph tradition. He asserts

that no unit of discourse exists between the sentence and the whole

essay.

Cooper's challenge illuminates critical issues about the theory

of the paragraph. If the paragraph is not a unit of discourse, what

is it? What are its characteristics, its essential elements? How does

the paragraph fit into the traditional offices of rhetoric? What is

its function? These four theoretical issues which are embedded in

Cooper's challenge are considered--directly or indirectly--in

Herbert Lewis' 1894 dissertation, The History of the Paragraph.

Herbert Lewis and the Proto-Theory

of the Nineteenth Century

Lewis is the first writer to attempt to synthesize the commentary

on the paragraph. Though Bain, Genung and the others claim to explore

the "theory" of the paragraph, they incorporate the theoretical with

the pedagogical in such a way that the two are difficult to separate.

Lewis, however, attempts to make a clear distinction between the two.

His second chapter, "Rhetorical Theories of the Paragraph,"

points out: "Until 1866, when Bain published his Manual of English

Composition and Rhetoric, the paragraph as a structural unit had

received from writers on rhetoric no serious attention" (20).

Then, Lewis considers the earliest theoretical problem upon which the

debate of "discourse unit" rests: is the paragraph more like the essay

or more like the sentence?

Lewis describes two schools of thought. Bain's school follows his assertion that "The division of discourse next higher than the sentence is the Paragraph . . ." (142). His disciples essentially hold to his claim about the paragraph existing as a unit between the sentence and the essay. John McElroy: "A Paragraph is in fact a whole composition in miniature . . . ." (196); John Genung: "The general laws, of selection, arrangement and proportion, which govern the composition of the paragraph, are . . . similar to those governing the composition of an entire discourse" (Practical 194); and A. S. Hill: "[the paragraph] is something more than a sentence and something less than an essay . . ." (Foundations 325).

The second school looks to the sentence and finds there the principles for the paragraph. T. W. Hunt: "[the paragraph is] a collection of sentences unified by some common idea. It sustains the same relation to the sentence which this does to the clause or member" (82) and Barrett Wendell: "In these straits, trying to make a definition for myself, I have been able to frame no better one than this, . . . : A paragraph is to a sentence what a sentence is to a word" (119).

Lewis then turns to the most recent writing on the paragraph, Scott and Denny's Paragraph Writing. He finds that they have taken the middle road, which he finds "important, since [their definition] emphasizes the idea that a good paragraph is, more properly than the sentence itself, an organic unit of composition" (Lewis 22). Scott and Denny's organic view is that "[a paragraph] consists of a group

of sentences closely related to one another and to the thought
expressed by the whole group or series. Devoted, like the sentence,
to the development of one topic, a good paragraph is also, like a good
essay, a complete treatment in itself" (1).

Lewis contends that beyond the debate over the appropriate model
of this discourse unit, little more theoretical work has been
attempted. He cites Bain's six principles: explicit "bearing" of
each sentence upon what precedes; parallel construction when consecu-
tive sentences "iterate or Illustrate the same idea"; the first sen-
tence in the paragraph should "indicate . . . the subject of the para-
graph"; the sentences should be "free from dislocation," which means
that the sentences follow the plan "dictated by the nature of the
composition"; possess unity; and "as in the sentence, [present] a due
proportion . . . between principal and subordinate statements"
(Lewis 29).

These principles, Lewis shows, are present in most of the works
of his day. He finds the principles "with new names and various
modifications in the best textbooks of the last quarter century" (30).
Lewis goes to Minto's A Manual of English Prose (1887) and sees that
Bain's principles "constitute the formal criterion" which Minto uses
to judge a paragraph's value. Lewis claims that McElroy's The
Structure of English Prose (1882) and John Genung's The Practical
Elements of Rhetoric (1886) quote and "are regulated" by Bain's
principles. Lewis discovers that Barrett Wendell's English Composi-
tion (1892) combines Bain's first, second, and fourth principles to

produce "Coherence." Wendell also combines principles three and six
to create "Mass." Thus from Bain, through Wendell, the paragraph is
governed by Unity, Coherence, and Mass. These three principles, with
only the shift in terminology of Mass to Emphasis, inform most theo-
retical discussions of the paragraph which are found in textbooks
today.

Even though he lists these theoretical principles, Lewis himself
hastens to point out that these principles pose particular problems.
First, he cites Wendell's test for a "well massed" paragraph: "A
paragraph whose unity can be demonstrated by summarizing its substance
in a sentence whose subject shall be a summary of its opening sen-
tence and whose predicate shall be a summary of its closing sentence"
(Lewis 31). After allowing Wendell to present the test, Lewis suggests
the problem: "This [test] is both clever and interesting; and as a
matter of theory it is probably more than half true and good. His-
torically, however, paragraphs as well massed as this are comparatively
few." Thus, Lewis is questioning, in 1894, a fundamental principle
of the paragraph which is presented by Brooks and Warren as axiomatic.

After counting sentences to determine the average length of the
paragraph, Lewis concerns himself with the issue of the rhetorical
office of the paragraph. He states unequivocably: "Evidently there
has been from the earliest days of our prose a unit of invention much
larger than the modern sentence, and always separated in the mind of
the writer from the sentence unit, of whatever length" (43). The
paragraph, for Lewis, belongs to invention. He emphasizes the point

when he writes: "The writer conceives his paragraph topic before he develops it, though of course in the process of development the associations of the symbols used may lead him afield. He thinks . . . in successive nebulous masses, perceiving in each a luminous centre before he analyzes the whole."

At this juncture Lewis has uncovered three theoretical issues that continue to shape discussions of the paragraph: which unit of discourse does he paragraph reflect--the sentence or the essay, what are the principles which govern the paragraph, and what is the rhetorical office of the paragraph--style or invention?

Lewis' dissertation also considers explicitly, in the first chapter, the fourth critical issue in the theory of the paragraph: What is the function of the paragraph? Lewis finds that historically, the paragraph has served only one function, "a margin character or note employed to direct attention to some part of the text" (5). Yet, Lewis concludes the opening paragraph of his dissertation by pointing to the most recent use of the paragraph--the rhetorical paragraph-- which may be "developed to a structural unit capable of organic internal arrangement"[4]. Here, Lewis is acknowledging the arguments of Scott and Denny, whose Paragraph Writing strives to convince teachers of composition that the paragraph is the "best adapted, psychologically and pedagogically" for instruction in writing (iv).

This chapter will use these four critical issues exposed by Herbert Lewis as the framework for responding to Cooper's challenge about the theory of the paragraph. The following discussions will be presented:

(1) Which model for the paragraph, the sentence or the essay, is embraced today?

(2) What are the essential characteristics of the paragraph?

(3) Which rhetorical office claims the paragraph?

(4) What is the function of the Paragraph?

Sentence Model or Essay Model

No clear consensus has emerged since Lewis as to the model of the paragraph. Manly and Rickert begin their discussion with the assertion that "The paragraph, like the sentence, is an organization of thought" (82). The provocative aspect of their assertion is that it pulls together two theoretical issues: traditionally, from Bain and others[5], the sentence has been an element of style, not an element of "thought" or invention, yet Manly and Rickert align themselves with the nineteenth century school that sees the sentence as the model for the paragraph.

This emphasis on the sentence as the model for the paragraph has continued through the 1960's. For example, in his CCC article which was part of the symposium on the paragraph[6], Christensen asserts that the second century of the rhetoric of the paragraph need not abandon the sentence analogy ("Symposium" 66). Christensen sees a continuous line of dependence on this sentence analogy. He places himself at the end of the line which starts with Bain, who said that the topic sentence is to its support sentences what the subject is to the predicate. Next, Christensen endorses Barrett Wendell's analogy: the paragraph is to the sentence as the sentence is to the word. Lastly, Christensen

points to his own notion of the cumulative sentence[7] and says that within his model the topic sentence is to its support what the base clause is to its free modifiers.

A second contributor to the issue of what analogy or model informs the understanding of the paragraph is Alton Becker and his essay, "A Tagmemic Approach to the Paragraph" (1965). His purpose for writing the article is clear: there is a need to apply the discoveries of linguistic research beyond the level of the sentence (154). He chooses the model of tagmemics as a way to extend linguistic theory to paragraphs.

Tagmemes have both a functional and a formal aspect at the level of the sentence. To illustrate the relationship between form and function, Becker uses "subject." He explains that in grammar, "subject" is a functional slot into which several different grammatical forms or constructions may be employed (155). This illustration echoes the nineteenth century paragraph tradition: "The principle in which the plan of a paragraph is constructed may be regarded as an extension of the principles of sentence structure" (Practical 198). Note that Genung's statement in Practical Elements uses "structure" much in the same way that Becker uses "form." Also Genung suggests that the sentence-structure "principles" be "extended" to the paragraph, which is Becker's premise, too.

The third major contributor to the issue of the model for the paragraph in its "second century" is Paul Rodgers and his article, "The Stadium of Discourse" (1967). Rodgers' "stadia" are units which

contain a single topic "together with any accrete extensions or adjunctive support that may be present" (182). Rodgers' claim rejects the sentence model and comes close to embracing the other school of thought from the nineteenth century tradition described by Lewis-- the paragraph is an essay "writ small."

The definition of stadia--the single topic and its support-- recalls what Genung says in his second text on composition, Outlines of Rhetoric (1893), about the paragraph: [the paragraph] is . . . a complete composition in miniature; it is constructed on the prin- ciples governing a larger composition in this respect, that it has a theme and a plan and an articulation of parts" (228). The important difference between Genung's statement in 1893 and Rodgers' assessment of the paragraph almost one hundred years later is, simply, that Genung is prescribing, Rodgers is describing.

A second writer who, according to Robert Conners, attacks the conventional sense of the paragraph--and its model of the sentence-- is Willis Pitkin. Pitkin's "Discourse Blocs" (1969) attempts to show that discourse is not distinct sentences or paragraphs; instead discourse consists of "blocs" which may be "coterminous" with paragraphs but typically these blocs consist of several paragraphs. On its face, Pitkin's claim can be seen to be more in keeping with Rodgers' stadia than with Becker's tagmemes or Christensen's cumula- tive paragraphs. In fact, Pitkin's claim that "blocs" do not always find themselves within traditional paragraphing practices seems to return to Scott and Denny's analysis of the paragraph: "The

mechanical paragraphing does not always represent every joint in the structure of the essay. The joints are of greater or lesser importance, and hence it is frequently left to the options of the writer to determine whether he shall mark the articulation (1) at every joint, (2) at the larger joints, or (3) for the sake of variety follow now one plan, now the other" (97).

However, in his later work, particularly his "X/Y: Some Basic Strategies of Discourse" (1977), Pitkin seems to return to a more sentence-like model for the paragraph. Pitkin there claims that discourse exhibits a "binary-hierarchical" structure which is reflected at all levels of discourse. This model echoes the binary model of transformational grammar which defines an English sentence as consisting of two parts: a Noun Phrase (a head noun and all its modifiers) and the Verb Phrase (a finite verb with all of its modifiers). Thus, Pitkin seems to be asking his readers to consider that if a S ----> NP + VP, then a paragraph must also reflect this same structure.

Closer examination of Pitkin's position, however, reveals that he is consistently aligned with Rodgers' and the model of the essay for the paragraph. As he writes in his dissertation (1973): "one can find in the verbal behavior called discourse a finite set of patterns at work. If one cannot find patterns, discourse must be defined as the linguistic chaos beyond the sentence" (25). Thus, the structure of discourse at its greatest level of generality is simply mirrored in the sentence, not dictated by the understanding of sentence

structure. What Pitkin seems to argue is that sentences are not the model for understanding discourse beyond the "double-cross" boundary; in fact, the converse is true: extended discourse beyond the level of the sentence has a structure which the sentence happens to reflect. Thus, the sentence reflects the structure of discourse, not the reverse as presented by the traditional paragraph lore.

In the past fifteen years, a quite different approach to the paragraph has been suggested. Researchers have begun to consider that neither the sentence model nor the essay model accurately accounts for the paragraph. This approach looks at the issue of "coherence" and claims that levels of coherence define the paragraph, not overt structural elements that exist at the level of the sentence or at the level of the essay as a whole. The claims for coherence suggest the next section of this chapter, the essential elements of the paragraph.

The Principles of the Paragraph

Alexander Bain, as Lewis notes, is the first to point to any essential characteristics or principles which define the paragraph[8]. These six were pared to three by Wendell Barrett[9]. And these three have survived until today: Unity, Coherence, Mass (or as Brooks and Warren labeled it, Emphasis)[10]. The only significant shift in the understanding of these three elements comes in the area of coherence, for coherence has been the only element to merit its own research and response.

One of the first examples of focusing on coherence as the essential element is W. Ross Winterowd's essay, "The Grammar of Coherence"

(1970). Winterowd begins by lamenting,"Just at the point where it could best serve rhetoric transformation generative [T-G] grammar fails: it does not jump the double cross mark (#) that signifies sentence boundary . . . (225). Thus, he continues, T-G grammar, though helpful in style, has done little to aid in the understanding of invention and organization (226). He does claim, however, that coherence aids in the understanding of what happens beyond the #-boundary, for when one perceives coherence in discourse, one has perceived form. And in perceiving its form, one has perceived coherence.

To understand coherence, Winterowd claims, one needs to know what constitutes coherence. First, he finds that "case" relationships are the "first 'layer' . . . that make up coherence" (227). Winterowd, following the T-G grammar model, finds that there is a "deep structure" relationship of case which remains "invariable," even though writers may enlist several syntatic options which demonstrate these case relationships[11]. Winterowd takes the sentence,

"Jones paid Smith the money with a check,"
through several "transformations" (direct object/indirect object exchange, the passive transformation, and so on) to illustrate this principle about case relationships.

The second layer of coherence for Winterowd is the level of syntax, including those options which allow "inserting sentences within other sentences by means of coordination." After listing a few methods, Winterowd moves to the heart of his argument for coherence as the defining characteristic of discourse:

> there is a set of relationships beyond case and
> syntax and . . . this set constitutes the relationships
> for coherence--among the transformational units of a
> paragraph, among paragraphs in a chapter, ... I
> call these relationships transitions, and I claim . . .
> we perceive coherence only as the consistent relation-
> ships among transitions (228).

Readers and writers know paragraphs, not because they have arbi-

trary punctuation points such as indention, but because paragraphs

exhibit at least one of seven transition relationships[11]:

    --Coordination (expressed by "and")

    --Obversity (expressed by "but")

    --Causality (expressed by "for")

    --Conclusivity (expressed by "so")

    --Alternativity (expressed by "or")

    --Inclusivity (expressed by the punctuation mark, colon [:])

    --Sequential relationships (revealed by transitions such as

       "first . . . second" or "earlier . . . later" (229-30).

Two aspects of "The Grammar of Coherence" make it important to

this discussion: first, Winterowd is using the most recent theories

about language to make a claim that coherence is the most essential

characteristic of the paragraph, and second, by looking at transitions

as the third and crucial "layer" for his view on coherence, Winterowd

echoes one of the earliest writers to consider the paragraph as "the

unit of discourse beyond the sentence," Alexander Bain.

