theses. The main fault of her presentation is that she tends to rely on assertion rather than demonstration. She presumes her readers know as much as she knows about classical rhetoric and composition studies. As evidence of her astonishing erudition about her subject, her nine-page List of References contains over two hundred references. Frequently when she asserts that some writer represents a certain position, she expects her readers to be familiar with the text, and so she does not make any attempt to demonstrate her claim. This is one of the few scholarly books that I have read in recent years where I wish that there were more quotations in the book. Most scholarly books are, like most convention talks, too long. This book is too short for what the author attempts to do. Kathleen Welch may very well be right about the various issues she discusses in this book. But she does not always convince me that she is right. Too much of the clinching argument is still in her head.


Reviewed by Walter H. Beale, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

While discussions of "theories of composition" or schools of pedagogy and their epistemological and political relations are attracting crowds of rhetoricians and composition specialists these days, the audience for discourse theory is not so large. It ought to be larger. To put this another way, schools of pedagogy ought to be interrogated not only about their epistemological and political affiliations but also about what kinds, settings, functions, and strategies of writing they envision. Why? Because there is no globally affirmable definition or art of "good writing," no unequivocally endorsable organization of forms and strategies. It is all a matter of local circumstances, particular genres and functions, particular traditions, settings, public and covert motives at the moment, author-audience relations, rhetorical situations, times of life. And here is where the theory of discourse comes in.

Arts of rhetoric—which have traditionally been responsible for organizing our knowledge about the variables of subject, author, audience, and circumstance and for developing a consistent terminology for discussing them—must draw upon theories of discourse, whether they would prefer to or not. Most teachers of composition would prefer not. There is no escape from theory, however; the only question is whether theory will be engaged
consciously and deliberately or unreflectingly and haphazardly. Textbooks in composition have for the most part muddled through with the unreflecting and the haphazard—largely, one suspects, because most pedagogy has been oriented toward writing in school, where the variables of public discourse could be ignored. But there have been other reasons as well for the aversion to theory among composition teachers, not the least of which has been the great difficulty and inconclusiveness of the entire enterprise. Lewis Thomas has aptly speculated that there must be a "scrambler in the brain" that is activated by our attempts to discourse about discourse. Full of circularities, tautologies, loopholes, brambles and thickets of overlapping and conflicting terminology, the theory of discourse sometimes appears to be the most hazardous of intellectual undertakings, an academic killing-match where every affirmable proposition is canceled out by an equal and opposite proposition. Still, in the theory of discourse there are some very delicious questions about how we understand ourselves, both as individuals and as communities. Moreover, as long as rhetoric aspires to be art rather than knack, we will need the best theory we can get.

For both the initiated and the uninitiated, for those of us who are already engaged in theory and for those who might have preferred not, Timothy Crusius' *Theories of Discourse* will serve as an engaging and instructive tour of the field, or at least part of it. Crusius limits his study to four books designed to provide underpinnings for the study and teaching of writing and which have been influential among English teachers: James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse*, James Moffett's *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, James Britton's *The Development of Writing Abilities*, and Frank D'Angelo's *A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric*. One of the virtues of Crusius' study is that, while assessing each of these works individually for its strengths and weaknesses, Crusius brings the books into a kind of conversation with each other (and also with himself) on salient theoretical questions at various points along the way. The first part of Crusius' work is devoted to treating the four theories in this way; the second part, rather shorter and somewhat less successful, even though wise and perceptive on individual points, is an attempt at synthesizing the insights of the four theories.

It is apparent that Crusius has thought long and hard about the aims, uses, and philosophical underpinnings of theory, as well as about ways of analyzing and interrogating individual theories. His assessments and criticisms of the four theories treated are generally insightful and on-target: Kinneavy is praised for clarity, for coherence, and for engagement of the entire Western liberal arts tradition; he is criticized, on the other hand, for overly objectifying the notion of aim, for making aim deterministic of other discourse variables, and for ignoring questions of process and development. James Moffett is praised for a "brilliant disclosure of how to think about discourse in development" and for some very stimulating connections between Piagetian speculation about development and a continuum of dis-
course types; he is criticized for ignoring considerations of aim and function, and also for a bias against rhetoric and persuasion as fields of discourse. Britton is credited with drawing upon empirical research to produce "a model of mature discourse functions linked with at least the beginning of a developmental model of the functions"; on the other hand, Britton's interests are not primarily theoretical and his treatment of theoretical questions is selective and elliptical. Finally, Crusius provides an ample explanation of Frank D'Angelo's ambitious but unsuccessful attempt to reframe traditional categories (particularly topoi) into a cognitive deep structure of discourse, while acknowledging the highly speculative nature of the project as well as its disengagement from rhetorical practice and rhetorical products.

