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Out of Style

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STYLE IN THE DIASPORA OF COMPOSITION STUDIES

Around 1985, after two decades of innovative activity, the study of style became largely invisible in the hegemonic research scholarship in composition and rhetoric and has remained so ever since. Just as the study of style is largely invisible in the field today, however, it is, paradoxically, ubiquitous, and evidence of its continued presence can be found in many diverse places in the discipline. In *The New St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, Robert Connors and Cheryl Glenn (1999) contend that "style has diffused today into one of the most important canons of rhetoric" (232) and go on to list a few places where it can be found: in personal and business writing; "lurking" behind areas of critical theory like deconstruction, which shares with style the search and play of tropes, and reader-response literary criticism, including Stanley Fish's (1980) "affective stylistics"; and in "socioeconomic ramifications of style," such as cultural critic Kenneth Cmiel's (1990) economic rationale for the development of the plain style. Importantly, however, style in its dispersed form is often not *called* style, but instead is named something else within the field. Janice Lauer (2002) suggests that this same phenomenon has occurred with rhetorical invention which, she says, exists today in a "diaspora" of composition studies, areas where that canon has "migrated, entered, settled, and shaped many other areas of theory and practice in rhetoric and composition." Like invention, I argue, work on style has also migrated to composition's so-called "diaspora," where it is "implicit, fragmented" and located in many areas of inquiry (2).¹

In "Rhetorical Invention: The Diaspora," Lauer (2002) investigates what has happened to studies of rhetorical invention,

a central part of what she calls “‘past’ composition studies” from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. During that period, which corresponds with composition’s process movement and the Golden Age of style, a number of publications focused explicitly on invention theory and pedagogy. In light of the dearth of work that has appeared since that time, Lauer asks what has happened to studies of invention in the field. In response, she draws a parallel to the medieval period (from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries) and argues that like then “invention today can be found in a diaspora of composition areas rather than in discussions labeled ‘invention’” (2). In addition to enumerating several scholarly emphases that have been marginalized since the mid-1980s—for example, the relationship between invention and the writing process—Lauer looks to a number of sites where she contends the diffusion of invention studies has occurred: writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum; public contexts and cultural studies; studies of gender, race, and cultural difference; theories of technology; studies of genre; and hermeneutics. From her survey of these areas, Lauer concludes that recent work on invention in the field is now “dispersed and localized, precluding any final characterization of a unified theory or common set of practices” (11).

In adopting the concept of the diaspora, Lauer borrows a term rich in history and significance. Although Lauer’s use of the word denotes the more generic meaning of a flight (of a group) from a country or region—or a “dispersion”—the term *diaspora* initially referred specifically to the Jewish population around the Mediterranean that was forced to live outside of Palestine after the Babylonian invasion. Since then, the term has been used by the African-American community to refer to the “forced migration” of groups from Africa under threat (Himley 2003), and other groups have adopted the term as well, leading to the development of a separate area of scholarship known as Diasporic Studies. While Lauer does not complicate the notion of diaspora in this way, such a use is not inconsistent with her thinking about the fate of invention in

composition. I propose that the idea of a “forced migration” applies not only to the canon of invention in the aftermath of the process era, but also—and even more urgently—to the study of style during that same period. Lauer sees the diaspóra as a “promising terrain” for future studies in composition, and this is no less the case if we view the dispersion of style as a forced exile from the discipline.

While Lauer’s idea of the diaspora opens up many possibilities, it does not address potential explanations for this migration. In *The Ecology of Composition*, Margaret Syverson (1999) proposes one when she suggests that dynamic changes in writing theory exist as part of an “ecology” of composition studies. Syverson’s theory is important in explaining the highly dynamic nature of style and the way in which its migration as a topic into other spaces of composition studies suggests a corresponding evolution in its use by scholars: “Emergent properties suggest that all of our classification systems are actually open-ended, explanatory theories rather than closed, deterministic containers” (11). Syverson proposes a way that we may want to view style as it has emerged in various sites of the diaspora. Part of the “ecology” is that “as new forms or agents emerge, others fall away, break up, dwindle down, rust, decay, or decompose into either chaotic or stable states from which new forms emerge” (11–12).

The implication of Syverson’s theoretical approach is that the understanding of style in composition has not remained static in *a priori* locations but has developed dynamically as it encounters language and practices in other areas of the field (see Hopper 1998). Syverson’s theory also helps explain that the view of style I am proposing is not that of language as a container to be filled; even during the heyday of stylistic studies during the modern Golden Age, composition scholars working in style studies rejected that approach, envisioning style instead as a dynamic canon of rhetoric (see, for example, Young *et al.* 1970; Corbett 1976; Lanham 1974, 1983a; Christensen 1963; Bateman and Zidonis 1970). One distinction that I make, however, is that the concept of an emerging style remains grounded

in rhetoric. It is possible that various language resources may be deployed to generate the new forms Syverson mentions, but the basic tools of that undertaking remain rhetorical styles. Thus, for example, some of the “forms” or “agents” that may be seen as breaking up or decaying might include the use of a high or elegant style that was common in the time of Cicero or the use of periodic sentences. Yet, in the evolution of these rhetorical components, it is important that even those that are no longer regularly used remain a part of overall stylistic resources. Syverson seems to affirm this premise when she writes that “the concept of emergence is not in opposition to entropy; it includes it” (11).