Winterowd seems to be using modern linguistic theory to cor-

roborate Bain's claim about the essential characteristic of the para-

graph. Winterowd shows that there are snytactic and case relationships

only within the #-boundary. Once writers move across the boundary, transition rules must apply. Thus, any series of sentences which employ transitions exhibit coherence. And in exhibiting coherence beyond the #-boundary, a level of discourse beyond the sentence is defined, just as Bain claimed.

More importantly, however, Winterowd emulates the organization of Bain's discussion of the paragraph. The first principle for Bain is that "the bearing of each sentence upon what precedes shall be explicit and unmistakable" (142). After setting forth this principle, Bain points to the "employment of proper Conjunctions" which is a condition of this first principle. These conjunctions can be grouped into two classes (142-45):

Co-ordinating	Subordinating
--Cumulative ("and")	These are not sub-
--Adversative	divided but simply
1. Exclusive ("else" or "otherwise")	listed: because, if,
2. Alternative ("or" and "nor")	in order that, and
3. Arrestive ("but")	so on.
--Illiative ("therefore," "thus," "so")	

Note that there are six types classed as co-ordinating and the separate class subordinating. Bain, therefore, finds seven conjunctive relationships which establish an "explicit bearing" on what comes before. Though Winterowd uses different names for his classes, the number of "transitions" he lists, seven, is identical to Bain's.

Another look at coherence is found in B. J. F. Meyer's The
Orangization of Prose and its Effect on Memory (1975). In this book,
Meyers defines a "Semantic Grammar of Propositions" which builds upon
a foundation of two existing notions: "proposition" as defined in
philosophy and "phrase structure rules" from T-G grammar.

Meyer sets forth two "rules" for coherence:

(1) The predicate rule

$$F \longrightarrow P_1 \quad A_{(0)}$$

(2) The argument rule

$$A \longrightarrow i \quad (F)$$

The rules are explained in this manner:

"F" means the "form" or coherence of a passage.

"P" means "predicates" as in logic or philosophy, not as in verbs.

"A" means arguments or "case" relationships[13].

"i (F)" means that the arguments, "A," can be represented as the
indices of other propositions (26).

Meyer's phrase structure rules may be paraphrased in this manner:
the predicate statement says that form or coherence may be rewritten
by one or more predicates along with zero or more arguments. The
argument rule allows for the recursive nature of her grammar. Simply,
the $A_{(0)}$ of the predicate rule may be rewritten as another "form-
structure," $P_1 A_{(0)}$. Consider the following exampled cited by
Meyer. Take the English sentence, Roger rode the horse.

The predicate of the proposition is "rode." The first argument of this predicate (the agent) would be "Roger," or whoever was riding the horse. The second argument of the predicate (the patient) is "horse," or whatever was acted upon. This sentence would be parsed within Meyer's Semantic Grammar framework as:

Rode ⌐agent
      └Roger

      ⌐patient
      └Horse
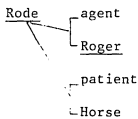
After establishing this Semantic Grammar, Meyer considers a second element, "Rhetorical Predicates." She defines "rhetorical predicates" as two different hierarchical relationships that occur in a written passage[14]. The first relationship, "paratactic predicates," establish a proposition of alternatives (28). These alternatives are considered to be equal in "weight" and may be realized as "two options," "question(s) and answer(s)" or as "problem(s) and solution(s)."

The second relationship, "hypotactic," consists of a superordinate statement which, in turn, is balanced by several subordinate statements (33). The subordinate statements or arguments may describe qualities of the superordinate, may offer an analogy to support the superordinate, or may identify the superordinate as a part in relation to a whole. By combining the rhetorical predicates which establish a framework of hierarchical tensions and the two phrase structure rules

which generate "psychological" relationships, Meyer's grammar of coherence is ready to analyze a passage of prose--whether an entire essay or a paragraph[14].

The studies by Meyer and Winterowd, besides their provocative use of a traditional element of paragraph theory known as coherence, move the theory of the paragraph to the third significant concern that Lewis considered in 1894--what is the rhetorical office of the paragraph?

The Rhetorical Office of the Paragraph

With the birth of movable type and the spreading of literacy, the five traditional offices of rhetoric--invention, arrangement, memory, elocution, and style--slowly shifted to three: invention, arrangement, and style. Thus, as the paragraph began to find its place in the nineteenth century rhetorical tradition, it had to have a rhetorical office. The two candidates were, and still are, invention and style.

Bain's position on the office of the paragraph is ambiguous. When he tells his students that a paragraph "handles and exhausts a distinct topic" (142), he seems to be placing the paragraph under invention. Yet he claims that "every division of discourse" exhausts its topic. Then, at the conclusion of his section on the paragraph, his focus, theoretically speaking, is that the paragraph functions as a "a maxim of style" and he ends the unit with DeQuincy's comments on style.

John Genung, one of Bain's major disciples, also sends mixed messages to students about the office of the paragraph. Genung seems

to have a clear understanding of what invention and style mean, for early in <u>Practical Elements</u> (1886), he points out that "the principles of rhetoric therefore group themselves naturally around two main topics: style, which deals with the expression of discourse, and invention, which deals with the thought" (7). Genung follows through with this distinction even to his organization because he discusses the paragraph as the last unit in his section on "Style" before starting his unit on "Invention." Thus, his students could believe him when he writes " . . . as we call the sentence the unit of style, so we must regard the paragraph as the unit of invention" (194).

However, when Genung writes <u>Outlines of Rhetoric</u> (1893), he tells his students that "The paragraph is virtually an expanded sentence; that is, it contains a subject here called a topic . . . ." (221). The students are left with a question: how can a paragraph follow the principles of a sentence, even an expanded one, and the principles of an entire discourse at the same time?

By the time Scott and Denny and Herbert Lewis contribute to the paragraph tradition, the tradition is nearly established. Perhaps because of Barrett Wendell's insistence on "prevision," Scott and Denny seem to place the paragraph under invention. For example, they tell their students that the "main function [of the paragraph] . . . is . . . to develop a specific subject by bringing particular facts into their due relation to the theme of the whole essay" (102).

But when Scott and Denny illustrate how the theory of the paragraph may be applied to a prose passage, their position seems to be as

ambiguous as Bain's and Genung's. They, like Lewis, talk of "stadia."
Their explanation of "stadia" comes from the positing of a human thought
pattern which moves "toward some point of interest, eddies about it a
moment, then hurries on to another" (94). With this frame of refer-
ence, Scott and Denny seem to prefigure Rodgers' "discourse-centered"
approach, for they turn to a piece of prose and show that it has three
important "stadia and ten "partial conclusions divided among the three
stadia," demonstrating to their students that the passage may be para-
graphed in at least three different ways (97). They conclude: "The
paragraph taken by itself is, indeed, a brief essay, the one difference
being that the essay is complete by itself, whereas the paragraph . . .
can be truly understood only in its relation to the remainder of the
essay" (101).

However, if the students look closely at the analysis of the piece
of prose which Scott and Denny conduct, they will find that the empha-
sis is not on how writers discover relationships, but on how writers
select options for expressing relationships. Thus Scott and Denny are
really considering the paragraph as a function of style. For example,
they never show how "facts" could be suggested in relation to the
theme of the composition. Second, they consider the options they
establish as dependent upon the "character of the readers to whom
the writer is addressing himself" (100). And third, as they prepare
to conclude their analysis, Scott and Denny cite Renton's <u>Logic of
Style</u> to qualify their analysis of two of the options they have
suggested: "It is very ungenteel to straddle back against a door

post, one leg in the room, and the other in the lobby . . . " (101).
Not only in Renton's title, but also in considering the issue of
"gentility," Scott and Denny seem content to put the considerations
of the paragraph within the office of style.

Herbert Lewis describes the paragraph unambiguously as a "a unit
of invention much larger than the modern sentence" (43). And his
discussion of the process of "invention" is characteristic of much in
The History of the English Paragraph, for he is able to look back and
find what is important in Bain's associationist psychology, as well as
look forward and apparently anticipate Rodgers' "stadia."

Lewis explains that "The process of composition is always rela-
tively an intuitive one." The writer, Lewis claims, "conceives his
paragraph topic before he develops it, though of course in the process
of development the associations of the symbols may lead him afield."
As noted in Chapter One, an essential aspect of Bain's association
psychology is the mind's capacity to form aggregates or new combinations
that are distinct from any previous experiences[15].

Then Lewis goes on describing this process in terms of "nebulous
masses" with "luminous centers." This very description is cited in
Rodgers' "A Discourse-Centered Rhetoric of the Paragraph" (1966).
However, Rodgers classes Lewis' "nebulous masses" as a "horizontal
image" which uses paragraphing to indicate "successive conceptual leaps
and lingerings" (4). After dismissing this "horizontal image,"
Rodgers likens writing to music, "a complex sequence of events in
time. Subordinate patterns occur with the sequence, many of them

interpenetrating and partly coinciding with others" (5). Rodgers'
music analogy does not seem that foreign to Lewis' "nebulous masses"
with "luminous centres"; the similes employed by both are not mutually
exclusive. Sound and light have both been considered waves and par-
ticles and both images allow for "subordinate patterns" that "inter-
penetrate" or "coincide."

This connection between Lewis and Rodgers seems even clearer when
Lewis' masses and centers are juxtaposed with his earlier claim that
the real question about a paragraph "that nearly every great writer
asks has not been, Is this paragraph a group of sentences? but, Is this
paragraph a real stadium in the thought" (26). In his next paragraph,
Lewis makes it clear that the "stadia" are not always logical, which
seems to be echoed in Rodgers' assertion that even though a great deal
of stadia are logical, they may also be subject to the flexible parti-
tioning of the thought-movements evident in discourse (5).

Into the twentieth century, the issue of invention and style seems
to be decided in favor of invention. Crawford's "Paragraphs as Trains"
(1912) note in the English Journal and Grainger's response, "'Para-
graphs as Trains'--The Caboose" (1913), show their position by the
simile they have selected. Though prescriptive in their intent
concerning the topic sentence, their notes show that the topic sen-
tence is a cue for further thought, a method of invention.

Thompson's title, "Though-Building in the Paragraph" (1916),
reveals his position just as readily as Crawford's and Grainger's.
His thesis is that the paragraph is a method for discovering the

development of the topic (610). One of his guiding principles in teaching the paragraph is "to teach [students] to interpret, evaluate, and to relate their experiences." And his pedagogy--develop a "working thought," call to mind "ideas, thoughts, facts, experiences, illus-trations . . . that relate" to the thought, choose the best material, work the material into a "fitting topic statement," and then use the remaining material to amplify the statement (610-11)--seems remark-ably close to Maxine Hairston's regimen of pre-writing and incubation (16) which she explains in her 1978 textbook Contemporary Rhetoric, independently of paragraph instruction per se.

Leon Mones' method for "Teaching the Paragraph" (1921) differs slightly from Thompson's process. The instructor seems to be more prominent in Mones' model--either prompting the students or encouraging the discussion which leads to their discovering ideas or details for their paragraphs--but this point is a minor contrast with Thompson. The significant difference between the two is Mones' fervor in attacking the theory of Bain and his disciples, who Mones claims lean towards "metaphysics" instead of encouraging habits of writing (458).

Even Manly and Rickert and their major critic, Herbert Winslow Smith, come to agreement on the issue of the paragraph's rhetorical office, as an "organization of thought" (82). Their advice on how to develop the topic is for the student to consider the subject three ways:

(1) If it is concrete . . . you will naturally think about its parts and qualities; you will develop its details.

(2) If it is abstract . . . you may look for illustrations . . . ;
you may develop it by examples.

(3) Instead of developing the topic by details or examples . . . ,
you may develop it by repetition (88).

Herbert Winslow Smith's attack on Manly and Rickert challenges
this simple method of discovery by claiming that students do not
naturally think in one of the three ways Manly and Rickert suggest
(Smith 393). His solution, still a method of invention, is "the old
fashioned, formal sentence outline, because it checks random associa-
tions and develops in the maturing mind a conception of relevancy
. . . " (394).

Smith would have been pleased, on the other hand, with Brooks and
Warren's Modern Rhetoric. As one of the Modern Rhetoic's reviewers
points out, " . . . Brooks and Warren . . . believe that people may
be helped toward straight thinking; in their chapter on the paragraph
and the sentence, as well as in their appendices . . . , they show
how [straight thinking] may be done" (Stauffer 21). Their decision
on how to make best use of paragraph instruction, clearly as an aid
to invention, fits Smith's conviction that the errors in writing come
from sloppy thinking.

When looking at the issue of the paragraph's rhetorical office in
the 1960's, the consensus is not as evident. Rodgers, in "A Discourse-
Centered Rhetoric," holds that "Paragraphs are not composed; they are
discovered" (6), and in "The Stadium of Discourse" (1967), he concludes
with the aphorism: "A paragraph is where you invent" (182). Both

articles reveal his agreement with Lewis and most of the others from the early twentieth century that the paragraph belongs to invention, not style, which is a marked contrast with the rhetoricians of the nineteenth century. The paragraph, as it is presented in the twentieth century, reflects a shift away from the rhetorical and pedagogical functions of the paragraph toward the structural function--where invention does indeed occur.

Rodgers' orientation is explicitly toward invention, yet he implicitly claims that Becker's tagmemic approach and Christensen's generative paragraphs are more in keeping with rhetorical notions of style. For example, in his contribution to the symposium on the paragraph, he starts by claiming that he, like Christensen and Becker, will consider the "unit of style beyond the sentence" (72). He is being coy with this choice of phrasing, for his arguments clearly show his departure from any preoccupation with style per se. Also, Rodgers equates Christensen and Becker with the nineteenth century's insistence on the sentence as the model for the paragraph, which leads the nineteenth century to lean toward style as the office for the paragraph.

Rodgers' analysis of Christensen and Becker is most compelling, however, when he considers the distinction between formal and functional concerns of the paragraph. In "A Discourse-Centered Rhetoric," Rodgers reveals a functional concern in calling for rhetoricians "to understand why indentations occur when they do" (4). Christensen, as Rodgers points out, wants to show that the paragraph has "a structure as definable and traceable as that of the sentence and that it can be

analyzed in the same way" ("A Generative" 162). "Structure" denotes "form," not function. And Becker's model "sets off a unit which has a kind of internal structure allowable by the rules of the language, just as an independent clause is punctuated by a period or a period substitute" (159).

These associations with formal or structural concerns instead of functional concerns compel Rodgers to relegate Christensen's and Becker's models to concerns of style, not invention: "Structure does not govern indentation," he writes. "Rather, the indentation isolates and interprets structure" ("Symposium" 73). And this last assertion lends itself to Winterowd's assessment of the rhetorical office of the paragraph; for clearly, Rodgers' claim about form proceeding from function is compatible with Winterowd's model of coherence.

Winterowd makes clear that his focus is on the paragraph's rhetorical office: "transformational generative grammar has been tremendously useful in the study of style, but it has little application . . . to invention and arrangement" (226). His point serves two purposes: a tacit attack on Christensen and Becker and a commitment to looking at the paragraph as an aspect of invention. And after his list of conjunctions that assure coherence, he tells his readers that these conjunctions move a writer across the #-boundary to "that very point at which _inventio_ and _dispositio_ begin" (228).

