conditions that shape textbook production.

This collection inspires me to question the taken-for-granted status of textbooks as necessary ingredients in writing courses. I especially appreciate the implicit focus on the disciplining effect that textbooks have in composition studies, a focus that suggests how textbooks have both limited and made possible certain ways of seeing writing and teaching. This focus, which might have been usefully developed through an examination of students' perspectives on textbooks, must include at least two key questions: Do students experience textbooks as oppressive, monologic, and rule-governed? What is the view of writing impressed on them through years of schooling and years of reading textbooks? These questions should inform future studies of writing textbooks. Until then, *Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks* offers the most sustained and substantial study of textbook production to date. Among other things, this book encourages compositionists to question that which is completely taken for granted, that which passes as "normal" in writing classrooms: the place and function of the textbook in our very concept of first-year writing.

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Reviewed by Marshall Alcorn, George Washington University

Twenty years ago there was considerable hope among composition scholars that a new theoretical paradigm might make sense of what composition was and how it should be taught. James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse*, published in 1971, was enormously influential as it both outlined a systematic understanding of discourse and offered a practical model for classroom teaching. In 1982, James Berlin's "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories" was another significant contribution, giving emphasis to the importance of theory. Berlin's essay helped many of us to understand more fully the relationships among language, reality, and communication. Over the last decade, however, hope for a master paradigm, a totalized theoretical understanding of the field of composition, has largely died. Composition scholars, like scholars in literature, face a bewildering array of grandiose claims and contra-
dictory theoretical assertions defended by arguments spoken in a language that resembles some form of pidgin English (a synthesis, perhaps, of English and deconstruction). The temptation for all of us is to work snugly within the parameters of our own particular specialties.

Mark Bracher’s *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition, and the Aims of Education* may renew our hopes for a research paradigm in composition studies. The book shows great potential for establishing a complex, flexible, and useful model for understanding discourse use. It promises to explain the problems of instruction in composition; it outlines a feasible program for the teaching of discourse; and it describes in original and compelling terms the social and psychological benefits of learning to write.

Bracher argues that learning to write well is a developmental function that progresses as writers learn to integrate, in their speech, split and dissociated aspects of their own subjectivity. The process of verbalization in writing, he observes, may not be terribly different from the process of verbalization in psychoanalysis. Central to Bracher’s argument is Lacan’s observation that the unconscious is “repeated, and insists on interfering in . . . the effective discourse” of the ego. This insight into writing—the understanding that the unconscious characteristically interrupts the conscious mind—offers a clue to one of the more frustrating dimensions of composition theory: the common assumption is that writing is not taught like other disciplines in the university because there are no facts to be memorized and directly employed to improve writing; writing gets better with practice, but it is not clear what students “learn” when their writing gets better.

Bracher argues that good writing is facilitated by the integration of unconscious desire. The process of integrating desire takes time, but it is not as mysterious as it might seem. Bracher makes careful use of psychoanalytic documents to show that the integration of unconscious desire is, in its own way, a systematic and logical process. It is also a process that composition teachers can make use of without therapeutic training. Forty years ago, when western culture more neurotically idealized the image of rational individuality, Bracher’s claim about unconscious desire might have seemed farfetched. In contemporary society, however, evidence of intrusive unconscious desire is widely available. While writing this review, I happened to watch an old episode of the comedy *Fawlty Towers* and found many examples. In this episode, Basil, the innkeeper, anticipates the arrival of guests from Germany, and he emphatically tells his staff that they absolutely must not make their
visitors uncomfortable by talking about the war. As soon as Basil himself greets his guests, however, he asks if they would like cocktails “before the war.” The canned laughter in the background cranks up and Basil writhes in discomfort. He struggles to regain control, but as he continues to talk, urgently seeking to put his guests at ease, more and more discomforting utterances emerge. At one point, he utters an entire “crazy” sentence to his shocked guests, who are waiting patiently to hear more about the hotel and its services. “Prisoners will be tied with piano wire,” he says impulsively. This line is an example, not of everyday misdirection of speech, but of humorous exaggeration. We laugh because we think we never make such mistakes, but we also laugh because we recognize how such Freudian slips occur.

Clearly, Basil has problems producing discourse. He knows what he wants to say, but he can’t quite say what he wants. This is true, Bracher would argue, because Basil is divided in his desires. The self he recognizes when he says “I” does not want to insult his guests. Yet, there is another aspect of his desire, largely rejected but unsuccessfully subdued (or eliminated) that wants to torment the Germans—or, more accurately, any guest. This other self hijacks Basil’s efforts to produce comfortable social discourse. So it is, Bracher argues, with all of us who speak and write. Unlike older Freudian models of a simple repressed subjectivity, Bracher’s emphasis upon a Lacanian subject allows for an examination of multiple aspects of subjectivity (Symbolic, Imaginary, Real, ego ideal, drive, fundamental fantasy), all of which struggle for expression in any extended discourse.

Using examples from student writing, Bracher argues that unconscious desire explains many, if not most, problems in writing. If good development, for example, means making a promise to a reader and then fulfilling that promise, then problems in development are the result of speech production that does not relate to the original promise. Such failures in speech may not appear as obvious as those found in episodes of Fawlty Towers; nonetheless, the psychoanalytically perceptive teacher will be able to detect unconscious conflict in various kinds of writing that ranges from the “safe-but-boring” to the “original-but-incoherent.” Bracher argues: “The psychoanalytic model of the subject . . . provides a basis for understanding virtually every type of problem in writing as deriving not exclusively or even primarily from deficiencies in knowledge or cognition but rather from conflicts within and among . . . [various dissociated clusters of self] components.” This is a bold claim, but Bracher provides ample evidence to support it.
In his third chapter, "The Psychopathology of Everyday Prose," Bracher offers a virtual catalogue of writing problems and intrapsychic conflict. He examines writing problems with reference to a large collection of traditional writing terms: problems in topic selection, focus, invention, development, style, diction, coherence, transition, logic, and organization. The discussion of coherence in writing is valuable in and of itself, for it neatly integrates psychoanalytic theory, common sense, and contemporary observations. If coherence requires a clear representation of a writer’s purpose, lack of coherence is precisely the effect of textual productions that do not relate clearly to a defined purpose. Such productions are places where desire speaks, but not in clear relation to some central idea that integrates the various parts of speech that constitute the text.