GENRE THEORY

One reason for beginning with genre as a site of dispersion is that, like style, it is an area that has traditionally been ignored in first-year composition pedagogy, though it does appear in professional and technical communication. Amy Devitt (1997) alludes to a connection between style and genre when she writes, “If the metaphoric and literal connection of genre as language standard has illuminated the role of constraint/standardization and choice/variation, then perhaps it can illuminate the place of genre in the writing classroom” (54). Yet, she fails to make an explicit connection between genre and stylistic analysis. For example, while using the relationship of variation versus constraint, choice versus standards in order to redefine genres as dynamic and shifting, she does not point out that style itself functions as a dynamic set of relationships. Similarly, when Lauer describes the movement of invention into a “diaspora” of composition studies, she does not ask the critical question of what accounts for its diffusion into other areas of interest in the field. In the case of style, it seems crucial to account for its continuing neglect as a dynamic language theory. I propose that one reason for style’s migration is that it has acquired a certain amount of cultural “baggage” that has resulted in compositionists’ distancing themselves from the discourse of style.

In this instance, Lauer's concept of the diaspora seems more of a forced migration than an emergent property of language development.

An example of style's migration can be found in Anis Bawarshi's (2003) *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, where the author identifies the composition syllabus as a "site of invention" in which genre is taking place in a dynamic way. In his book, Bawarshi examines the way in which genres constitute writers into subject formations and position the writer as someone who is "written" or produced by the genres he or she writes (11). In a chapter in which he looks at various classroom genres—the syllabus, the writing prompt, and the student essay—Bawarshi makes the argument that the first-year writing classroom "is a multilayered, multitextured site of social and material action and identity formation, a site that is reproduced as it is rhetorically enacted by its participants within the various classroom genres available to them" (14–15). In examining the syllabus as one genre that contributes to this multilayered site, Bawarshi suggests that the frequent dichotomy of "you" and "we" in the syllabi of composition instructors reflects "on the pronoun level a larger tension many teachers face . . . between establishing solidarity with students and demarcating lines of authority" (122).

Bawarshi's analysis of the way in which teachers use pronouns to position students as "passive recipients" and to effect a contractual obligation draws upon the work of Louis Althusser (1971) and the power dynamic of interpellation. Althusser suggests that ideology interpellates individuals as subjects in a way that appears to be consensual, so that individuals seem to choose a subject position that is actually imposed upon them. Bawarshi argues that the use of the pronouns "you" and "we" in the syllabus serves, in Althusserian fashion, to "hail" students as subjects:

This "you," coupled with the occasional "we," the second most common pronoun, works as a hailing gesture, interpellating the

individual who walks into the classroom as a student subject, one who then becomes part of the collective “we” that will operationalize this activity system we call the FYW course. (Bawarshi 2003, 123–24)

While Bawarshi is able to show convincingly that pronouns function in a power dynamic that results in an inherent hierarchy among instructors and students, I argue that by using direct tools of stylistic analysis, he would have had access to additional resources to understand the rhetorical and generic forces at work in syllabus construction.

For example, a fuller stylistic analysis would help to show how the social relationships implicit in the use of pronouns change the dynamics at work in the syllabus as a genre. While Bawarshi explains the pronoun tension within the ideological framework of interpellation, I argue that it is actually the same “tension” between exophoric (situational) and endophoric (textual) reference that M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan (1976) discuss in *Cohesion in English*. Halliday and Hasan emphasize that the pronouns “you” and “we” are typically exophoric, occurring in specific rhetorical situations that are heavily context dependent and in turn “point” toward certain social and cultural understandings. Clearly, this is the case with the syllabi in question, which are understandable only within the context of the class, instructor, institution, and more broadly within a culture that thinks about composition studies in certain ways.

In terms of understanding that situation, Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggest that “a high degree of exophoric reference” is one characteristic of the language of “the children’s peer group” and go on to make a connection to Basil Bernstein’s (1964) “restricted code,” a method of communication heavily dependent on the context of the situation. Halliday and Hasan help explain how, as Bawarshi suggests, the use of “you” coupled with “we” acts as a hailing gesture that interpellates student subjects who are drawn into the collective “we” (Bawarshi 2003) and, by extension, into a kind of restricted code. Under Bawarshi’s

analysis, the nature of that relationship is coercive on the part of the teacher, who tries to make it seem consensual: “The ‘we’ construction tries to minimize the teacher’s power implicit in the ‘you’ construction by making it appear as though the students are more than merely passive recipients of the teacher’s dictates” (123). The work of both Althusser and Bernstein takes that a step further, suggesting that the pronouns work as a kind of infantilizing gesture that reveals the real dynamic between the “you and we”: the instructor’s gesture toward an ostensibly democratizing “we” actually drawing upon situational knowledge that constructs students, through the syllabus, as dependent parts of a hierarchical relationship.