By the time Winterowd makes his comments about coherence and the paragraph's belonging to invention, the fourth and final issue of

paragraph theory found first in Herbert Lewis' dissertation has fully

emerged: Is the paragraph best understood by its form or by its

function?

Form and Function of the Paragraph

The issue of form and function is not debated in the nineteenth

century textbooks, simply because those texts assumed the preeminence

of form. A survey of the texts indicates this inclination. Genung,

like many of the others, spends time talking about the "types" of

paragraphs: preliminary, transitional, amplifying (_Practical_ 211-12).

And in _Outlines of Rhetoric_ (1893) Genung tells his student writers,

"the structure of the paragraph concerns principally the relation of

its parts to each other, a relation that involves what has been called

'the secret of dovetailing style'" (228).

Barrett Wendell's emphasis on "prevision"--according to which the

topic sentences of each paragraph fit into a part of the sentence

outline (126)--shows the rigors of this emphasis on form. In his

"Notes to the Teacher," Wendell reinforces the importance of form over

function when he tells the instructor: "[the students'] knowledge of

the chapter on paragraphs is . . . tested thus:

Paragraphs: I. Summarize the theme you criti-

                                      cize, paragrph by paragraph.

                   II. 1. Kinds of paragraphs.

                            2. Principles of composition.

                            3. Denotation and connota-

                                tion." (iv)

After studying the paragraph with Wendell, students may have an awareness of the forms of paragraphs, but they will have little, if any understanding of how to produce paragraphs that do what the writer wants them to do.

For Scott and Denny, the paragraph's form is most important, for it is "psychologically and pedagogically" best suited for instructing beginning writers (iv). This conclusion comes from their premise that

> Learning to write well in one's own language means
> in large part learning to give unity and coherence to
> one's ideas. It means learning to construct units of
> discourse which have order and symmetry and coherence
> of parts. It means learning theoretically how such
> units are made, and practically how to put them together
> . . . . The making of such units is in general terms
> the task of all who produce written discourse (iii).

Scott and Denny's approach to producing "written discourse" tells students that first they must recognize the isolated forms they will be producing and then model their writing on those rigid forms.

This insistence on the paragraph's form, however, poses potential problems. Students, as Mones charges, spend too much time labeling types of paragraphs instead of producing paragraphs. Also, student writers are compelled to emulate the forms on which they have been drilled; however, actual writing does not always lend itself to such neat types as Genung and Scott and Denny laboriously prescribe. Thirdly, the paragraphs produced are often mechanical or unnatural, even though they do conform to the structures students have been tested on. Still, student writers find themselves in a double jeopardy—they must produce unnatural forms or risk failure because instructors

regularly value the more natural "sounding" forms which do violate
the patterns. Lastly, and most importantly, emphasis on form belies
the historical evidence which clearly shows that the paragraph was born
from a functional necessity--a resting point for the eye ("Discourse-
Centered"4).

One can, however, understand why these nineteenth century writers
placed so much value on form. The textbook writers had inherited a
formal view of language born from the English Renaissance. A growing
vernacular must and would be purified by molding the vernacular to fit
Latin forms-- regardless of the fact that Lain syntax depends more on
surface form to do its work than English does. Vernacular English--
in the Renaissance, in the nineteenth century, and today--is far less
concerned with surface form and depends heavily on function. The
growth of English clearly shows a movement away from patterns of form
towards patterns of function, a movement that effectively accounts
for the loss of English inflections. The best example is the break-
down of the English infectional system. Only the English pronouns
preserve the different forms for different functions of subject and
object; nouns have long since lost any subject/object inflections.

The nineteenth century writers were content to consider form and
to ignore function; however, as Becker points out with the tagmemic
approach, and as Rodgers calls for in his discussion of stadia, form
seems to be equal to or proceed from function. Becker asserts, for
example, that tagmemes are "composites of both form and function"
(155). Rodgers goes so far as to use a functional simile to stress the

paragraphs function when he likens paragraphs to buoys that mark out a
channel among reefs ("Stadia" 179). And Josephine Miles, more
conservative in her model of the paragraph than either Becker or
Rodgers, concedes that "the basic parts of speech . . . are not just
items but are also functions, and perhaps any of the items may serve
any of the functions . . . " (185).

Perhaps one of the most revealing analyses on this issue of form
and function is Kenneth Pike's Language in Relation to a Unified Theory
of the Structure of Human Behavior (1967). His work on language and
human behavior illuminates the gap between depending upon forms and
coming to terms with functions in language. This gap which Pike
explores uncovers implications for understanding the theory of the
paragraph.

Pike's exploration of the gap between form and function starts
with an important step in explaining language behavior. He is
convinced that the observer may perceive a language event--such as
discourse--through one of two "lenses":

    (1) the "etic" lens "which views the data in tacit
         reference to a perspective oriented to all
         comparable events . . . of all peoples, of all
         parts of the earth . . . ."

and (2) the "emic" lens that "views the same events,
         at the same time, in the same context, in
         reference to a perspective oriented to the
         particular function of those particular events
         in that particular culture, as it and it alone
         is structured" (41).

How do these terms--etic and emic--illuminate the issue of form and function? If an observer is looking at data in reference to a universal perspective, "of all people, of all parts of the earth," then the observer will tend to look for forms. However, if the observer is content to look at the data in reference to "the particular function of those particular events . . . ," then the observer will be considering function. The etic and emic perspectives explain some differences in Bain and Lewis, while illuminating the form/function split.

To understand the "etic" perspective of Alexander Bain, one only need consider Paul Rodgers' "Alexander Bain and the Rise of the Organic Paragraph" (1965). In this essay, Rodgers summarizes the growth of interest in the paragraph: The shortening of the sentence from the days of Milton and Hooker while paragraph length remained stable posed a problem because more sentences per paragraph make the parts of the paragraph more "disjointed," allowing the writer and the reader to be "more easily thrown off [the] track" (McElroy 198). This problem of disunity is compounded in the nineteenth century with the shift of pedagogical emphasis from oral discourse to written. As Rodgers explains, "The paragraph does not exist in spoken discourse; it arises only in written contexts, where its function . . . is comparable to that of punctuation" (405)[17]. Hence instruction on the paragraph becomes "obligatory."

In response to this felt obligation to deal with the paragraph, Bain steps forth with a "theory." The paragraph is a unit of discourse between the sentence and the essay; the paragraph exhausts its topic;

the paragraph, like the sentence, must obey six basic principles:
explicit reference, parallel construction, an opening statement, a
logical sequencing of sentences, unity of purpose, and appropriate
weight depending on importance. Rodgers shows that all of Bain's
principles are "formed deductively, first by assuming a close organic
similarity between the paragraph and the sentence, then by applying to
the paragraph the classical sentence-oriented rhetoric he had
inherited" (406). Bain does not attempt to view the paragraph "in
reference to a perspective oriented to the particular"; his deductive
approach could only emerge from a perspective "oriented to all
comparable events . . . of all peoples, of all parts of the earth."
Bain's perspective, as Rodgers' essay clearly suggests, is deductive
and etic (a perspective on experience which looks for comparable
behaviors across all cultures)--which leads to _formal_ concerns.

Lewis, on the other hand, works in his dissertation from an
inductive point of reference. Bain's deductive and etic perspective,
which allowed for the "tenuous and unproductive" organic parallel
between the sentence and the paragraph, requires "later investigators
[to work] by induction" ("Alexander" 407). Also, Rodgers points out
that these investigators can find too many paragraphs which are obvi-
ously satisfactory yet run "afoul of Bain's dictum." Thus, the stage
is set for Lewis.

Lewis looks at paragraphs and sentences in their contexts. He
counts sentences per paragraph and considers average words in a sen-
tence. He notes the number and types of connectives used by writers from

the Old English period to Pater and Barrett Wendell. Only after counting hundreds of paragraphs and thousands of sentences which he has considered "in reference to a perspective oriented to the particular function of those particular events . . . as it and it alone is structured," does Lewis offer some observations about the paragraph. Thus Lewis' dissertation reveals his perspective as emic (a perspective on experience which looks for uses and patterns of use within a particular group) and inductive--which leads to _functional_ concerns.

Though the formal/functional issue is exemplied in the words of Bain and Lewis, the form/function question may be further illuminated when one recalls the distinctions made in the Introduction between the three approaches to the paragraph. One approach, the rhetorical approach, looks to the "usage" of the paragraph, that is the actual indenting practice of writers. The second approach, the structural, considers how writers work within large sections of discourse (larger than "usage" allows for "rhetorical" paragraphs) as a way to discover and explore relationships in their writing. The third approach, which the third chapter explores in detail, is the pedagogical approach which is born out of the nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph and which ignores the possibilities of the other two approaches by mandating the form _and_ function of the paragraph as being confined to the limits of paragraph indentations.

The first two approaches are explicable by using Pike's emic and etic perspectives. Clearly, the rhetorical paragraph emerges from the etic perspective. We paragraph every eight to ten lines of typed

text because we are "oriented to all comparable events . . . of all peoples, of all parts of the earth .. . ." Somewhat overstated, admittedly, but nevertheless true. We indent just as we follow other usage constraints, such as comma use or use of post office abbreviations for the fifty states. All English speakers, whenever they write, typically follow certain patterns of "punctuation" for their paragraphs. The reason why we do so is based on "comparable events" we have observed and which we accecpt.

The structural approach, on the other hand, is understood through the emic lens that Pike provides. Each writing task is specific, isolated, unique. Thus, the relationships writers discover as they make paragraph blocs are "oriented to the particular function of those particular events . . . ." As one writes, one looks for connections and patterns of development which are not always coterminous with the patterns of indentation mandated by usage.

Though the emic and the etic perspectives highlight, from a theoretical perspective, two of the three approaches, the perspectives do not adequately explain the pedagogical approach. Therefore, either the theory is flawed, or the pedagogical approach is flawed. My position, as stated in the Introduction, is that the pedagogical approach is flawed theoretically and--as shown in Chapter Three-- pedagogically.

The four theoretical concerns discovered in Lewis have been addressed. Where does this leave writing teachers? The theory of the paragraph today, as it is informed by the distinctions described

above and by a shift in our understanding of language and discourse, can best be explained thus:

Theoretically, the paragraph is no longer viewed as a distinct unit of discourse as it is in the nineteenth century tradition; pedagogically, however, it is.

Theoretically, the paragraph's unity and emphasis no longer take on a significant role. Coherence has remained an important aspect of the paragraph, but this element of the paragraph is intimately related to the nature of writing--that the discourse event is _not_ perceived at the same time and at the same location it is produced. Thus, coherence is essential if readers are going to have a chance at decoding the message. Pedagogically, however, the three elements of unity, emphasis, and coherence are treated with the same degree of importance as they were in Bain's day.

Theoretically, the paragraph seems more readily placed under the office of invention. Pedagogically, however, ambiguity arises.

For example, a typical college handbook, Prentice-Hall's Handbook for Writers (1985), defines the paragraph as "rather like a miniature essay . . . " (343). This "miniature essay" may have problems in three areas: unity, coherence, and development. On looking at the section on development, the students find this pronouncement: "Readers want details--they _need_ details--" (369). Yet if the students look for ways to "invent" or discover details, they are told to consider outlining "each paragraph by the Christensen indentation method" and to look "for omissions in the paragraph's levels of

supporting details" (372). This advice does not sound like "how to work out a line of thought from its central theme through its outline to its final amplified form" which is how Genung defined invention in Practical Elements in 1866 (7f).

Yet when students look to Handbook for Writers for ways to solve coherence problems in their paragraph, they are told to make sure their ideas "flow" and to check for this flow "as you revise and edit" paragraphs (351). These suggestions—particularly concerning editing comments—seem closer to issues of style. Yet, the specific advice, listed as "Organizational options," include methods of invention: chronology, space relationships, comparison/contrast, cause and effect.

In actual practice, as revealed in textbooks and handbooks, the paragraph is presented in a confusing manner, mixing invention and style. This confusion could be easily remedied if textbook writers would either (a) avoid the specious instruction on the paragraph all together or (b) explain to students the difference between the rhe-torical paragraph (which belongs to style) and the structural para-graph (which fits under invention).

Theoretically, the problem of form and function can be addressed by Pike's emic and etic perspectives, by current theories of grammar which give precedence—or at least equal time—to function, and by recognizing two clearly defined functions of the paragraph: rhetorical and structural. Pedagogically, however, form seems to have precedence.

An example of this nearly exclusive pedagogical dependence on form comes from Lynn Troyka's Handbook for Writers. Her advice on function

is treated in little over a page. Students are told the paragraphs
may function to inform or to persuade (73). Yet Troyka quickly moves
to form and spends most of what remains on the section looking at
topic sentence placement (76-79) and at methods which ensure coherence
(83-87).

The theory of the paragraph, therefore, has come back to where
this chapter started--to Charles Cooper's claim that the "concern
about paragraphs and their structure is misplaced . . . ." As far as
those who consider theory today, structure or form of the paragraph
is not of significant importance, except how structure of isolated
paragraphs informs whole-discourse level decisions. Thus, the para-
graph theory of today shows how the paragraph lends itself to creating
tension between awareness of intention and use

> of linguistic structures that enable writers and readers
> to use discourse coherently. And it is just this sort if
> syntactic-rhetorical double vision that effective writers
> use when they write. No sentence-combining approach that
> ignores or devalues the problems of the rhetorical inten-
> tion can ever help students develop this double vision.
> But, no purely rhetorical consideration of developing
> intention can accomplish this double vision, either. What
> teachers of writing need is a heuristic that naturally
> emphasizes both part and whole, that encourages developing
> writers to see chunks of syntax as resulting from choices
> made on the whole-discourse level, and that encourages them
> simultaneously, to define and redefine their intentions in
> light of those syntactic chunks (Comprone 226f)

Though balanced between syntactic options and rhetorical inten-
tions, the paragraph has no real identity of its own. The paragraph
is a clue, a mark--"designedly dropt"--which indicates parts that
remind the readers there is a whole, which tells writers that

sentence level decisions follow from discourse level intentions, and which serves as points of reflection where reader and writer can decide what meaning is being defined or needs re-defining.

The problem remains, however, to translate this theoretical vision into a workable methodology for students in a writing class. Alexander Bain's deductive approach, in Paul Rodgers' words, has placed "paragraph rhetoric in a deductive cage, from which it has yet to extricate itself" (Alexander 408). In theory, the paragraph has freed itself, but in practice, the bars of the cage are still evident, even after years of being hack-sawed by both theory and empirical study [18]. The next chapter considers what elements in the pedagogical approach dominate classroom practice with the paragraph, what the empirical studies say about these practices, how these practices have survived (even in the face of strong evidence that shows the practices are not used by real writers), and what--if any changes-- appear to be making their way into the classroom as the paragraph moves towards its second century.

