

**Timothy Donovan and W. McClelland.**  
**EIGHT APPROACHES TO TEACHING COMPOSITION.**  
 Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1980.  
 160 pp.

This collection will appeal to a very limited audience. The teacher of English (or another discipline) who is unfamiliar with the past decade's professional publications on composition pedagogy will find a good introduction to what Donovan and McClelland term the "new paradigm" of teaching composition, a paradigm which emphasizes the writing process rather than the products of composition. The informed professional or the serious student of English methodology, on the other hand, will find the anthology both incomplete and unenlightening.

Recent approaches to teaching composition have emphasized the importance of writing to the writer: the writer learns about himself, about his fellow man, and about his environment through re-examining, classifying, and codifying his experience. Consequently, the teacher is seen as a guide who helps students with all aspects of the composing process (finding a suitable topic, generating ideas, selecting an audience, organizing and reorganizing thoughts, and proofreading and preparing for publication) rather than — as in the "old paradigm" — an assigner of tasks and an evaluator of products.

Donald M. Murray, recipient of a Pulitzer Prize for his editorials in the *Boston Herald* and author of the classic *A Writer Teaches Writing* (Houghton Mifflin, 1968), and Stephen Judy, former editor of the *English Journal* and author of two widely-used texts on English methodology, contribute the two major articles in the collection. Murray views writing as a process of discovering meaning rather than as a method of recording completely-formed products, and suggests that this discovery is the result of complex interactions among the process of *collecting, connecting, reading, and writing*. Judy outlines an experimental approach to composition, and proposes a sequence which moves from personal writing to journalistic writing to academic writing, a pedagogy based on the inner-worlds-to-outer-worlds pattern described by Piaget, Creber, Moffett, and others.

The remaining articles in the collection explore other recent trends in the teaching of composition: Kenneth Dowst's epistemic approach examines writing as a way of "making some sense out of an extremely complex set of personal perceptions and experiences"; Paul A. Eschholz suggests that prose models be introduced during the writing process to help the individual with specific writing problems rather than using them as a prewriting activity; Janice M. Lauer outlines a three-stage rhetorical program; Harvey S. Wiener proposes that "Basic Writing" be taught as process instead of remedial grammar; Thomas Carnicelli provides a rationale for the conference method of teaching writing and suggests

criteria for effective conferences; and Robert H. Weiss discusses the integration of composition with other subject areas — writing across the curriculum.

Despite the fact that each of the eight articles appears to be written specifically for this anthology, *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition* does not offer much that is new, either in terms of substance or in terms of fresh approaches to comfortably well-born ideas. Failing to offer new ideas, then, such an anthology should include works by theorists who are at the leading edge of the theory. Conspicuously absent from this collection are the writings of most of the better-known spokesmen of the new paradigm — James Britton, James Moffett, Nancy Martin, John Dixon, Janet Emig — although all, of course, are mentioned in the references.

Compared with such anthologies as Richard Larson's *Children and Writing in the Elementary School* (Oxford University Press, 1975) the Donovan and McClelland collection has a very limited view of recent trends in composition. Among its shortcomings —

1. Important work by Christensen, O'Hare, Mellon, and others on generative rhetoric and sentence-combining;
2. Composition evaluation is mentioned only in passing,
3. Schemes for classifying writing (those devised by Britton or Moffett or Emig, for example) are largely ignored.

Nor do the editors help the reader to digest the material. Beyond the seven-page general introduction, they supply neither headnotes to the articles nor summary questions following them. One final minor irritation with the format of the book is that bibliographic material is all placed at the back of the book rather than following each individual article.

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