In addition to this deictic aspect of these personal pronouns, Halliday and Hasan help show how the pronoun reference analyzed by Bawarshi becomes more complicated still: pronouns that are typically exophoric—pointing to an outward reality—often become anaphoric—referring to the previous part of a text—in many varieties of written language. The composition syllabus, which is at heart exophoric because of the constant juxtaposition of “you” and “we” (and, by extension, “I”) (see below) and their reference to an external reality, may become anaphoric, particularly when those pronouns refer to an institutional rule or policy that the instructor is quoting. Here, the role of the pronouns shifts so that the relationship between the instructor (“I” or “we”) and students (“you”) becomes a textual reference, which makes the authority of the syllabus writer easier to maintain. Thus, the syllabus essentially functions in a dialectic relationship between exophoric and anaphoric reference, and this suggests one way the instructor is able to maintain the balance she must achieve between what Bawarshi calls “community and complicity” (123). The syllabus writer makes both an inclusive and distancing gesture and, through the use of pronouns, is able to build solidarity. Even though Bawarshi is correct in asserting that there is a tension in this kind of passive-aggressive interpellation, his analysis could draw upon style as a tool that would

significantly improve its persuasive appeal by showing why the pronouns function in this manner.

Bawarshi indicates the dynamic nature of genre in composition studies when he contends that the syllabus “is not merely informative; it is also, as all genres are, a site of action that produces subjects who desire to act in certain ideological and discursive ways” (125). In constructing the syllabus as genre, Bawarshi suggests that its writers use the pronouns “you” and “we” in a way that “positions students and teachers within situated subjectivities and relations” (121). While intimating that the use of pronouns is important in creating a kind of subjectivity in the composition syllabus, he relies on the interplay of “you” and “we” without pointing out the importance of “we” as a complicated pronoun connected to an underlying “I.” However, French philosopher Emile Benveniste (1971), a contemporary of Althusser’s, articulates the importance of the intricate connection between the use of “we” or “I” and “you” when he writes:

In “we” it is always “I” which predominates since there cannot be “we” except by starting with “I,” and this “I” dominates the “non-I” element by means of its transcendent quality. *The presence of “I” is constitutive of “we.”* (202; emphasis added)

While Bawarshi suggests that the “we” is used by the instructor to interpellate student subjects (“you”), Benveniste’s analysis of pronouns (which Bawarshi does *not* use) offers a more reciprocal view of this subjectivity. By looking more broadly than Bawarshi does at the “I” behind the “we,” Benveniste helps us argue that the dichotomy of “I” and “you” is imperative in order for the subjectivity of the teacher to exist:

Consciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be a *you* in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of person, for it implies that reciprocally *I* becomes *you* in the address of the one who in his turn designates himself *I*. Here we see a principle whose consequences are to spread out in all directions. Language

is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a subject by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to “me,” becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. (224–25)

Benveniste’s analysis, which is similar to Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) concepts of “svoj” (one’s own voice) and “čужoj” (the voice of another) (423), adds a great deal to the discussion of the purpose of the genre of the syllabus because Benveniste makes clear that the writer (the instructor) as “I” (sometimes, as Bawarshi points out, in the form of “we”) is constituted through his or her own discourse. Thus, the dialectic between the “I” or “we” and the “you” is an important part of the identity of both, but does not necessarily entail an equal relationship. As Benveniste states, “This polarity does not mean either equality or symmetry: ‘ego’ always has a position of transcendence with regard to you” (Benveniste 1971, 225). In the syllabi Bawarshi analyzes, there is evidence of the same unsettling inequality, even in the use of “we” to include the instructor in the learning enterprise.

Even in the face of the inequality inherent in this dialectic, however, Benveniste points out that there is also an unusual sense of reciprocity. He writes that “neither of the terms can be conceived of without the other. They are complementary . . . and, at the same time, they are reversible” (225). This contention is quite provocative, yet Bawarshi’s construction of the syllabus as genre does not account for the full stylistic potential it affords. Admittedly, Bawarshi (2003) does suggest that the pronouns can be complementary on one level when he writes that the “interchange between ‘you’ and ‘we’ on the pronoun level reflects a larger tension many teachers face when writing a syllabus: between establishing solidarity with students and demarcating lines of authority” (122). However, Bawarshi does not imagine a scenario in which the roles are reversible. If, for example, the syllabus were to refer to the part of the course where students evaluate the instructor, or to students assuming

the role of teacher for a peer-writing workshop, the full import of the reversibility of pronouns could be realized. Benveniste invites us to acknowledge the ambivalent relationship between power and shared authority in the syllabus genre. The complicated relationship of the pronouns gives students who are otherwise “interpellated” a kind of agency and power that Bawarshi attributes only to the teacher. Through the syllabus, students are constructed as writers themselves. When they write, they become the “I.” While Bawarshi points to pronoun (and other stylistic) relationships in promising ways, his analysis does not fully recognize the potential ways in which the instructor/student interactions might change as they are constructed through language.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The study of style has not only moved into genre studies, but into one of the main sites that composition claims as part of its disciplinary identity: rhetorical analysis. Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor (2002) write that “rhetorical analysis, whether of a written or a spoken text, must always factor into account the speaker, audience, context, and ‘moment’ of a text as explanatory principles for the linguistic and strategic choices identified” (178). In identifying “linguistic and strategic choices,” the authors raise key words in the study of style. The idea of choice has always been crucial to style, and many aspects of stylistic analysis are seen as linguistic as well as rhetorical. While acknowledging a historical tradition of style, however, the authors end by incorporating it as simply a small part of “rhetorical analysis.” Thus, when viewed in terms of Lauer’s concept of the diaspora, rhetorical analysis becomes a site of dispersion that includes various aspects of stylistic analysis, such as vocabulary, syntax, and the classical tropes and schemes. The authors’ appropriation of style as rhetoric raises an important question: If the method used is stylistic analysis, is there a greater advantage in calling it by that name?