NOTES

[1] William Strong is responsible for several books which exploit Hunt's
and Mellon's work on sentence combining and syntactic fluency:
Sentence Combining: A Composing Book. New York: Random House, 1973;
Sentence Combining and Paragraph Building. New York: Random House,
1981; Practicing Sentence Options. New York: Random House, 1984;
and Crafting Cumulative Sentences. New York: Random House, 1984.
Other works which take advantage of the student's innate competence to
combine syntactic elements are Donald Dailer, Andrew Kerek, and Max
Morenberg's The Writer's Options: Combining to Composing, 2nd ed.
New York: Harper and Row, 1982 and William Stull's Combining and
Creating: Sentence Combining and Generative Rhetoric. New York:
Holt, 1983.

[2] See Walter Beale, Karen Meyers, and Laurie White's Stylistic Options:
The Sentence and the Paragraph. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1982;
Charles R. Duke's Writing Through Sequence. Boston: Little, Brown,
1983; and Glenn Leggett, C. David Mead, and Richard Beal's Handbook
for Writers. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985.

[3] According to the Library of Congress National Union Catalog, Young,
Becker, and Pike's Rhetoric: Discovery and Change saw only one imprint
and that was 1970.

[4]The "rhetorical paragraph" described here should not be confused with the "rhetorical approach" to the paragraph which has been discussed at several points. What Lewis is calling the "rhetorical paragraph" is really the pedagogical, isolated paragraph which Scott and Denny present as the model for composition instruction.

[5]See John Nichol's _Primer of English Composition_. London: np, 1891; T. W. Hunt's _The Principles of Written Discourse_. New York: np, 1891; and Barrett Wendell's _English Composition: Eight Lectures Given at the Lowell Institute_. New York: np, 1905 (first published in 1891).

[6]The editors of _College Composition and Communication_ asked the three major theorists of the time, Francis Christensen, A. L. Becker, and Paul Rodgers, to respond to one another's work in an article simply known as "Symposium on the Paragraph." CCC 17 (1966): 60-80. Any textual citations to this article will include "Symposium" to distinguish these writers' comments from other works by them.

[7]See Christensen's _Notes Toward a New Rhetoric_. New York: Harper and Row, 1967 or the original article which led to the "Symposium" of 1966, "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence." CCC 14 (1963): 155-161.

[8]Bain's six principles appear as sub-heads 159, 175, 176, 177, 178, and 179 in _English Composition and Rhetoric_. They are as follows:

    I.   " . . . the bearing of each sentence upon what precedes

          shall be explicit and unmistakable."

   II.   " . . . consecutive sentences . . . should, as far as

          possible, be formed alike."

  III.   "The opening sentence, . . . is expected to indicate . . .

          the subject of the paragraph.

   IV.   "A paragraph should be consecutive, or free fromdiloca-

          tion."

    V.   "The paragraph should possess unity."

   VI.   "As in a sentence, so in the paragraph, a due proportion

          should obtain between principal and subordinate elements."

[9] See Wendell's English Composition (1905), 128f.

[10] See James A. Reinking and Andrew Hart's Strategies for Successful Writing; A Rhetoric, Reader, and Handbook. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988.

[11] See Charles J.Fillmore's "The Case for Case." In Emmon Bach and Robert Harms, eds. Universals in Linguistic Theory. New York: Holt, 1968: 1-88.

[12] Though Winterowd lists seven relationships, he notes at the beginning of his article that since it first appeared," . . . it seems to me that the sequential relationship is only a special instance of what I call coordinate relationships" (225). Thus, he would now argue there are six, and not seven, as Bain lists.

[13]See note 10.

[14]Meyer is assuming that the passage is a "monologue," i.e. no interruptions with "dialogue" may appear which would affect the coherence of the passage.

[15]See Appendix B, "Content Structure of Passage Used in Study," 205-35 of Meyer's book for an example of her analysis.

[16]See Chapter One, note 3.

[17]See Lindley Murray's An English Grammar. Murray, through all the editions of his text, kept his discussion of the paragraph in the section titled "Punctuation."

[18]See the discussion of four empirical studies which challenge the nineteenth century pedagogy in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE--UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

ABOUT TRADITIONAL PARAGRAPH PEDAGOGY

Richard Graves, in his introductory comments to a selection of essays on the theory of the paragraph, writes that Richard Meade and W. Geiger Ellis' study of the paragraph pursues this question: "Do textbook admonitions accurately reflect current practice in para- graph structure?" (152) Graves responds to his question by saying that Meade and Ellis "give a resounding 'No.'" If textbook admonitions do not reflect current practices, several questions immediately present themselves:

--What are the textbook admonitions?

--How did the textbook methods come about?

--What is the practice by "real" writers?

--Have the traditional methods regarded any of the evidence, both
   theoretical and empirical, or has the evidence simply been
   ignored?

--Why have the traditional textbook methods survived, especially
   in the face of empirical evidence that the methods are
   inaccurate?

To begin to answer these questions, one should begin with the writer who first offered a critical examination of the way the paragraph is taught, Herbert Lewis.

What do Textbooks Teach About the Paragraph?

In The History of the English Paragraph (1894), Lewis looks to the comments on the paragraph in the works of those who proceeded him-- Bain, Genung, Wendell, Scott and Denny--and charges: "All the definitions [of the paragraph] thus far given were framed primarily for the purposes of pedagogy" (22). The pedagogy Lewis surveys has quite simple prescriptions:

   (1) Paragraphs should exhause their topics (Bain 142).

   (2) Paragraphs should exhibit six basic principles--

      I. explicit reference to all which lies within the paragraph.

     II. parallel construction for like ideas.

   III. the first sentence should announce with "prominence" the subject of the paragraph.

    IV. consecutive arrangement of ideas.

     V. overall unity within the paragraph.

    VI. subordination of less important details.

                           (Bain 142-52 passim)

Or paragraphs may exhibit three essential characteristics:

      I. Unity--the paragraph should develop one and only one central idea (Wendell 123).

     II. Mass--the principle is evident when the unity of the paragraph can be demonstrated by "summarizing [the paragraph's] substance in a sentence whose subject shall be a summary of the closing sentence, . . . " (128f).

III. Coherence--the relationships within the paragraph are
       unmistakable (134).

(3) Paragraphs should have topic sentences which should be
      placed at the beginning of the paragraph, at the beginning
      and the end of the paragraph, or--on occasion--at the end.
      (Scott and Denny 21).

These same prescriptions about the paragraph are clearly echoed
in composition textbooks today. Consider some of the paragraph
instruction that students encounter:

--Paragraphs and Themes, a popular textbook in the late 1970's
and early 1980's which has seen at least four editions, presents the
structure of the paragraph by saying, "Good paragraphs possesses four
qualities: unity, completeness, order, and coherence." And a page
or so later, Canavan adds to these qualities the suggestion that a
good paragraph usually has "a good topic sentence [which] expresses
a single main idea" (41).

--One of the recent handbooks on writing, Hans Guth's A New
English Handbook (1985), acknowledges change in writing by including
guidance on word processing, yet Guth maintains the traditional
instruction on what makes good paragraphs: "In most well-written
paragraphs, we include a clear statement that tells our readers:
'This is what I am trying to show' . . . . A topic sentence is a
sentence that sums up the main point or key idea of a paragraph" (266).
Guth also includes the important elements of a good paragraph--the
material is relevant to one another (what McElory calls "free from

dislocation"), the material is adequately developed, and the material is coherent (265-77 passim).

    --Jean Wyrick informs the teachers who use her Steps to Writing Well: A Concise Guide to Composition (1987) that her section on paragraphs "discusses in detail the requirements of good body paragraphs: topic sentences, unity, order and coherence, adequate development, use of specific detail, and logical sequence" (iv). This actual discussion looks like Barrett Wendell's "prevision," for Wyrick shows her students to use topic sentences from their paragraphs as main points in the outline of the essay as a whole (32). She also includes a rule in the middle of page 33 to remind students: "Most body paragraphs you will write require a topic sentence. In addition, every paragraph should have adequate development, unity, and coherence."

    --John Lannon's The Writing Process: A Concise Rhetoric (1985) spends several chapters looking at the paragraph. One of the first chapters shows that the paragraph "is an idea unit, one distinct place for developing one organizing point, a space for making [the writer's] meaning exact" (40). Quite a bit later, students are told to remember that "a paragraph body has several sentences supporting the topic statement, [just like] an essay body has several paragraphs supporting the thesis statement" (166).

    --Even in books that are exploiting timely topics such as writing across the curriculum or on-the-job-writing, students will still find much of the traditional paragraph instruction which continues the nineteenth century tradition of McElroy, Genung, and

Scott and Denny. In Maimon, et al Writing in the Arts and Sciences
(1981), students find the rather innovative notion that writing is an
effective way of learning; however, when they are told about para-
graphs, they are told to remember, "Each paragraph should have a
thesis statement and a commentary upon, a development of, or evidence
for that thesis" (149 f). And in a textbook designed for "career-
education students," the paragraph instruction echoes traditional
pedagogy: "Paragraphs can stand by themselves as miniature essays,"
"most paragraphs . . . consist of several sentences that develop one
and only one idea," and paragraphs should obey the rules of unity and
adequate development (Hart 12-33 passim).

This nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph has dominated
the instruction students have received--and still receive. Not that
the content of this tradition has been aired, the question to consider
is how this pedagogy developed.

How did the Pedagogy of the Paragraph Come About?

Paul Rodgers' "Alexander Bain and the Rise of the Organic Para-
graph" (1965) points to several changes in the mid-nineteenth century
that lead to Bain's paragraph rhetoric and its wide spread acceptance.
From the start, the paragraph posed problems to nineteenth century
rhetoricians because it does not occur in spoken discourse (405). Yet
the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnesses a shift from the
oratorical premise of the classical tradition--exampled by Blair,
Campbell, and Whatley--toward a written rhetoric.

Textbook writers, who were themselves schooled in Blair's
Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) or Campbell's

The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1850), found that their training seemed
inadequate for addressing the needs of writing. First, neither Blair
nor Campbell even consider the paragraph. Second, the rhetorics of
Blair and Campbell seem to depend on what Applebee calls "the flowers
of rhetoric" (8). Look, for example, at this sampling of Blair's
table of contents:

<div style="margin-left:2em">

Lect. II . . . . Taste

    III . . . . Criticism--Genius--Pleasures of Taste--

               Sublimity in objects

    IV .. . . The Sublime

     V . . . . Beauty, and other Pleasures of Taste

    XVI . . . . Hyperbole--Personification--Apostrophe

               (vol. I vii-viiii)

</div>

George Campbell's The Philosophy of Rhetoric is one of the
successors of Blair's Lectures. Though first published in 1795,
Campbell's several imprints and editions (save a condensation in
1911) appeared exclusively in the nineteenth century and shaped
classroom practices until the last decade or so of the century. Lloyd
Bitzer says in his introduction to Philosophy that those who taught
before Bain clearly favored Campbell's work "as a text for students
of oratory, composition, and criticism" (xi). A glance at the contents
of Philosopy reveals that Campbell, just as Blair, is committed to the
"flowers" of rhetoric:

Though Blair and Campbell seem to dominate the century, they begin to lose favor when writing supplants the tradition of oral composition. Rodgers' historical survey in his essay on Bain and the organic paragraph traces the course of events that culminate with oratory being divorced from the classroom practices of rhetoric.

Rodgers reports that the evidence for this shift may be found as early as 1827 in Samuel Newman's Practical System of Rhetoric, noting that Newman's text "seems to have been the first American rhetoric . . . [to concern] itself almost exclusively with written composition" ("Alexander" 402n). After tracing the shift through the 1840's and into the 1860's, Rodgers concludes that "the separation of voice and delivery from rhetoric was generally accepted by the 1880's" (402).

Along with this shift from voice and delivery toward a rhetoric of writing, a second significant change occurred in classrooms, especially in America. America's educational systems in the post-Civil War years faced mass confusion because the students who occupied the chairs in the college and university classrooms changed. Suddenly, men--and women--from broader cultural and socio-economic backgrounds found their way into composition classes. Before, instructors could

expect that their students came from similar economic backgrounds and had shared cultural values and experiences. However, with the democratization of education following the industrial revolution, many men and women became first generation college students, and their backgrounds were not highly literate or culturally sophisticated. This lack of shared experiences affected the expectations of college instructors.

This change in shared experiences, in conjunction with the shift from oral to written discourse, is problem enough. Yet a third change also occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The belletristic tradition of Blair and Campbell, which is described above, gave way to the pressures of a scientific and technical tradition. A new prose "genre" was born from the study of science and the rise of business--exposition. Students were no longer encouraged to make "attempts"--"essais" as Montaigne envisioned. They must produce writing that meets the requirements of the "bottom-line." These new students require a "practical" rhetoric, as Rodgers describes it, that assures adequately developed paragraphs which exhibit unity ("Alexander" 407).

With all these changes occurring in the classrooms--the shift from oral to written, the change of the student population, the supplanting of "essais" with exposition--there was near anarchy in departments of English and rhetoric. Robert Connors sees this anarchy and comments:

> What occurred between 1870 and 1895 was a shift from a
> concrete, form-based model [of writing] rooted in lit-
> erary high culture to a more pliable, abstract model
> that seemed to be adaptable to anything which a rising
> young American might wish to say   ("Rise" 447).

Thus, events required someone to step forward and assert order

over this chaos in the classroom and lead the way in developing this

adaptable, abstract model for writing. Alexander Bain's rhetoric

of the paragraph, modified somewhat by his followers—but otherwise

intact, emerged with prescriptions that assured this order for the

classroom. Rodgers reminds his readers at the end of his essay on

the organic paragraph that "on the surface [Bain's] appeal is wholly

to logic and empirical authority"; however, Rodgers goes on to warn

that beneath this facade the pedagogy of the paragraph is deductive

and arises from the model of the expanded sentence (408). And Bain's

prescriptions, though addressing the immediate needs of classroom

teachers faced with chaos, placed "twentieth-century paragraph rhetoric

in a deductive cage, from which it has yet to extricate itself."

Bain's appeal, as Rodgers rightly claims, bore only a semblance

to empirical authority. The late 1960's and early 1970's, however,

offer significant and authoritative studies of the paragraph whose

conclusions are—at best—surprising when compared to the current

pedagogies, for the studies show that actual practice is at odds with

traditional textbook claims about the paragraph.

What do "Real" Writers do with Paragraphs and how does the Pedagogy
Deal with the Theoretical and Empirical Studies?

The first empirical studies to show the descrepancy between
pedagogy and practice of "real" writers is Richard Meade and W. Geiger
Ellis' report, "Paragraph Development in the Modern Age of Rhetoric"
(1970). The premise for their study is candid and obvious--"Much
attention has been given to the phase of organization usually referred
to as the paragraph. Because of the dearth of research investigations
on rhetorical concerns [such as the paragraph], the teacher has been
left to rely largely on the recommendations of textbooks" (193).

Meade and Ellis go on to report that various events--the CCC
conference on the paragraph in 1958 and Albert Kitzhaber's comments
on the paragraph in Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of
Writing in College (1963)--lead them to look for research which
supports the traditional textbook recommendations which the CCC
conference and Kitzhaber challenge. They turn to Richard Braddock's
Research and Written Composition (1963), which is a compendium of
research on theory and pedagogy, and find no research which defends
the traditional pedagogy against such assertions as Kitzhaber's:
"the majority of handbooks present a dessicated rhetorical doctrine
that has probably done a good deal more over the years to hinder good
writing than to foster it--the position of the topic sentence and
mechanical rules for developing expository paragraphs" (136).