Most of us who teach writing are acutely aware of how easy it is to call attention to aspects of student writing that “don’t fit” or “don’t make sense.” We often assume that such flagrant examples of “lack of sense” can be fixed by a simple application of logic. Bracher’s work suggests otherwise: speech and cognition in essence are not completely rational; they are a direct expression of a subjectivity that is multiple and conflicted in many ways. Subjectivity is essentially an irrational, conflicted, and defensive structure that works against rationality. Characteristically, it labors to deny factual claims, to repress feeling, and to silence opposition. Teachers, and society in general, may want us to be rational; we will seek to fulfill the desire of what Lacan terms “the Other” and thereby become “good subjects.” But the application of logic to the production of discourse is never a simple affair. Acts of attention are always deflected in multiple directions that attenuate any logic that might correct bad discourse.

Bracher suggests that rationality and coherence can serve human ends by helping us to communicate with each other and plan political action. Rationality and coherence, however, are not produced by simple demand or by learning logical rules. Coherence and rationality are developed, paradoxically, by responding to the irrational that interrupts discourse. Control in writing does not come through policing discourse with logic but through integrating unconscious desire with the self—by learning to listen to, and integrate, what “it,” the text, wants to say (as Donald Murray puts it).

In chapters four and five, Bracher describes how his theoretical ideas could be used in a writing classroom. Many of Bracher’s claims will make immediate sense to writing teachers because much of his analysis incorporates work already done by a diverse group of composition scholars,
such as Peter Elbow, Lester Faigley, Janice Lauer, Donald Murray, and Stephen Witte. Responding to the discussion of transference in teaching introduced by Robert Brooke, Bracher makes extensive use of psychoanalytic writings to describe in detail the mechanism of transference. He then goes on to show how this understanding of transference can guide the response of a classroom teacher seeking to develop student writing. The goal in all this is to "avoid prescription, suggestion, and authoritative pronouncements" and instead to find ways to return the student’s message so that the student can "recognize the heretofore unconscious desire contained within it.” Helping a student recognize unconscious desire may involve practical responses such as: repeating back to the student part of what she or he says; looking for gaps in the writing, places where something that is left out is needed to make sense; working for connections between sections of the text that are not linked but logically should be linked; helping a student explore ego-alien fantasies, but certainly without insisting that the student think about issues that provoke unmanageable anxiety.

Readers primarily interested in Bracher’s account of composition will be advised to give particular attention to his chapter on everyday prose. Although earlier chapters will be more easily engaged by scholars with a particular interest in theory or in psychoanalysis, Bracher devotes an entire chapter to articulating a theory of subjectivity that can be useful to composition theorists. His use of Lacanian theory is extraordinarily lucid, and I am particularly impressed with the explanation of the three Lacanian registers of subjectivity: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. The domain of Lacan’s Real has long been a point of contention among Lacanian scholars. It has been associated in various misleading ways with reality, with nothing, and with trauma. Bracher labors, successfully I believe, to integrate important empirical work on human development with Lacan’s three registers, and he sees the Real in relation to certain “vitality affects” that are coded in the body but that are not representable in terms of discourse (the Symbolic) or image (the Imaginary). Composition scholars are constantly working with vitality affects that appear in the classroom and in writing, yet the theoretical paradigms that we have borrowed from literary studies do not allow us to think carefully and with real discrimination about affective responses such as excitement, anxiety, and impulsiveness. In addition to providing a useful introduction to some difficult Lacanian concepts, Bracher’s book also critically examines most of the work done at the intersection of composition and psychoanalysis and many of the theoretical claims made by
composition scholars. This material is systematically integrated with Bracher's own argument, and it offers, in one neatly logical design, a very compelling synthesis of multiple perspectives on writing.

Bracher makes smart use of examples from student writing to support and illustrate his argument, even though the bulk of the book is an exhaustive analysis of the overlap between verbalization in writing and verbalization in psychoanalysis. Many writing teachers therefore may desire more concrete examples from real student writers. But if the book is heavy on theory, it is unlike other work in theory in that it supports theoretical claims with reference to empirical research. Work done by the psychologist James Pennebaker and the literary critic Jeffrey Berman provide hard evidence that a psychoanalytically sensitive pedagogy can improve writing, reduce personal conflict, and contribute to better social relations. Claims such as these may sound like reckless exaggerations to some; however, Bracher's claim—that integrating desire reduces the projection and aggression that are at the root of various social problems—has both clinical and empirical support and thus merits serious consideration.

Bracher does not claim to offer an easy formula that will allow every teacher to perform miracles in the classroom, but he does provide a theoretical system that will help us understand and operate more effectively with the mechanisms and relationships that we engage when we promote verbalization in writing classrooms.


Reviewed by Eileen E. Schell, Syracuse University

Gary Rhoades' *Managed Professionals* investigates crucial issues preoccupying many of us in higher education: faculty salaries, job security, the increasing use of part-time faculty, the increasing use of electronic technologies, and claims on faculty time and intellectual properties. Rhoades, who is professor at the Center for the Study of Higher Education