I argue that the answer is “yes,” and as an example I cite a “rhetorical analysis” by Fahnestock and Secor in which they

examine a controversy over Alan Sokal's postmodern "farce" that is the subject of an editorial by Fish (1996) for the *New York Times*. Sokal (1996a), a physicist at New York University, submitted a postmodern critique of quantum mechanics that was subsequently accepted and published by the editors of the journal *Social Text*. Afterward, in an article in *Lingua Franca*, Sokal (1996b) claimed that his *Social Text* article was a parody and was published with factual errors that the editors, who did not follow the standard practice of sending the piece out for scholarly review, had not caught. Fish, then a professor of law and literature at Duke University, and editor of Duke University Press, which publishes *Social Text*, wrote about the hoax on the op-ed pages of the *Times* and, as Fahnestock and Secor (2002) describe it, "helped to turn Sokal's parody into an academic *cause célèbre*" (185). Fish's opinion piece serves as the subject of Fahnestock and Secor's rhetorical analysis. They begin by analyzing Fish's use of register, voice, and colloquial terms:

Consider first how Fish's level or register shifting contributes to his distinctive voice. For example, he mixes vocabulary from a formal, scholarly register with informal or colloquial terms: "Distinguishing fact from fiction is surely the business of science, but the means of doing so are not perspicuous in nature—for if they were, there would be no work to be done." The term "business" as used here and the phrases "work to be done" and "fact from fiction" are less formal. More formal—that is, less conversational—are the choices "surely" and "the means of doing so." (191)

The analysis of Fish's text, which Fahnestock and Secor place under the subheading of "appeals to ethos," continues as the authors look carefully at some of Fish's use of vocabulary and shifts in register:

But the most striking word choice in the sentence, "perspicuous," is an unusual if not arcane usage. Fish apparently uses this word in the sense of "clear" or "easy to understand," but because "perspicuous" and its noun form "perspicuity" are usually applied to language

(indeed, perspicuity is one of the four virtues of style in rhetoric), the application to “nature” is a self-conscious stretch. The word itself suggests the notion of nature as a text to be read with interpretive difference, a notion that comes from the disciplinary camp of sociologists of science. Notice too the register shifts within the sentence, from low at the beginning and end to high in the middle: The overall impression is of accessibility, but there is a marked formality amidst the casual. Fish’s choices seem to say, “I can communicate on your level, but I’m doing so from above.” (191–92)

While the authors clearly identify the importance of style in mentioning (parenthetically) that Fish’s use of “perspicuity” alludes to a virtue of style, they do not acknowledge that their *entire* analysis is essentially a stylistic analysis. Their interest in register (formal vs. informal or colloquial), voice, vocabulary, diction (word choice), syntax, and more is, by definition, stylistic, and that analysis is crucial to uncovering the underlying meaning and intention of the author. If the Fahnestock and Secor analysis is clearly stylistic, why is it important to identify it specifically as style instead of more generally as rhetoric, which is what the authors call it? I argue that by labeling their analysis “style,” the authors would bring to bear a great deal of knowledge about style onto another tradition. This suggests that the rhetorical tradition includes a rich stylistic component with a plethora of analytical tools that are not being fully exploited here. Style is a key ingredient in creating the underlying meaning that Fish intends and, by being aware of it, readers could uncover other levels of meaning tied to stylistic analysis.

While style looks closely at sentences and the meanings inherent in them, it makes sense only in relation to broader patterns of discourse and thus has an inextricable connection to arrangement and form. Secor and Fahenstock allude to many rhetorical traditions in their article, yet they do not show this dynamic interplay among style and other canons of the rhetorical tradition. In her article “Kairotic Encounters,” Debra Hawhee (2002) writes:

When rhetoric emerges from encounters, invention is practiced on many levels: in the unexpected syncopations that occur under the traditional rubric of “style”; in the strategic piecing together of discourse (also called “arrangement”); in the bodily and “surface” movements sometimes called “delivery”; and in the configurations of experiential “memory.” (33)

In finding many similarities between what they call discourse analysis (involving language resources at the word and sentence level) and rhetorical analysis (which they say implies broader patterns and forms of discourse), Fahnestock and Secor (2002) acknowledge that “different lenses always produce different visions and the more lenses and visions, the better” (195). What the authors do not acknowledge, however, is the presence of style and the debt that their distinction between discourse and rhetorical analysis owes to style. While Fahnestock and Secor discuss the tradition of style—and elaborate at some length about the nature of its contributions to rhetoric—they seem to see it primarily as a historical phenomenon, and not one currently part of the lexicon of rhetoric. Admittedly, the authors go on to describe traditional attributes of style, such as register, rhetorical schemes and tropes, and lexical field, yet in their failure to describe style’s current relevance to their analysis, they relegate stylistic resources to the by-product of a previous era. In their “rhetorical analysis” of the Sokal text, however, it is clear that they have broadly appropriated the tools of stylistic analysis, generally without acknowledging them as stylistic. This strategy fails to acknowledge that what the authors are performing in the name of rhetorical analysis involves, in large part, an analysis of style.