Thus, Meade and Ellis see a "dual attack" on the issue of
traditional writing instruction: do writers actually practice the

methods for paragraph development which are born from Bain's deductive
approach and which consume great deals of time in classes and space
in textbooks? And, how do writers go about using any method in their
writing? Meade and Ellis, after posing the two questions, report on
their observation concerning the first.

Their methodology is relatively simple. They look at three hun-
dred paragraphs randomly selected from three print sources: one hundred
paragraphs from a popular source, Saturday Review; one hundred para-
graphs from a professional publication, English Journal; and one
hundred paragraphs from the letters to the editor section of the
Richmond Times-Dispatch newspaper. The paragraphs from Saturday
Review and English Journal are considered as they appeared in print;
Meade and Ellis use the actual letters sent to the Times-Dispatch, for
journalistic practices may have required some changes from the letter
writer's intentions.

Their observations reveal that fewer than 50 percent of the three
hundred paragraphs exhibited the usual prescriptions found in text-
books: 53 out of 100 from the Saturday Review used no textbook method,
62 out of the 100 from the Times-Dispatch avoided traditional para-
graph prescriptions, and 53 out of the 100 randomly selected from
English Journal indicated no usual method of development (195). Also,
Meade and Ellis report that the 44 percent of the paragraphs depended
on only two methods of development: reasons and examples[1].

Meade and Ellis suggest a conclusion based on their observations:
"A teacher may therefore question the validity of teaching all the

methods textbooks include . . . " (199). And from this conclusion,

Meade and Ellis tell their readers,

> Much teaching in the English class in the past--attention
> to formal grammar, for example--was irrelevant to the real
> use of the language. A similar danger exists in the
> modern age of rhetoric if the English teacher, in the name
> of rhetoric, turns to formalities of paragraph development
> irrelevant to the output of contemporary writers . . . "
> (200).

But as the survey of textbooks included here, or anywhere, indi-

cates, this conclusion about "irrelevant formalities" has gone

unheeded over the past fifteen years since Meade and Ellis' research.

A second empirical study of the paragraph considers "The fre-

quency and Placement of Topic Sentences in Expository Prose" (1974).

Richard Braddock looks to the prescriptions about the topic sentence

that appear in the pedagogy and asks, "How much basis is there for us

to make such statements to students or to base testing on the truth

of them?" (311) He plans to pursue this question with two lines of

investigation: what percentage of paragraphs do indeed contain topic

sentences and, if they occur, where in the paragraph do they appear?

His procedure is similar to Meade and Ellis' methodology,

Braddock uses a corpus of material randomly selected by Margaret Ashida

from popular magazines such as The Atlantic, Harper's, The New Yorker,

The Reporter, and The Saturday Review. Braddock works with 25 essays

garnered from Ashida's 420 and begins with going through each article,

numbering the paragraphs.

After numbering the paragraphs, Braddock inserts "a penciled slash

mark after each T-unit in each paragraph and [then writes] the total

number of T-units at the end of each paragraph" (312). Braddock uses Kellogg Hunt's description of T-units as "the shortest grammatically allowable sentences into which . . . [writing can] be segmented." Braddock wants to locate the T-units for two purposes: to have a "standard conception of a sentence" which avoids differences in punctuation and to be able to determine which T-unit functions as the topic sentence (312-13 passim).

As he begins to search for the topic sentence, Braddock runs into problems: "After several frustrating attempts [to underline the topic sentence] . . . , I realized that the notion of what a topic sentence is, is not at all clear." Finding no adequate and elegant description of the topic sentence, Braddock concludes that topic sentences may appear as he develops sentence outlines for each of the 25 essays in his corpus. Sentence outlines, he decides, "omit transitional and illustrative statements and concentrate on the theses themselves" (314).

After analyzing his T-units and classifying his data into headings such as "simple," "delayed-completion," "assembled," and "inferred," Braddock is able to conclude: "It just is not true that most expository paragraphs have topic sentences in [the composition textbook] sense" (320). He can then move from this conclusion to some implications for teaching writing: both teachers and textbook authors should "exercise caution" in making claims about the frequency of topic sentences in contemporary prose and textbooks, teachers, and reading-test makers should be more careful in defining the "topic

sentence" and give students assistance in dealing with delayed-completion and implicit topic sentences. Braddock summarizes his study by pointing out that even though topic sentences may be helpful for students in developing their paragraphs, teachers should not imply that the topic sentence came from words written in the skies ("Discourse-centered"4), but that topic sentences, at best, aid in making the writing clearer for both the writer and the reader.

Again, as the brief survey included above indicates, no one seems to have wanted to clarify the definition of the topic sentence nor have any textbook writers elected to tone down their claims about the frequency or the occurrence of topic sentences.

In yet another study, "The Psychological Reality of the Paragraph" (1969), Koen, Becker, and Young report on their results of giving students long pieces of discourse without indentations and having them mark paragraph boundaries. When the discourse is "normal" English prose, the students agree with one another 80 percent of the time. Koen, Becker and Young take the experiment further and remove all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, replacing them with non-sense words, "paralogs" (50). Still, they report their students have 75 percent agreement on paragraph breaks.

Robert Connors uses these findings to make the claim that "the paragraph is a psychologically real unit that depends on both formal and content based cues for its identity" (Dissertation 461). Connors goes on to assert that the findings from Koen, Becker, and Young refute "Rodgers' contention that many paragraphs are indented by their authors in a completely arbitrary way."

However, Koen, Becker and Young and Robert Connors seem to miss a crucial point. If the students agree, fine. But how closely do the students' intuitions match those of the writer's paragraph <u>intentions</u>? Isn't this agreement important in talking about the "psychological reality" of the paragraph? Don't "real" writers insert paragraph marks--either rhetorical or structural--for some purpose in aiding the reader through the task? However, Koen, Becker, and Young indicate in their study that they chose not to compare the students' paragraphing with the author's.

Another question concerns Koen, Becker, and Young's methodology. Students were told to mark on the page where paragraphs appear. The question arises, however, would students be more likely to agree if they are acting as <u>readers</u> and mark as they go through the discourse <u>or</u> is their agreement more likely to occur when they copy or "<u>write</u>" the discourse? In reading, we are dependent upon the writer's cues--or else we are likely--as were the freshmen students in Koen, Becker, and Young's study--to "come up for air" more often than we are supposed to. Writers, on the other hand, paragraph for usage or "coming up for air" <u>and</u> for other purposes. Thus, how can we unequivocally say the paragraph is psychologically real when there are too many variables that affect its occurrence?

In an attempt to answer these questions about reading and writing and in an attempt to see how agreement among students at a community college match with the paragraphing from Koen, Becker, and Young's study, I gave three groups of students a brief essay by Stephen Jay

Gould, "Ever Since Darwin." This piece was chosen for two reasons:
it is used in The St. Martin's Guide to Writing (1985) as an example
of how students intuitively know paragraph points. Secondly, the
passage is rather difficult to read, thus requiring the students to
read for "both formal and content-based cues," just as in the nonsense
passages in Koen, Becker, and Young.

The three groups used in this mock of Koen, Becker, and Young's
study were:

Group 1: Developmental English students who were placed in
pre-college work because of an inadequate score on a placement essay
holistically scored by members of the English department.

Group 2: Students who were enrolled in the Spring Quarter 1988
in English 113--Research and Composition. These students have
completed two quarters of freshman English and have demonstrated
adequate control of academic writing to be enrolled in English 113.

Group 3: Developmental reading students who were placed in a
course to improve their reading comprehension and speed. These stu-
dents were placed into reading because they scored less than eleventh
grade, fifth month (11.5) on the Nelson Denny reading test adminis-
tered by the Davidson County Community College placement service.

The students in Groups 1 and 2 read the essay and then were asked
to copy by hand the Gould piece and insert paragraph indentations where
they believed paragraphs should go. These students were told not to
type the essay. This caution was inserted to assure that the students
consider the material as if they were playing the role of writer.

Trained typists can duplicate a piece of prose and not know what has
been written. Group 3 was told to read the essay and insert para-
graph points with a slash mark (/) or a square bracket ([). Table 1
shows the results of the exercise.

Table 1.0
Results from the Three Groups Marking Paragraphs
in an Essay

	Number of Sentences Marked as Paragraphs	Mean Number of Paragraphs Found
Group 1 (N=13)	19/30	5.92
Group 2 (N=14)	25/30	8.00
Group 3 (N=17)	28/30	6.35

Table 1 shows that the more advanced readers/writers in Group 2
tended to find two more paragraphs out of the thirty sentence essay
than the lesser skilled developmental groups. However, the skilled
group seems almost as willing as the group of readers to mark para-
graphs more often than the developmental English group. The develop-
mental writers found 19 places for paragraphs; however, the other two
groups found 25 or 28 out of only 30 sentences.

The issue to consider next is the percent of agreement that can
be discovered from the sampling. However, some problems present them-
selves in defining agreement. First, how many students must select a

sentence as a point for a paragraph before one can say the students
"agree"? Secondly, every student in the sample agreed that the first
sentence is a paragraph point; however, this agreement skews what the
sampling is trying to discover. Koen, Becker, and Young were careful
to avoid this issue because the subjects in their study were told that
"each passage might or might not begin or end with a paragraph" (50).

    Because the instructions for the three groups of students did
not indicate the possibility of the presence or absence of a para-
graph at the beginning or the end of the essay, this sampling found
100 percent agreement among the students in all three groups that the
first sentence indicates the beginning of a paragraph. Since students
were not properly instructed and since even the most basic writer
knows that the first sentence of a piece of discourse is usually
marked as a paragraph, this percentage is considered moot and
Table 1.1 indicates the mean "agreement" among the students where
two or more students indicated a paragraph point.

Table 1.1

Agreement among Students on Paragraph Marks

	Mean % of agreement for paragraphs (based on 2+ decisions)
Group 1 (N=13)	35%
Group 2 (N=14)	47%
Group 3 (N=17)	34%
Mean % for the three groups	39%

When the points of indentation are counted, the students agree with one another only 39 percent of the time, with those who were "writing" the essay tending to agree more often than those who were "reading" the essay. Also, almost as one would expect, the more advanced writers tended to agree more often, yet their agreement is less than 50 percent and far less than what Koen, Becker, and Young report.

Koen, Becker, and Young report their findings in a table which indicates the percentage of agreement at the sentence junctures. For one of their sample passages, the data are reported:

Passage	No. junctures	Percentage of S's marking paragraphs				
		0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100
5E	19	14	1	1	0	3

(Reproduced here from p. 51 of Koen, Becker, and Young's Table 1)

Thus, out of this passage where somewhere between 9 and 14 under-graduates read the passage and marked paragraphs at sentence junctures labeled with brackets [], only at 3 junctures did the students agree 80-100 percent of the time. Yet, in their discussion of these data, Koen, Becker, and Young report, "In other words, there was 80 percent or better agreement for 17 of the 19 junctures" (50).

If the data from the sampling of community college students are placed in a table such as Koen, Becker, and Young (Table 1.2), the following is revealed:

Table 1.2

Community College Sample Modeled on Koen, Becker, and Young's Data

Group no.	No. junctures	Percentage of S's marking paragraphs				
		0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100
1	30	19	7	1	2	1
2	30	16	6	6	0	2
3	30	20	3	4	2	1
Totals	90	55	16	11	4	4

Out of the 90 sentences considered for this sampling, at 55 junctures students agreed less than 20 percent of the time, and at only 4 junctures could students agree 80 percent of the time or better. In other words, given any passage of discourse, only at 13 percent of the sentence junctures will students be able to agree 80 percent or better on whether a paragraph belongs at that juncture.

Thus the sample collected from community college students does not differ greatly from Koen, Becker, and Young in that in roughly 1 out of 10 sentence junctures of non-indented prose students can agree 80 percent of the time or better. This figure, however, seems far less than what Connors reports in his dissertation, which leads him to assert that the paragraph is a psychologically real unit.

These data show that far less than 80 percent of the time can students agree with one another where the paragraphs should appear, if, indeed, the researcher wants to definitely learn about this sort of agreement. Koen, Becker, and Young's study is disturbing at this very point. They present, in their discussion of the data, that their sample agreed 80 percent of the time. However, close examination of their data reveals that yes—80 percent either agreed or disagreed about the location of paragraphs. What Koen, Becker, and Young present as 80 percent agreement is that at 14 of the 19 junctures students agree less than 20 percent of the time. This figure is added to the 3 junctures where they found 80-100 percent agreement for them to make their claim of 80 percent agreement. In reality, the students only agreed at 3 junctures and disagreed at 14. When this reading of

the data is considered and when one considers that Koen, Becker, and Young's sample included only 9-14 students, then one needs to consider how reliable is Connor's psychological reality of the paragraph.

Of course, my attempt to follow-up Koen, Becker, and Young's study may err in the definition of "agreement." Thus, Table 1.3 reports where at least half of the students agree a paragraph should belong (with sentence one deleted).

Table 1.3

At Least 50% Agreement among Students

Group 1 (N=13)	Group 2 (N=14)	Group 3 (N=17)
Sent. 9-69% (9/13)	Sent. 3-50% (7/14)	Sent. 4-59% (10/17)
Sent. 24-61.5% (8/13)	Sent. 11-50% (7/14)	Sent. 24-76.5% (13/17)
	Sent. 24-86% (12/14)	
	Sent. 28-57% (8/14)	

Using the raw data from Table 1.3, the Table 1.4 reveals the mean percentage of agreement from each group.

Table 1.4

Mean % of Agreement among Students

Group 1 (N=13)	65%
Group 2 (N=14)	61%
Group 3 (N=17)	67.5%

Table 1.4 seems to show agreement more in keeping with Koen, Becker, and Young's study. However, the number of points of agreement are so small that one must question the reliability of the agreement. Out of the 30 sentences in Gould's essay, Groups 1 and 3 could only find 3 (exactly 10 percent of the sentence junctures) where the students could agree 50 percent of the time or more. Group 2 agreement is better--4 sentences out of 30 (13% of the junctures).

Yet another issue in terms of agreement needs to be considered-- what of the points of agreement with Gould? In other words, how often do the students' paragraph points agree with Gould's indentations and intentions? Table 1.5 illustrates this issue.

Table 1.5

Students' Agreement with Paragraph Marks in the Essay

Gould's para- graphing	Group 1 (N=13)	Group 2 (N=14)	Group 3 (N=17)
Sent. 1	13/13	14/14	17/17
Sent. 8	0/13	2/14	4/17
Sent. 11	5/13	7/14	7/17
Sent. 13	3/13	3/14	3/17
Sent. 24	8/13	12/14	13/17
Sent. 28	3/13	8/14	7/17

Table 1.6 takes these raw data and converts them into percentages for simpler comparisons.