Crusius' vision of the way these theories speak to one another is Hegelian: Kinneavy as thesis, with emphasis on static typology; Moffett as antithesis, with emphasis on developmental concerns; Britton as a partial synthesis; and D'Angelo as an alternative voice attempting to shift the grounds of discussion from discourse to the cognitive structures behind discourse. While all of these works are valuable, there may be some irony in the consideration that, all things considered, the richest and most provocative concepts emerge from the works by Moffett and Britton—the two that do not have the word "theory" in their titles and which are not really styled as theories of discourse proper. This suggests to me an alternate way of grouping the works: Kinneavy and D'Angelo at opposite ends of a spectrum of theorizing (stretching from concern with a typology of formal structures to concern with a typology of cognitive structures) with Moffett and Britton in the middle, each more responsive to questions about how students write and how they learn to write than to questions of typology per se. And this suggests two additional generalizations that Crusius would clearly endorse: first, that theory ought to be continuously responsive to the Britton-Moffett questions; and second, that the most engaging theories of discourse are likely to be those that are strongly motivated by the desire to bring clarity to problems of pedagogy and practical criticism.

By way of prolegomena to any future theory, Crusius provides wise remarks on two additional points. First, he is persuaded that the theory of discourse cannot be "paradigm-based," owing to the nature of the beast itself—a field defined more by its paradoxes than by regularities of form and formula. Because of this condition, he recommends that the theory of discourse should be both dialectical and dialogical—dialectical in the sense of attempting to account for the counterstatement that goes with every statement, and dialogical in the sense of being willing to bring other and opposite voices into the conversation at every step along the way. (Although I cannot be expected to agree with every one of the criticisms that Crusius makes of my own *Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, I certainly take to heart his broad prescriptions regarding dialectic and dialogue, and like many a poor soul before me, I wish that I could recall and refurbish.)
While valuable in all the ways I have suggested, Crusius' work is not without shortcomings. So eager is he to bring the works he is treating into dialogue with one another that he fails in some cases to provide an ample and clear exposition of the content of particular theories. This lends to the book a talking-to-insiders quality that is occasionally unfortunate, since one of the book's potential contributions is to attract to questions of theory the reluctant and the uninitiated among us. Another shortcoming is Crusius' failure to give his audience a more developmental and historicist view of the theorists he is discussing. Crusius dwells a bit too exclusively on the texts alone. We would have profited from some attention to the ways in which the authors' interests in theory developed, the historical and pedagogical pressures that led them (forced them?) into theory, and the possible political and ideological concerns that informed their theorizing.

The second part of Crusius' book is devoted to a "synthesis" of the four theories. Readers will find this section satisfying only if they come to it not expecting an actual reconciliation of the claims of the four theories into a coherent overarching vision or set of concepts. Crusius explicitly disavows this notion of synthesis, which he terms "literal," and seeks to replace it with the idea of "creative synthesis," comprised of a "winnowing process of conversation" which "assumes that the truth is a whole, and must accommodate disparate and contradictory truths." What emerges from Crusius' creative synthesis is a set of cogent and useful clarifications and pedagogical speculations centered on a succession of discourse parameters: act variables, agent variables, and process variables. What emerges is not a coherent theoretical vision, however, not something that could replace or supplant any of the theories discussed, but rather a series of clarifications and adjudications of particular points of theory and theoretical terminology. Crusius would have done better to avoid the notion of "synthesis," I believe, with its implicit promise of wholeness, and to substitute the notion of "sifting" or "cross-sectioning"—a useful process for assessing theories and setting the requirements of future theories, but not a theory-establishing process in itself.

A final, piddling complaint: every good scholarly book (and this book is certainly a good one) deserves an index, which this book lacks. If not providing an index is a policy of Crusius' publisher, The Modern Language Association, it is a policy that should be reexamined.