PERSONAL WRITING

Another example of the migration of style into composition’s diaspora is the field’s recent interest in memoir, creative non-fiction, and autobiography, which cuts across many disciplines in a meta-narrative of local concerns. In the field of composition, several special issues of *College English* (see Hesse 2003;

Hindman 2001, 2003) have been devoted to that study: one in creative nonfiction and two on the personal in academic writing, as well as individual articles on the genre of scholarly memoir in various academic publications. In an edited collection on “the personal,” *Personal Effects: The Social Character of Scholarly Writing*, editors David Bleich and Deborah Holdstein (2001) write, “To one degree or another, scholarly authors’ lived experiences are already part of the different subject matters in the humanities” (2). Though this interest can be viewed in a number of ways, I suggest that one of its features is an interest in register as related to stylistic choices about vocabulary, the use of pronouns to form a persona, and experiments with syntax, tense, and form that focus on the style of these various genres as experimentation and play. As is true with other aspects of the stylistic migration I have been discussing, however, the renewed interest in these genres ignores a potentially useful discussion of style. James Kinneavy (1971) described some of these useful aims of style, including the style of expressive discourse, in his work *A Theory of Discourse*.

Jane Hindman (2001) has used a blending of academic and nonacademic styles, registers, vocabulary, and typography to point to opposing views of authorizing experience in discourse. In her argument for the use of the personal in academic discourse, Hindman weaves together various aspects of her own personae. In her innovative use of various levels of discourse, however, Hindman does not ever characterize any element of her work as stylistic or allude to style in any way. In “Making Writing Matter: Using ‘the Personal’ to Recover[y] an Essential[ist] Tension in Academic Discourse,” Hindman (2001) weaves stylistic experience as follows:

Many, however, object—sometimes strenuously—to proposals that academics use “the personal” as a way to renounce mastery and share a common discourse. . . . I would additionally define this tension as the conflict between opposing conceptions of an expressive, autobiographical self whose autonomy creates coherence out

of inchoate experience and a socially constructed self who is always already constrained by the conventions of discourse.

No, no, no. This is not the way to make things clear: I'm already fogging up the issue with jargon like "agency" and "subject[ivitie]s" and critical affirmation." And this way that I'm thinking I'm so clever by using "matter" to mean something it doesn't really mean: what's up with that? I can't get what I'm talking about any more. What is my point here? I'm so concerned with getting in the right sources that I can't get in what I want to say. Can't I keep this simple? Start over.

My name's JaneE and I'm an alcoholic. My sobriety date is January 1, 1987. I'm glad to be here today. As I understand the topic, the issue we're discussing is what makes someone "really" an alcoholic. Is it the word, the label, or is it something in her? How can you tell the difference? (89–90)

In Hindman's autobiographical essay, it is clear that with each persona she adopts, the writer uses a different register or level of language appropriate for the occasion. In trying to give each "voice" or persona a different but equal authority, Hindman experiments with stylistic variation, suggesting that the informal quality of inner speech (see Vygotsky 1997) can be just as powerful in revealing the questions we ask ourselves as more formal academic prose. In this sense, the style (e.g., the variation in vocabulary, syntax, register, and so forth) of each separate persona has meaning in itself. Take, for example, the contrast between the style of the first and third paragraphs. The first paragraph, heavily indebted to the genre of academic discourse, draws on a particular vocabulary as well as a somewhat complicated syntax. Thus, for example, when Hindman (2001) writes that there is tension in "the conflict between opposing conceptions of an expressivist, autobiographical self whose autonomy creates coherence out of inchoate experience and a socially constructed self who is always already constrained by the conventions of discourse" (106), she clearly draws upon the language of the discipline ("expressivist," "socially constructed") and a meta-discourse of poststructuralist expressions that characterize the conflicts

in language in a certain way (“always already constrained,” “inchoate experience,” and “constrained by the conventions of discourse”). Through vocabulary, she in turn adopts a register (formal, “academic,” intellectual) that mimics the jargon of the field.

When regarded alone, the nature of this academic discourse does not seem unusual. However, when Hindman juxtaposes the academic discourse—albeit on the topic of “the personal”—with a far less formal third paragraph related to the genre of the confession, the contrast is striking. Most readers, even those unfamiliar with formal academic discourse, will be familiar with the confessional genre so prevalent in 12-step or personal improvement programs that have become cultural commonplaces. In the latter discourse, Hindman embraces the confessional style through the use of the pronoun “I” and the use of the formulaic confession (“My name’s JaneE and I’m an alcoholic”). At the same time, however, Hindman, through stylistic means, questions the “simplicity” of the simple sentences and uncomplicated vocabulary of the confession. By superimposing upon the confessional genre an “academic style” (“As I understand the topic, the issue we’re discussing is what makes someone ‘really’ an alcoholic. Is it the word, the label, or is it something in her?”), she challenges the separation between these two supposedly distinct genres.