When the students' paragraph, as indicated in Table 1.6, is compared to Gould's original paragraphing, the students' agreement with his marks range from 29 to 46 percent. Though Group 3, who only read and marked paragraphs, tends to make a larger number of paragraphs (28 out of 30 sentences are labeled as paragraphs by at least student), the students agreed with Gould more often than Group 1, the "unsophisticated" writers of Gould's essay. Nevertheless, Group 1 tends to mark fewer sentences as paragraphs (only 19 out of the 30 sentences). Of course, Group 2 has the greatest amount of agreement with Gould's marks, which should not be a surprise since these students have had more experience with writing and reading than those in the other groups.

Table 1.6

Percentage of Agreement with Paragraph Marks in

the Essay

Gould's para- graphing	Group 1 (N=13)	Group 2 (N=14)	Group 3 (N=17)
Sent. 1	100%	100%	100%
Sent. 8	0%	14%	23.5%
Sent. 11	38%	50%	41%
Sent. 13	23%	21%	18%
Sent. 24	62%	86%	76.5%
Sent. 28	23%	57%	41%
Mean %	41%	54.5%	50%
Mean % (without Sent. 1)	29%	46%	40%

What do all these percentages mean? Perhaps that Koen, Becker, and Young's study needs to be reevaluated with a broader range of students before one claims, as Connors does in dissertation, that the paragraph "is a psychologically real unit." Perhaps the students who make up this current sampling does not have the sophistication of the university undergraduates in Koen, Becker, and Young's study. However, the number of students involved in this sampling is in keeping with Koen, Becker, and Young's sample; they employed 9-14 students, and this sample used 13-17.

Regardless of the controls--number of subjects, similar passages and instructions, levels of experience--comparing the two samples does

illuminate several important issues for those who wish to consider further the "psychological reality" of the paragraph. Koen, Becker, and Young ask their students to mark paragraph points as readers; the sample for this dissertation asked the students in two groups to make paragraphs as writers. The unsophisticated group of readers does agree with Gould more often than the unsophisticated writers; however, the readers tend to make more paragraphs (almost 50 percent more than those in Group 1) and they do agree less often with one another (only about 35 percent of the time) than the Group 1 writers (who agree 38 percent).

Also, those in this sample who are sophisticated readers and writers still do not display anything near the level of agreement reported by Koen, Becker, and Young. This difference may be explained in several ways. The students in this present survey may just be poorer readers and writers than in the earlier study. Certainly most people today are familiar with decline of American's students. The difference between what readers expect and what writers supply may be more different than Koen, Becker, and Young's study can explain. Or, perhaps Koen, Becker and Young's report of 80 percent agreement may be more ambiguous than Connors allows. Just because students agree where paragraphs do not belong, does not mean that students will agree where paragraphs do belong.

Whatever the case, this present study suggests the need to reevaluate Koen, Becker, and Young's findings and further suggest that the "psychological reality of the paragraph" may not refute Rodgers'

contention about stadia of discourse as Connors would have us believe.
In fact, just the opposite may be true; for even though one may agree
with Connors that paragraphs are "psychologically real" for readers,
the "writer'" samples for this present survey seem to confirm Rodgers'
claim that paragraphs are discovered. The "writers" mark fewer para-
graphs and are more likely to agree with one another than those who
marked as they read. Also, the "writers" of Groups 1 and 2 can deal
with larger pieces of discourse than the readers. Simply, when the
readers do not have marks to guide them, they insert marks wherever
they take a rest; writers, on the other hand, can view the discourse's
larger function and supply paragraphs as the paragraphs work to
establish or develop that larger function, not simply because the
writers needed to stop and reflect.

A fourth empirical study, Thomas H. Utley's "Testinf Standard
Modern Paragraph Theories" (1983), attempts to show just what the title
suggests: Which of the three modern theories best account of para-
graphs selected from published sources? Utley uses Becker's tagmemic
approach (the operations of variation, lexical equivalence classes,
lexical transitions, and verb sequences); Christensen's coordination,
subordination, and mixed sequences (as well as Christensen's claim
that the topic sentence should appear in the initial position); and
Rodgers' stadia of discourse which influences paragraphing patterns.

Utley reports that of the corpus he analyzed, 32.8 percent of the
paragraphs could be explained by Becker's tagmemic approach, 30.8
percent by Christensen's model, and 100 percent by Rodgers' stadia.

Utley concludes that Rodgers' model allows "for sequences not neces-
sarily coterminous with paragraph boundaries and for more flexible
concepts of flunctuations in the abstraction levels within sequences."
Thus, Utley's empirical observations uncover a crucial concern that
has been followed throughout this dissertation's analysis of the
paragraph--the distinction between form and function, which, in turn,
informs our understanding of the rhetorical and the structural
approaches to the paragraph.

What do the Textbooks say about
the Research and the Theories?

If these empirical studies are to be believed even marginally,
then teachers should exercise caution in their lectures about the
placement of topic sentences, the ways paragraphs are developed, and,
perhaps, reconsider their entire approach to the paragraph. However,
teachers rarely consider the theories of Becker, Christensen, or
Rodgers, simply because few teachers have been advised by their texts
to "exercise caution" concerning the traditional approach to the para-
graph. Textbooks are not considering the empirical research and only
a handful of the writing texts incorporate the new theoretical work
which challenges the nineteenth century pronouncements about the
paragraph. Look, for example, at a few of those textbooks which do
acknowledge that, perhaps, the nineteenth century tradition of the
paragraph needs to be reassessed.

--Jim Corder tells students, in Contemporary Writing: Process
and Practice (1979), that "a recent study of paragraph form shows that

somewhat fewer than half of the paragraphs examined had a single, plainly recognizable topic sentence" (255). Though Corder does not note this "recent study," he is surely referring to Braddock's "Frequency and Placement of Topic Sentences" (1974). Of thirty-two rhetoric texts surveyed concerning paragraph instruction, Corder is the only text to acknowledge the existence of an empirical study which presents counter-evidence to the traditional pedagogy[2] list the books).

--Out of the thirty-two texts surveyed, ten texts (see note 2) followed Christensen's "generative rhetoric of the paragraph[3]. This number, nearly 30 percent, should not be surprising because Christensen's approach is the most conservative of the three and goes so far as to insist that the topic sentence be the first sentence in the paragraph[4].

--In this survey, five textbooks (see note 2) inform students of Becker's tagmemic method (though the texts often use different vocabulary and rarely acknowledge Becker).

--And in the textbooks surveyed, only two (see note 2) mention paragraph chunks in such a way as to echo Rodgers' stadia of discourse.

Regardless of what the studies and the theories claim, however, textbooks clearly prefer the traditional paragraph instruction. Of the thirty-two texts considered, seventeen hold the line on the nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph and essentially ignore the work of the last thirty years.

Why Have the Theories and the Studies Been Ignored?

The question remains, however, since over the past thirty years the tradition has at least been questioned: why have more than 50 percent of the current textbooks elected to ignore the issues that have dominated professional literature and even shaped the theme for the CCC conference in 1958?

One reason the challenges have been ignored is that the theoretical approaches are not easily adapted to classroom practice. Christensen has had the most success, perhaps because his model is reminiscent of the sentence-combining approach and because he preserves many of the nineteenth century pedagogy's vocabulary: the topic sentence, coordination, subordination[5]. Becker has had some following, particularly with the increasing interest in the process approach to writing. His typology--TRI and PS--offers students "hooks" which are far more helpful in generating and shaping their ideas than Christensen's levels of generality which connote structure or form instead of heuristic.

A second reason why the tradition has been preserved is the essentially conservative nature of teaching. That "teachers teach the way they were taught" has become accepted as a truism. Thus, when teacher training for English spends a great deal of its time focusing on the study of literature and traditional theories of language, then few innovative or challenging approaches will make their way into a classroom. Look, for example, at transformational-generative grammar which goes far in explaining why students produce the sentences they do. Yet

few high school teachers have been exposed to this model for grammar and fewer dare use--except indirectly in sentence-combining exercises.

Third, many writing instructors are intimidated by the teaching of writing, thus they depend on the traditional pedagogies to help them deal with their anxiety. Especially since the emphasis on the process approach began ten to fifteen years ago, teachers have become apprehensive about the teaching of writing because (1) the process approach does not lend itself readily to "content-driven" pedagogies and (2) the process approach demands that teachers model for their students. As one reader responded on looking at the argument against the paragraph which I summarize in the introduction, "If the paragraph isn't taught, what would teachers teach in a writing class?"

With the process approach, teachers have found themselves in the uncomfortable position of meeting their classes, but not having any material for formal lectures. The topic-sentence and development model of the pedagogical approach solves this problem. Also, if students are drilled on topic sentences and development, then the teachers do not have to read so much writing. As Scott and Denny argued in their introduction to Paragraph Writing, the bane of a writing teacher's life is having to read student writing. Short answers--such as underline the topic sentence--and requiring only short paragraphs of eight to ten lines give teachers the opportunity to avoid the burden of reading student writing. And, when time in class is spent with drill on topic sentence location and modes of develoment, teachers do not have to take the responsibility to write

themselves; thus their credibility as a writer can go unquestioned-- as their credibility might well be questioned if they did model writing regularly for their students.

A fourth, and provocative explanation for the maintenance of the traditional pedagogy may be gleaned from Susan Sontag's essay, "Against Interpretation" (1969). Sontag challenges the tradition of the New Critical approach to literature, which she says starts with Marx and Freud and which " . . . [reduces] the work of art to its content and then . . . tames the work . . .. Interpretation [of the New Critical ilk] makes art manageable, conformable" (17). "To make manageable and conformable" is the goal of most composition teachers. And this conformity can be assured if students are required to follow the prescriptions of the nineteenth century rhetoric of the paragraph.

Sontag goes on to say that the role of interpretation has been "to translate the elements of the poem or play or novel or story into something else." This attitude is rife in a composition class. Teachers often feel compelled to take the "stuff" of the students' essay and "translate it" into something that it is not. If nothing else, consider the traditional pedagogical model of the essay--five paragraphs. Students know from their reading in magazines and news- papers that discourse does not follow the pattern of five, and only five, paragraphs. Yet teacher after teacher, especially at the secondary level, demands that student essays be no more, nor less, than five paragraphs.

Sontag's essay addresses the question of form and says that legitimate "criticism," from her perspective, should avoid "excessive

stress on content [which] provokes the arrogrance of interpretation,
[and should develop] more extended and more thorough descriptions of
form . . . " (22). By "form," Sontag is suggesting a vocabulary for
"the temporal arts": "What we don't have yet is a poetics of the novel,
any clear notion of the forms of narration" (22n). Her comments here
echo the problem with the study of the paragraph; teachers do not have
a "poetics" of the paragraph, nor even of the essay. Thus, teachers
find their pedagogy is far simplier when they depend upon prescrip-
tions instead of descriptions.

    Sontag goes further to say the critics, or composition teachers
for that matter, schooled in New Criticism find it easier to "show
what [a piece] means," than to be able to show "how it is what it is
. . . " (23). This "meaning-based" approach to a language act domi-
nates all language instruction in English classes, even though the
last thirty years have witnessed major shifts--at least in profes-
sional journals and at professional conferences--in how one goes about
explaining language. Look at how sentences are parsed: nouns are
"persons, places, or things"; verbs are simply "action words"; and
so on. Little instruction at the sentence level concerns itself with
"how a sentence is what it is." This same attitude contaminates
writing instruction beyond the level of the isolated sentence. A
paragraph can not be what it is; the paragraph must mean--"a unit
of structure higher than a sentence."

    Thus the traditional rhetoric of the paragraph survives in
textbooks and composition classrooms because it is expedient and

because it is meaning based instead of form or function based—in spite of what language theory tells teachers, in spite of what empirical evidence shows teachers, in spite of what new theories of the paragraph tell teachers, and in spite of what may (and probably is) in the best interest of the student writers.

To illuminate this gap between the traditional pedagogy and what current discussion of the paragraph suggests, I conducted a study in the spring of 1986 at Davidson County Community College to see if, indeed, any tangible results can be determined when comparing the work of students who received traditional instruction with the work of students who received no explicit instruction on the paragraph at all. The following chapter reports on the results of this study.

NOTES

[1]In Manly and Rickert's The Writing of English (1923) students are
instructed to develop paragraphs in one of two ways:

    1. If [the subject] is concrete--a person, thing, place, or

        event--you will naturally think about its parts and qualities;

        you will develop it by details.

    2. If [the subject] is abstract--a class, a truth, a law--

        you may look for illustrations of it in the concrete; you

        may develop it by examples (88).

Manly and Rickert's two methods seem quite similar to what Meade and

Ellis discover. Manly and Rickert's first suggestion seems to be

more like "examples." If something is concrete, students give examples

of this concrete object's parts or qualities.

Also, their second suggestion seems more like "reasons" than examples.

If the students' subject is an abstraction, they may give "reasons"

why a class is a class or why a law should be followed or a truth is,

indeed, the truth. Of course, students may return to the first sug-

gestion and give their readers details as to what the qualities are

of a certain class or some details about "the Parts" of a truth or

a law.

If nothing else, Manly and Rickert are able to intuitively know fifty

years before Meade and Ellis that paragraphs typically depend on a

small set of methods for development.

Sullivan, Walter and George Core. Writing From the Inside. New
    York: Norton, 1983.

Taylor, Maureen P. Writing to Communicate; A Rhetoric, Reader, and
    Handbook for College Writers. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1983.

Tyner, Thomas E. Writing Voyage: An Integrated, Process Approach
    to Basic Writing. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1985.

Trimmer, Joseph F. and Nancy I. Sommers. Writing With a Purpose,
    8th edition. Hopewell, NJ: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

Woodman, Lenora and Thomas P. Adler. The Writer's Choices.
    Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1985.

The following texts make specific reference to Christensen's

rhetoric of the paragraph:

Adelstein, Michael E. and Jean G. Pival. The Writing Commitment.
    Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1976.

Beale, Walter, Karen Meyers, Laurie White. Stylistic Options: The
    Sentence and the Paragraph. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman,
    1982.

Cavender, Nancy and Leonard Weiss. Thinking/Writing. Belmont, CA:
    Wadsworth, 1987.

Howard, C. Jeriel and Richard Francis Traca. The Paragraph Book.
    Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1982.

Leggett, Glenn, et al. Handbook for Writers, 9th edition. Engle-
    wood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985.

Lannon, John M. The Writing Process: A Concise Rhetoric. Boston:
    Little Brown, 1983.

Neman, Beth. Writing Effectively. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill,
    1983.

Reinking, James A. and Andrew W. Hart. Strategies for Successful
    Writing: A Rhetoric, Reader, and Handbook. Englewood Cliffs:
    Prentice-Hall, 1988.

West, William W. Developing Writing Skills, 3rd edition. Englewood
    Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Winkler, Anthony C. and Joe Ray McCuen. Rhetoric Made Plain, 4th
     edition. Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1984.

The following texts make use of Becker's tagmemic theory by encour-

aging students to organize paragraphs using TRI [topic/restriction/

illustration] (so some slight modification) and PS [problem/solution]

strategies.

Adelstein, Michael E. and Jean G. Pival. The Writing Commitment.
     Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1976.

Corder, Jim W. Contemporary Writing: Process and Practice.
     Tucker, GA: Scott Foresman, 1979.

Duncan, Jeffery L. Writing From Start to Finish: A Rhetoric With
     Readings. Atlanta: Harcourt Brace, 1985.

Levin, Gerald. The McMillan College Handbook. New York: McMillan,
     1987.

Neman, Beth. Writing Effectively. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill,
     1983.

The following two texts use "paragraph bloc" in much the same way

that Rodgers describes "stadia":

Irmscher, William F. and Harryette Stover. Holt Guide to English: The
     Alternate Edition. New York: Holt, 1985.

Neeld, Elizabeth Cowan. Writing Brief, 2nd edition. Glenview,
     IL: Scott Foresman, 1986.

[3]Two of the texts listed as using Christensen's method--Adelstein

and Pival (1976) and Neman (1983)--also use Becker's tagmemic

method. These authors tend to use Becker's tagmemes as a methods for

development and Christensen's "generative rhetoric" as a way to

account for paragraph "movement or modification within the paragraph"

(Adelstein 286).

Secondly, one should note that Beale, Meyers, and White (1982) depend heavily on Christensen for their analysis of the sentence, yet they shift to one of Christensen's students, Willis Pitkin, and discuss paragraphs as "discourse blocs" which demonstrate a binary, hierarchical structure of function units. For further details on Pitkin's system, see his "Discourse Blocs," CCC (May 1969): 138-47 and "X/Y: Some Basic Strategies of Discourse," CE (Mar. 1977): 660-72.

[4]Compare Christensen's headings from "The Generative Rhetoric of the Paragraph" to traditional nineteenth century pedagogy.

Christensen's Heading	19th Century Pedagogy
1. The paragraph may be defined as a sequence of structually related sentences.	1. "When several consecutive sentences iterate or illustrate the same idea, they should, as far as possible, be formed alike" (Bain 148).
2. The top sentence of the sequence is the topic sentence.	2. "The place for the subject is often in the opening sentence; sometimes preceeded, however, by a few words, obviously connective and preparatory" (Practical 196).
4. Simple sequences are of two sorts--coordinate and subordinate.	3. Two ways to assure "explicit reference" in a paragraph are conjunctions of "the coordinating class . . . [and] subordinating" (Bain 142).

6. Some paragraphs have no top, no topic, sentence.

4. In some paragraphs, the "subject cannot so easily be reduced to a proposition, but must be gathered from the general bearing of the whole" (Practical 195).

CHAPTER IV

AN ANSWER TO THE "WHAT IF" QUESTION

After considering what the theories say and what the empirical
studies demonstrate, one has to consider the possibility that the
pedagogy in composition classrooms is either--(1) ineffectual, (2)
confusing to students, (3) ill-founded theoretically, or (4) simply
"burned-out." If not, why do students receive the same instruction
about the paragraph and the modes of development year after year, from
the primary grades all the way through their freshman year of college
writing? Are students simply incompetent and need the same instruction
over and over again? And how can one account for the fact that
instructors often praise student writing that does not follow the
prescriptions of the pedagogy?

To explore further this challenge to the traditional paragraph
instruction which the previous two chapters have revealed, I coor-
dinated a different approach to the study of the paragraph in the
fall of 1985 on the campus of Davidson County Community College.
During the quarter, four sections of freshman composition,
English 111, were selected: two sections of students received no
formal instruction on the paragraph or the modes of development and
two sections were taught the traditional paragraph lore. Otherwise,
the four sections were similar: the process approach was used and
instructors encouraged revisions; all students used the same

textbooks--Reflections: A Thematic Reader (1985) and The Practical

English Handbook, the sixth edition (1982); all instructors used

one-on-one conferencing techniques for which they had received

training in a staff development workshop the previous spring.

Students in the four sections had demonstrated a similar level of

skill in writing or they would not have been placed in freshman

composition. All students, before enrolling in English 111, must write

an essay that is holistically scored by two or three members of the

English department. The essays are scored on a six-point rubric (see

Introduction, n.1). Readers look for clarity of purpose, sense of

audience, indications of development and organization, and some control

over Edited American English (EAE). Students must also pass a reading

test[1] where passing is approximately equivalent to reading at the

eleventh grade level. Even after their placement testing, students

were given a follow-up essay to write the first few days of class. If

an instructor felt a student's performance was below the expectations

of the course, the student was moved to a pre-college writing course

where his or her weaknesses could be diagnosed and remedied. Also,

if students showed a deficiency in their reading, they too were placed

in a developmental English class. To summarize, all students had

demonstrated a basic level of competency in writing before they were

admitted or allowed to stay in English 111.

Most of the students in the sample also come from the same

socio-economic background. The college is located in the center of

Davidson County, a rural county in the Piedmont of North Carolina,

where most income is derived from agriculture or from labor-intensive work in furniture or textile factories. There are three relatively large cities within a forty-five minute drive. Minorities do not figure significantly in the results because they comprise less than three percent of the college population and less than one percent in this sampling. The gender mix was nearly 50--50.

All instructors in the study, even though their actual classroom practices differed, used a similar rating scale. Evaluations of student writing looked first at content--purpose, understanding of audience's needs; (2) development--use of concrete details and experiences; (3) organization--smooth transitions from section to section and some apparent plan for moving the reader from one section of the essay to another; (4) style--avoidance of awkward phrasing or confusing sentence structure, clear and concise use of language; and (5) mechanics--following the conventions of EAE. This hierarchy was carefully attended to by all the instructors involved in the sample. In the spring of 1985, four or five months before the taking of the sample, these instructors participated in workshops that acquainted them with this hierarchy for evaluation, as well as one-on-one conferencing techniques.

Admittedly, there were some variables that could not be controlled in this sort of research: teacher/student personalities, time of day when classes meet, classroom setting, number of students per class on any one day of instruction, student motivation. However, though these factors may play a role, they were not believed to be of major significance.

During the final exam period in November, students in the test classes were given thirty minutes to write an essay (see Appendix G for the prompt and instructions). All students wrote on the same topic, which they had not seen before. All of the students were carefully timed and told to stop at the thirty minute mark. All were given the essay task during the first hour of the exam. All were told that the essay would figure in their final grade, yet the score on the essay would not hurt their performance in the course overall; however, the score could help them. After the exam was written and collected by the instructor, he/she did not see the essays.

An independent panel looked at the essays and scored them holistically on the same rubric used for placement into English 111. Each essay was read twice. If a disparity of more than two points occurred between two of the readers, a third reader looked at the essay. The essays were presented to the scorers as a refresher on holistic scoring and in preparation for a round of essays to be scored on a similar rubric for GED testing.

Following the scoring, the essays were given to another panel of readers who were asked to read each essay and mark what the readers thought to be topic sentences in each of the paragraphs. The members of this panel had taught high school English, and they were instructed to look for topic sentences that matched the definitions they would have given their high school writers. If the readers felt they had found "implied" topic sentences, they were to indicate so by putting an "I" in the left margin next to the paragraph that contained the

implied topic sentence. Essays that did not have clear paragraph
markings (an obvious attempt to indent) were discounted.

As Braddock (1974) reported, looking for topic sentences can be
frustrating. However, the readers who looked for topic sentences were
specifically informed to use the "definitions" they used in their
classes. The rationale for this instruction to the readers is simple:
typically, high school instruction follows the same nineteenth century
definition which has been discussed already. One of the goals of this
study is to determine how many of these paragraphs do indeed contain
topic sentences and if these topic sentences agree with the definition
from the nineteenth century.

The hypothesis which informed this study was quite simple:
instruction in traditional paragraph lore (topic sentence, its proper
location, the modes of development) would not significantly affect
a reader's response to the quality of the students' writing as measured
by holistic scoring. The rest of this chapter reports the data from
this study and discusses what the data reveal.

Tables 2.0 and 2.1 report the raw data from the sampling. The
first column indicates the number assigned to the paper to protect
the anoninity of the writer and for ease of reference. The next two
columns report the scores assigned by the two readers. Note that after
the essay was read by the first reader, her score was hidden so as not
to contaminate the second reader's scoring. The readers never learned
until after the experiment how each other scored the essays. The
fourth column reports the total score. A "perfect" paper would be

Table 2.0

Raw Scores from the Control Group (AR)

Who Received Traditional Topic Sentence Instruction

# Paper	1st Read	2nd Read	Tot. Score	# Top. S's	# of Para.
AR 1	6	5	11	2	2
AR 2	4	5	9	2	3
AR 3	5	5	10	5	5
AR 4	4	3	7	3	4
AR 5	3	3	6	1	1
AR 6	5	5	10	5	6
AR 7	2	1	3	2	2
AR 8	5	5	10	3	4
AR 9	5	6	11	6	8
AR 10	5	4	9	3	5
AR 11	4	5	9	3	4
AR 12	5	4	9	1	1
AR 13	5	3	8	3	4
AR 14	5	4	9	1	2
AR 15	6	6	12	3	4
AR 16	4	4	8	3	4
AR 17	2	4	6	2	2
AR 18	5	4	9	4	4
AR 19	5	5	10	2	3
AR 20	6	5	11	1	1
AR 21	5	5	10	2	3
AR 22	4	3	7	1	1
AR 23	4	4	8	1	1
AR 24	6	5	11	6	6
AR 25	5	2	7	2	2
AR 26	5	4	9	2	8
AR 27	4	5	9	1	3
AR 28	4	4	8	1	1
AR 29	3	3	6	1	2
AR 30	5	5	10	3	2
AR 31	3	2	5	2	2
AR 32	3	3	6	3	5
AR 33	3	4	7	1	1
AR 34	4	4	8	1	1
AR 35	4	2	6	1	1
AR 36	5	4	9	4	5
AR 37	4	4	8	3	3
AR 38	4	4	8	3	4
AR 39	5	3	8	2	5
Totals	171	156	327	95	125
Mean:	4.3846154	4.1282051	8.5128205	2.4358974	3.2051

Table 2.1

Raw Scored from the Test Group (BV)

Who Received No explicit Topic Sentence Instruction

# Paper	1st Read	2nd Read	Tot. Score	# Top. S's	# of Para.
BV 1	4	2	6	1	1
BV 2	4	5	9	2	4
BV 3	3	3	6	3	3
BV 4	4	4	8	2	3
BV 5	4	2	6	3	3
BV 6	6	3	9	0	1
BV 7	4	5	9	2	2
BV 8	4	4	8	4	6
BV 9	3	3	6	4	4
BV 10	3	3	6	2	4
BV 11	3	4	7	2	5
BV 12	3	1	4	1	1
BV 13	4	1	5	2	3
BV 14	4	2	6	4	4
BV 15	4	4	8	3	4
BV 16	2	2	4	0	2
BV 17	5	4	9	3	6
BV 18	4	3	7	2	3
BV 19	4	3	7	4	6
BV 20	4	4	8	4	5
BV 21	4	2	6	3	5
BV 22	3	3	6	2	2
BV 23	2	3	5	1	1
BV 24	4	4	8	5	5
BV 25	4	4	8	1	1
BV 26	3	5	8	3	5
BV 27	2	2	4	1	1
BV 28	5	3	8	2	1
BV 29	4	4	8	3	4
BV 30	3	3	6	1	1
BV 31	3	4	7	4	4
BV 32	3	3	6	4	5
BV 33	3	3	6	3	6
BV 34	6	4	10	3	4
BV 35	3	3	6	3	5
Totals	128	112	240	87	120
Mean:	3.6571429	3.2	6.8571429	2.4857143	3.4286

a score of 12; conceivably, a poor paper could earn a score of "0,"
yet this did not occur. The scores ranged from one perfect 12 in the
control group to a low combined score of 3. The last two columns
report the number of topic sentences found by the second panel of
readers and the total number of paragraphs per paper, respectively.

What do these data reveal? First, the mean number of paragraphs
for the two groups was nearly identical. The control group, which
received traditional paragraph instruction, had 3.2 paragraphs per
essay where the test group had a mean of 3.4 paragraphs per student
essay. This difference is not statistically significant ($\alpha = .01$).

Secondly, the mean number of topic sentence was also nearly
identical. Those who received traditional instruction generated a
mean of 2.44 topic sentences per essay, and the test group generated
2.49. This difference is not statistically significant ($\alpha = .01$).
Note that based on the mean number of paragraphs and the mean number
of topic sentences, the students nearly had one topic sentence per
paragraph.

Thirdly, the raw combined scores were quite different. Those who
received traditional instruction (Table 2.0), had a mean score of 8.5
out of a possible 12. The test group's mean holistic score from two
readers was 6.9 out of a total of twelve. These raw scores reveal
two important points: even though the number of paragraphs and topic
sentences are nearly identical, the control has a higher mean score.
This fact suggests that topic sentences must not factor significantly
in the readers' response, which is supported by the fact that even

though a difference in the raw mean score occurs, it is not
statistically significant (α = .01).

Table 2.2 below reports on the variance of the topic sentence
per group.

Table 2.2

Occurrence of Topic Sentences

<u>Control Group (AR)</u>

No. of topic sentences	No. of occurrences
1	12
2	10
3	11
4	2
5	2
6	2

<u>Test Group (BV)</u>

No. of topic sentences	No. of occurrences
1	6
2	10
3	10
4	7
5	1

Table 2.2 shows that the highest occurrence of topic sentences was 3 (21 instances out of the sample) and that the lowest occurrence of topic sentences 6 (only 2 instances). These data demonstrate that the number of topic sentences does not necessarily improve the quality of the writing. Also, the variance in the number of topic sentences between the two groups is not statistically significant (α = .01).

Table 2.3 illustrates the distribution of topic sentences by the combined readers' score. In other words, this table shows how many topic sentences appeared per "value" of the essay. Keep in mind that a combined score of 12 is the highest score possible.

Figures 1 and 2 give a graphic representation of these data. Though an apparent anomaly appears in Figure 2 at a readers' combined score of 6, the curves are quite similar. In both figures, the lower and upper ends indicate low numbers of topic sentences, while in the middle range of scores, far more topic sentences appear. Curiously enough, in the BV group, which received no formal paragraph instruction, there appears the highest occurrence of topic sentences, 36. The curves are interesting in three areas: in their similarity to traditional bell, in the anomaly that appears in Figure 2, and in the large number of topic sentences in the test group. However, the difference in the number of topic sentences per the readers' combined score between the two groups is not statistically significant (α = .01).

Table 2.3

Distribution of Topic Sentences by Combined Score

Reader's combined score	No. of topic sentences	
	AR	BV
12	3	Ø
11	15	Ø
10	20	3
9	21	4
8	17	27
7	7	12
6	8	36
5	2	3
4	0	2
3	2	Ø

(Note: a Ø (phi) means that no occurrence of this score is in the data, and a 0 (zero) means that for the scores given, no topic sentences appeared.)