Hindman’s blurring of styles and genres happens again when she questions self-reflexively the very academic “moves” she is making, taking on the persona of the self-doubting writer (“*No, no, no. This is not the way to make things clear: I’m already fogging up the issue with jargon like “agency” and “subject[ivitie]s” and “critical affirmation”*”) (Hindman 2001, 90). As with the other personae she adopts, Hindman uses typography, a stylistic feature that goes beyond sentences, to indicate the multiperspectival nature of her discourse. What’s more, the juxtaposition of the self-reflexive vocabulary (“fogging up,” “no, no, no”) with the words she is constantly questioning (e.g., “agency” and “subject[ivitie]s”) reveals the importance of style in constructing discourse. Her

desire to show the importance of the “personal” is made much greater by the blending of styles in creating her own academic discourse. The various uses of voice, register, vocabulary, and tone suggests an interest in style as play, as experimentation that the author never identifies explicitly as style but clearly embodies throughout her writing.

Autobiography and memoir implicate the study of style in composition in other important ways. Style reaches across the boundaries of genre to imbue language with a consciousness of gender, class, and ethnicity. Margaret K. Willard-Traub (2003) alludes to this tendency in her article “Rhetorics of Gender and Ethnicity in Scholarly Memoir,” where she writes:

Memoirs and autobiographically inflected texts . . . strongly reject language as a “transparent medium for” simply holding or conveying meaning, especially meaning related to such aspects of identity as ethnicity, gender, and class. Instead, these texts . . . conceive of language as a “material constituent in” the social relations that encourage particular understandings of identity within and across particular communities. (512)

Scholarship in rhetoric and composition has been filled with scholarly memoir that uses variation in style to look *at* (rather than *through*) language itself (Lanham 1974) as a source of meaning and identity. In works such as Keith Gilyard’s *Voices of the Self* (1990), Victor Villanueva’s *Boostraps* (1993), and Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary* (1989), the authors explore different writing styles that capture the often conflicting nature of their personal and professional identities. Indeed, this is not reserved exclusively for academics, but incorporates everything from political memoir—the instances of former president Bill Clinton, his wife Hillary Rodham Clinton, and whistle blower Richard Clark come to mind—to personal memoirs by American expatriate David Sedaris, writer Joan Didion, and *Meet the Press* moderator Tim Russert. Clearly, some of the movement into memoir has been controversial. For instance, in his biographical memoir of Ronald Reagan, *Dutch: A Memoir*

of *Ronald Reagan*, Edmund Morris (1999) decides to relate the period of time before he met Reagan (and for which he had no personal memory) by creating a persona. Morris makes a stylistic choice to form a persona through which he conveys specific information about the late president's life. Given the outcry that accompanied this decision, it is clear that the genre of personal writing is popular—and controversial—outside the academy.

In their interest in this type of writing, composition scholars also look across disciplines to find ways in which style is connected to larger issues. Willard-Traub (2003), for example, uses examples from various disciplines to make the point that the personal and professional are connected to identity, often through what she says is “the language of loss.” While she does not mention style specifically, Willard-Traub's work implicates style in many crucial ways. For example, she writes:

Scholars across the disciplines such as Ruth Behar in anthropology, Patricia Williams in law, Alice Kaplan in French studies, Shirley Geok-lin Lim in English, among others, have demonstrated in their scholarly work, much of which draws on examples from personal experience, how academic and professional languages, for example, are not separable from the behaviors of historically real human groups that have functioned to place women, people of color, and the poor in subordinate positions both outside and within the academy. (513)

While Willard-Traub's claim at first seems simply to explore the way in which personal and professional languages are connected to social patterns or behaviors, her specific analysis of this interconnection is, at heart, a function of style. Thus, for example, when Willard-Traub looks to Ruth Behar in the field of anthropology, she cites the latter's essay, “Writing in My Father's Name” (Behar 1995), to draw attention to a style she calls “shadow biography” as well as to larger issues of form and discourse. According to Traub, Behar (1993) achieves part of her effect by restructuring her essay through a series of diary

entries that examine her family's reaction to her book *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (1993), the ethnography of a Mexican peddler woman. At one point, Traub cites the instance of Behar's interpellation into the academic community after receiving both tenure and a MacArthur fellowship. Behar (1993) writes:

I was now lost in a different wilderness, the wilderness of success in the university system, success I myself had striven for. After being the woman who couldn't translate herself, I had suddenly become the woman who translated herself too well. And in the midst of it all, I was planning to turn the tales of a Mexican street peddler into a book that would be read within the very same academy that had toyed with my intimate sense of identity and then, with even less compunction, bought me out. Fresh from the horror of being a translated woman, I would now turn around and translate another woman for consumption on this side of the border. (335)

Willard-Traub (2003) interprets Behar's writing as an example of the "institutional rhetoric" in which Behar herself is complicit, an example, according to Willard-Traub, that works by "'translating' individuals into 'others' for particular audiences and purposes." In a rather prescient analysis, Willard-Traub adds that "*in the same moment*, Behar's reflection also blurs the dividing line between herself and Esperanza by acknowledging that both are vulnerable . . . to having their lived experiences and identities rewritten in ways outside of their control" (515; emphasis original).

Even though Willard-Traub's analysis reveals the way in which Behar and Esperanza's identities can become blurred or confused, where the subject becomes both the subjected and the agent of subjugation, her negotiation of this border territory would be enriched through stylistic analysis. In particular, I argue that the use of style is what reveals how the border becomes blurred—and thus illuminates the consequences of that blurring. That blurring occurs through Behar's own skillful use of rhetorical schemes and tropes. The metaphor of

translation, to begin with, itself suggests a certain blurring of boundaries between language, nationality, and idiom: it allows the translator to become both interpreter and interpreted, her own “translation” refracted through the lens of the “translated’s” subjectivity. Behar shows the nature of these double boundaries through the use of *anadiplosis*, or the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause (Corbett 1971, 475). For example, she writes, “wilderness, the wilderness,” “success in the university system, success” and then follows that up by weaving in the scheme of antithesis: “After being *the woman who couldn’t translate herself*, I had suddenly become *the woman who translated herself too well*,” an idea she continues with another example: “from the horror of being a translated woman” and “translate another woman” (Behar 1993, 335; emphasis added). By using these rhetorical schemes, mediated through the trope of metaphor, Behar mirrors syntactically—and stylistically—the reciprocal effect of her actions. The repetition of words has the effect of an antiphonal choir, the acted upon and the acting of language.

In addition to Behar, Willard-Traub also mentions Asian writer Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1996) who, in *Among the White Moon Faces*, shows how the form of autobiographical writing becomes a meta-narrative about the loss of place and identity in both personal and professional homelands. Geok-lin writes:

The dominant imprint I have carried with me since birth was of a Malaysian homeland. It has been an imperative for me to make sense of these birthmarks; they compose the hieroglyphs of my body’s senses. We tell stories to bind us to a spot, and often the stories that make us cry knot the thickest ropes. (231)

Later, Lim writes about the displacement she feels as she moves around within the United States, her new home:

To give up the struggle for a memorialized homeland may be the most forgiving act I can do. Everywhere I have lived in the United States—Boston, Brooklyn, Westchester—I felt an absence of place,

myself absent in America. Absence was the story my mother taught me, that being the story of her migrant people, the Malacca peranakans. But perhaps she was also teaching me that home is the place where our stories are told. Had I more time to talk to Mother, perhaps I could have learned to forgive, listening to her stories. In California, I am beginning to write stories about America, as well as about Malaysia. Listening, and telling my own stories, I am moving home. (231–32)

What remains under the surface in this powerful narrative is the importance of style. While Lim's conflict between place and displacement may be clear, it is more powerful when some of the elements of style are used to reveal how she achieves this effect. For example, Lim's use of occasional periodic sentences to delay the impact of her ideas is a function of style that helps to enact the power and emotion of her displacement and reacculturation. She writes, "To give up the struggle for a memorialized homeland *may be the most forgiving act I can do,*" and then, "Listening, and telling my stories, *I am moving home*" (emphasis added). In both instances, delaying the resolution of the sentence until the end works to extend the pain of her displacement and furthers the anticipation of its resolution. In addition, Lim uses the rhetorical scheme of *polyptoton*, or the repetition of words derived from the same root, to accentuate the feeling of loss, in this case, the various forms of the word "absence/absent." Thus, for instance, she writes, "I felt an absence of place, myself absent in America. Absence was the story my mother taught me" (Lim 1996, 231).

Lim also effectively combines two other rhetorical schemes to achieve her purposes: *asyndeton* and *parenthesis*. In her sentence, "Everywhere I have lived in the United States—Boston, Brooklyn, Westchester—I felt an absence of place, myself absent in America," the parenthesis achieved through the use of dashes—Boston, Brooklyn, Westchester—juxtaposes in an abrupt form locations that are easily recognizable for Americans with the lack of recognition they hold for Lim. In addition, Lim's use of parenthesis is accompanied by the use, in the same sentence,

of asyndeton, the “deliberate omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses” (Corbett 1971, 469). The effect of asyndeton (Boston, Brooklyn, Westchester), especially when it is used in conjunction with parenthesis, is to present the cities in a staccato effect, the one-two-three punch of words that are simply names in a list rather than attached to personal—or cultural—memory. The stylistic effect is to show how the cities themselves are alienated from Lim, not just Lim from them. While there are other stylistic schemes at work here, these few examples demonstrate how important style is to achieving the overall effect of Lim’s feeling of being both absent and present, in America and Malaysia, a feeling that is not alleviated until she realizes the importance of telling her own stories. The point is that the stylistic features, which exist on an implicit plane, are powerful when made explicit: they become an important part of the overall effect, meaning, emotion, and consensus the author is trying to achieve. The interest in the genre of personal writing, therefore, is imbued with the study of style, even though it is not acknowledged or recognized in that way.

One question that must still be answered is to what extent style can be construed as going beyond sentences (see Roen 1996). In other words, in addition to stylistic features that are primarily syntactic, how much does the form of the genre itself affect the way that style has dispersed into the diaspora? In Hindman’s (2001) essay, for example, the difference in typography reflects the changing personae she adopts. To what degree is this change in the form of the essay—the congruence of identity and form—a stylistic feature, or as Duane Roen asks, how does it reflect a feature of discourse at a broader level of concern (193)? The dispersion of style into personal writing suggests that style, while manifested locally in sentences, has important impacts on the broader form of discourse. It seems that the attention to memoir, autobiography, and creative non-fiction in composition is focused primarily at that broader level. What is clear, however, is that those features of the broader form of discourse—for example, Hindman’s distinctive typography,

or Behar's use of journal entries—become most important through the stylistic features enacted in sentences. Therefore, while it may be tempting to try to make a pronouncement about the migration of style into broader forms of discourse—the idea of arrangement or, perhaps, that of genre—it seems that the real dispersion, and its importance, must concomitantly be viewed at the level of the sentence.