Yet, more relationships to explore from the raw data are presented in Table 2.4. In this table, one finds the distribution of paragraphs per the readers' combined scores.
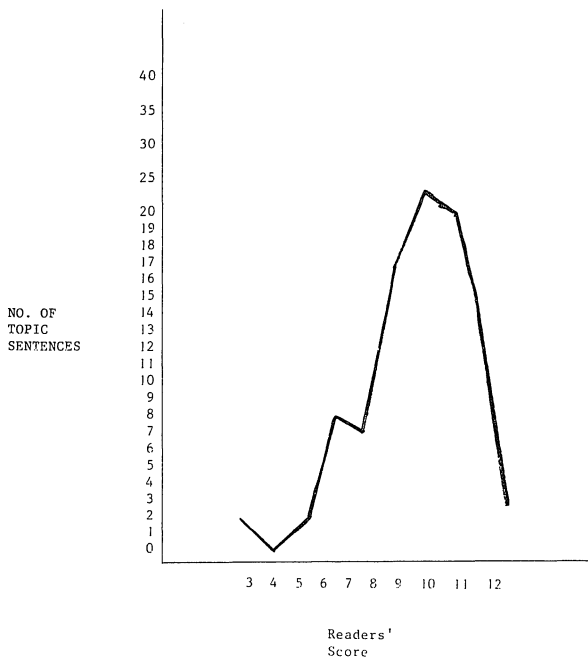
Fig. 1. The Relationship of Number of Topic Sentences
to Readers' Score for the AR Group
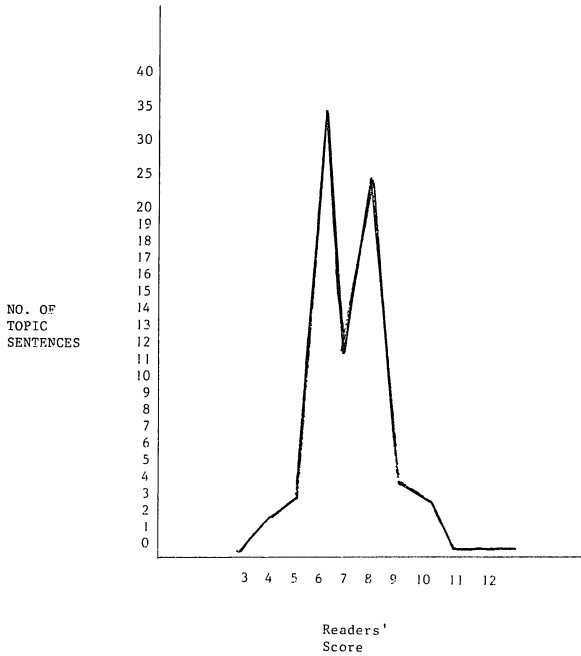
Fig. 2. The Relationship of Number of Topic Sentences to Readers' Score for the BV Group

Table 2.4

Distribution of Paragraphs by Readers'

Combined Score

Readers' combined score	No. of paragraphs	
	AR	BV
12	4	Ø
11	17	Ø
10	23	4
9	35	7
8	23	34
7	8	18
6	11	49
5	2	4
4	0	4
3	2	Ø

(<u>Note</u>: a Ø (phi) means that <u>no</u> occurrence of this score is in the data, and a 0 (zero) means no paragraphs occurred for that score.)

These data reveal a curious pattern. In both cases—occurrence of topic sentences and occurrence of paragraphs—the control group (AR) has more in the raw data (95 topic sentences and 125 paragraphs) than the test group (87 topic sentences and 120 paragraphs). However, when the mean number is figured based on the combined readers' score, something quite different emerges. Table 2.5 reveals this trend.

40
35
30
25
20
19
18
17
16
15
NO. OF   14
PARAGRAPHS   13
                12
                11
                10
                9
                8
                7
                6
                5
                4
                3
                2
                1
                0

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Readers'
Score.

Fig. 3. The Relationship of Number of Paragraphs

to Readers' Score for the AR Group

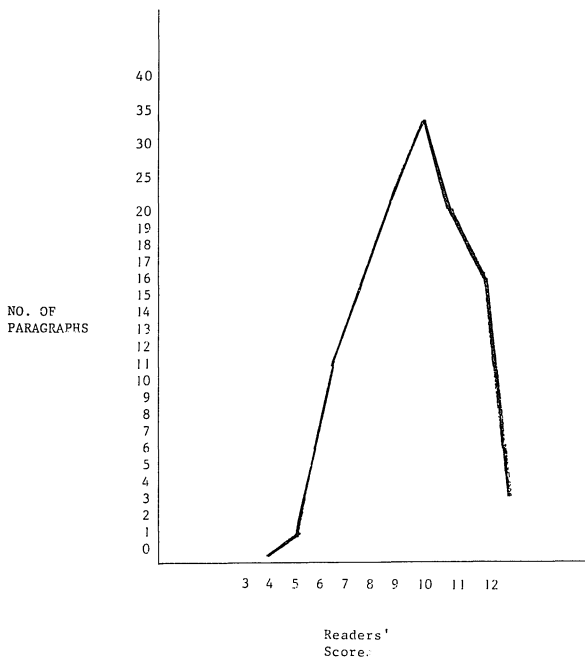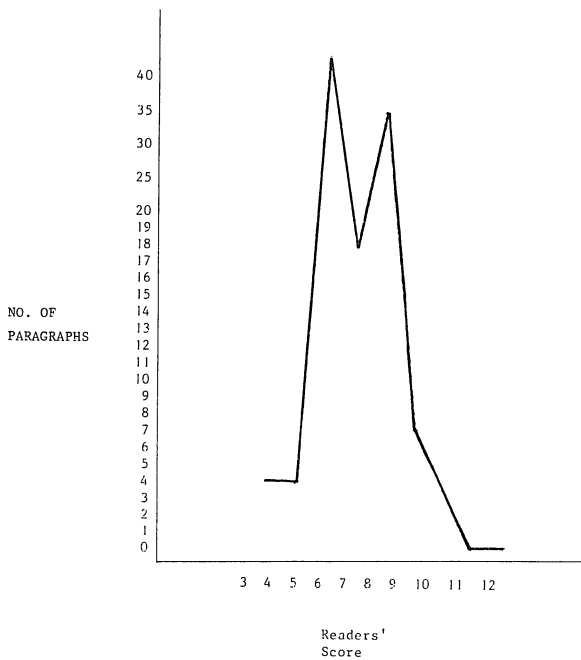Fig. 4. The Relationship of Number of Paragraphs
to Readers' Score for the BV Group

Table 2.5

Mean Number of Topic Sentences and Paragraphs by

Readers' Combined Score

	No. of topic sentences/score	No. of para- graphs/score
Control group (AR)	10	15
Test group (BV)	12	17

Though the mean readers' score for the control group is higher (8.5) than the test group (6.86), the mean number of paragraphs and topic sentences is higher in the test group. Even though these students received no formal instruction in paragraphing, they produced more paragraphs which contained easily identifiable topic sentences; nevertheless, this greater number of paragraphs and topic sentences, which traditional instruction claims is a mark of quality writing, did not produce better scores for these students. Figures 3 and 4 graphically represent this issue.

What, then, do all these data and all these graphs and all these tables add up to? Simply, the hypothesis is confirmed. Traditional instruction in the paragraph makes no statistically significant difference in the quality of student writing. This claim is statistically confirmed to a level of .01, which means that an instructor can confidently talk to students about their writing without recourse to the traditional paragraph pedgogy and still have students produce acceptable writing.

The data presented here do illuminate some curious trends and interesting patterns; however, the important aspect is that based on these figures collected from student writers, instructors and text-books could prescribe topic sentences all they wished, but the prescriptions would not, and in the case of the present study do not, significantly affect the quality of the student writing--unless the instructor were looking just for topic sentences. The goal of teaching writing, though, is not to produce topic sentences; the goal is to produce effective writers. And this study seems to suggest that traditional emphasis on the paragraph does not help student writers be any more effective than those who are told nothing about the traditional lore of the paragraph.

NOTES

[1] The Nelson-Denny Reading Test is given to all students who seek to enter a degree program at Davidson County Community College. The test reports on three areas in the students' reading: (1) vocabulary development, (2) reading rate, and (3) reading comprehension.

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Appendix A

Raw Scores of Basic Writers Making Paragraphs

Copying "Ever Since Darwin"

Group 1: Basic Writers

Sentence		Number of Students Marking a Paragraph	Percentage of Agreement-- Based on 2 or More Marks
S1	*	13	100
S2		0	0
S3		5	38
S4		6	46
S5		2	15
S6		5	38
S7		2	15
S8	*	0	0
S9		9	69
S10		1	0
S11	*	5	38.5
S12		1	0
S13	*	3	23
S14		0	0
S15		0	0
S16		5	38.5
S17		1	0
S18		0	0
S19		1	0
S20		2	15
S21		0	0
S22		0	0
S23		0	0
S24	*	8	61.5
S25		2	15
S26		0	0
S27		3	23
S28	*	3	23
S29		0	0
S30		0	0

Total   77

Mean %: 37%

Mean % Without Sentence 1: 30%

* = Sentences Marked as Paragraphs by Gould

Appendix B

Raw Scores of Advanced Writers Making

Paragraphs Copying "Ever Since Darwin"

Group 2: Advanced Writers

Sentence		Number of Students Marking a Paragraph	Percentage of Agreement-- Based on 2 or More Marks
S1	*	14	100
S2		2	14
S3		7	50
S4		5	36
S5		2	14
S6		5	36
S7		6	43
S8	*	2	14
S9		8	57
S10		4	28.5
S11	*	7	50
S12		1	0
S13	*	3	21
S14		2	14
S15		1	0
S16		8	57
S17		2	14
S18		0	0
S19		2	14
S20		0	0
S21		3	21
S22		0	0
S23		0	0
S24	*	12	86
S25		1	0
S26		1	0
S27		5	36
S28	*	8	57
S29		0	0
S30		1	0

Total   112

Mean %:   38%

Mean % Without Sentence 1:   33%

* = Sentences Marked as Paragraphs by Gould

Appendix C

Raw Scores of Basic Readers Marking

Paragraphs Reading "Ever Since Darwin"

Group 3: Basic Readers

Sentence		Number Students Marking a Paragraph	Percentage of Agreement-- Based on 2 or More Marks
S1	*	17	100
S2		2	12
S3		4	23.5
S4		10	76.5
S5		3	18
S6		2	12
S7		7	41
S8	*	4	23.5
S9		1	0
S10		5	29
S11	*	7	41
S12		2	12
S13	*	3	18
S14		1	0
S15		2	12
S16		8	47
S17		3	18
S18			0
S19		1	0
S20		2	12
S21		2	12
S22		2	12
S23			0
S24	*	13	76.5
S25		1	0
S26		3	18
S27		3	18
S28	*	7	41
S29		1	0
S30		2	12

Total   118

Mean %: 34%

Mean % Without Sentence 1: 29%

* = Sentences Marked as Paragraphs by Gould

Appendix D

Essay and Instructions Given to Groups 1 and 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following essay. As you can tell, the para-
graph marks (indentions) have been removed.

After reading the piece, copy it over by hand and insert
paragraph marks (indentions) where you believe they
should go.

As you copy, do not worry so much about the accuracy
of your copy; this exercise is to show me what you
know about paragraphs.

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Appendix E

Essay and Instructions Given to Group 3

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following essay. As you can see, no para-
graph marks (indentions) have been included.

After reading through the essay once, go back through
the piece and insert some kind of mark either a slash
(/) or a square bracket (⌐) to indicate where you
would place a paragraph mark.

This exercise is to show me what you know about
paragraphs.

Appendix F

Stephen Jay Gould's

Essay, "Ever Since Darwin"*

(1) Since man created God in his own image, the doctrine of special creation has never failed to explain those adaptations that we understand intuitively. (2) How can we doubt that animals are exquisitely designed for their appointed roles when we watch a lioness hunt, a horse run, or a hippo wallow? (3) The theory of natural selection would never have replaced the doctrine of divine creation if evident, admirable design pervaded all organisms. (4) Charles Darwin understood this, and he focused on features that would be out of place in a world constructed by perfect wisdom. (5) Why, for example, should a sensible designer create only on Australia a suite of marsupials to fill the same roles that placental mammals occupy on all other continents? (6) Darwin even wrote an entire book on orchids to argue that the structures evolved on insure fertilization by insects are jerry-built of available parts used by ancestors for other purposes. (7) Orchids are Rube Goldberg machines; a perfect engineer would certaily have come up with something better. (8) This principle remains true today. (9) The best illustrations of adaptation by evolution are the ones that strike our intuition as peculiar or bizarre. (10) Science is not "organized common sense", at its most exciting, it reformulates our view of the world by imposing powerful theories against the ancient, anthropocentric prejudices that we call intuition. (11) Consider, for example, the cecidomyian gall midges. (12) These tiny flies conduct

their lives in a way that tends to evoke feelings of pain or disgust when we empathize with them by applying the inappropriate standards of our own social codes. (13) Cecidomyian gall midges can grow and develop along one of two pathways. (14) In some situations, they hatch from eggs, go through a normal sequence of larval and pupal molts, and emerge as ordinary, sexually reproducing flies. (15) But in other circumstances, females reprodce by parthenogenesis, bringing forth their young without any fertilization by males. (16) Parthenogenesis is common enough among animals, but the cecidomyians give it an interesting twist. (17) First of all, the parthenogenetic females stop at an early age of development. (18) They never become normal, adult flies, but reproduce while they are still larvae or pupae. (19) Secondly, these females do not lay eggs. (20) The offspring develop live within their mother's body—not supplied with nutrient and packaged away in a protected uterus but right inside the mother's tissues, eventually filling her entire body. (21) In order to grow, the offspring devour the mother from the inside. (22) A few days later, they emerge, leaving a chitinous shell as the only remains of their only parent. (23) And within two days, their own developing children are beginning, literally, to eat them up. (24) _Micromalthus debilis_, an unrelated beetle, has evolved an almost identical system with a macabre variation. (25) Some parthenogenetic females give birth to a single male offspring. (26) This larva attaches itself to his mother's cuticle for about four or five days, then inserts his head into her genital aperture and devours her. (27) Greater love has no woman.

(28) Why has such a peculiar mode of reproduction evolved? (29) For

it is unusual even among insects, and not only by the irrelevant

standards of our own perceptions. (30) What is the adaptive signifi-

cance of a mode of life that so strongly violates our intuitions about

good design?

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*In Axelrod and Cooper's, <u>St. Martin's Guide to Writing</u>. New York:
    St. Martin's Press, 1985: 350-51.

Appendix G

Prompt

This writing sample is a way for the English department to check and see if it is meeting the needs of the students in our English 111--Introduction to Composition classes. Please write a response only to the prompt that is given below. A response on any other topic is unacceptable.

You will have exactly thirty minutes to complete the assignment. At the end of thst time, you will be asked to stop writing and turn in what you have completed.

Write your social security number and the first initial of your last name at the top of the first page. Do not write your name. Skip a line and begin your essay. Do not play to recopy. lf you want to make corrections, do so--neatly. You may use the back of the second page for scratch work.

lf you finish before time is called, go back over your paper and check for correctness and clarity. Return these directions with your essay.

Writing Prompt

    Increasingly, we are told by the media that Americans today
    have more leisure time than at any other time in the past.
    You may not believe such a statement now that you are in
    college, but few people in "real" jobs work over 40 hours
    a week. The question becomes, then, what can we do with
    our free time? Your task is to write an answer to the
    question of what to do with leisure time. Direct your
    response to your classmates. What do you do with your
    free time? Why do you do what you do? Would you encourage
    others to share your activity? Why or why not? As you
    write, keep the needs of your audience in mind.

Start writing at the signal from your instructor.