THEORIES OF RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

One of the most surprising areas into which style has moved is theories of race, class, gender, and cultural difference in composition. Since the social “turn” in composition, and even in light of CCCC's declaration of “Students' Right to Their Own Language” (Committee on CCCC Language 1974), the field has turned forcefully toward these theories within which there has been an emphasis on style in ways often not evident. One way this is manifested is in the notion of a “personal” style: the idea that language is most clearly evident in the way it is taken up by each person; the principle of variation; and, ultimately, the concept of diversity. The notion of variation is important in the definition and idea of style. It suggests that style is composed of variation from a norm and it is the juxtaposition of variation and normalization that produces the style. Clearly, this view has been important in many aspects of cultural studies.

Style has been important in theories of social class that have become increasingly significant in composition in recent years. Those who embody the tensions of trying to value their background, roots, and socioeconomic status often adopt a style appropriate to communicating their struggle. This conflict is evident in Laurel Johnson Black's (1995) essay, “Stupid Rich Bastards,” in which she discusses the difficulty of growing up in a working-class family, a way of life in which “bodily functions, secretions, garbage, crimes and delinquency, who got away with what were as much a part of our language as they were of our lives” (15). In positing another vocabulary, a register as a way

of life, Black is essentially advancing an argument about social class through stylistic choices. Through the study of style, we see how she achieves this balance, articulating her angry vision as she is pulled between two worlds:

At some point in my life, when I was very young, it had been decided that I would be the one who went to college, who earned a lot of money, who pulled my family away from the edge of the pit, and who gave the stupid rich bastards what they had coming to them. I would speak like them but wouldn't be one of them. I would move among them, would spy on them, learn their ways, and explain them to my own people—a guerrilla fighter for the poor. My father had visions of litigation dancing in his head, his daughter in a suit, verbally slapping the hell out of some rich asshole in a courtroom. (17)

Through the use of the passive voice (“it had been decided that I”), Black (1995) erases her own agency so that she becomes simply a force of the working class from which she hails. She shows the conflict in even greater detail through the repetition of the pronoun “who” (“I would be the one *who* went to college, *who* earned a lot of money, *who* pulled my family away from the edge of the pit, and *who* gave the stupid rich bastards what they had coming to them”) (17; emphasis added); each successive repetition of the relative pronoun both includes her as part of the class yet distances her from the person she actually is—and the person she is becoming. She also distances herself from the class she is joining by use of the conditional tense, “would” (i.e., “I *would* speak like them but *wouldn't* be one of them. I *would* move among them, *would* spy on them”) (17; emphasis added). The use of the conditional makes her simply a player in the overall actions of the working class with which she so closely identifies herself. These stylistic techniques allow Black to use the language of the working class, to adopt its vocabulary without fully embracing it. Thus, the effect is to make the use of her language somehow disembodied. Therefore, when she writes about the “stupid rich bastards” and “verbally slapping the hell out of some

rich asshole,” the reader is left with a curious effect: words that seem to be representative of the working class, but that seem distant—perhaps appropriately—for a woman who has entered a middle-class existence. This tension, between working and middle classes, between solidarity with her class and the fact of having left it, appears prominently in her stylistic moves.

In *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change among African American Women*, Jacqueline Jones Royster (2000) focuses on style in analyzing the literacy practices of some of the early American women she studies. In looking at the style of essayist/poet/novelist Alice Walker, Royster writes:

In terms of style, Walker does not always remain within conventional boundaries of exposition and argumentation. She weaves in and out of these modes—at will, as a master storyteller might do—and operates as if there were indeed a fluid space in which both autonomous and non-autonomous rhetorical choices can be selected. Sometimes she uses narration, description, dialogue, poetry, and powerful images, not just as interest-generating opening devices but as elaboration, as evidence for assertions that appeal to readers in terms of logos, pathos, and ethos. Further, she consistently pays attention to the triadic relationships between herself, her audience, and the subject matter, referencing her personal vision and experiences and the context in which she exists. (40)

Clearly, the very fact that Royster attributes these characteristics of Walker’s writing to style is evidence of style having migrated in composition into explorations of race and gender. Royster’s observations include Walker’s use of “the voices of others” (40). Part of Royster’s discussion of style, however, is primarily one of genre: argumentation, the genre of storytelling, and so forth. I submit that the actual language and techniques of stylistic analysis might lead Royster to some unexpected conclusions about the connection between literacy and social action.

Royster takes important steps in stylistic analysis when she quotes the following passage from an Alice Walker (1983) essay on Zora Neale Hurston:

Without money of one's own in a capitalist society, there is no such thing as independence. This is one of the clearest lessons of Zora's life, and why I consider the telling of her life "a cautionary tale." We must learn from it what we can. . . . Without money, an illness, even a simple one, can undermine the will. Without money, getting into a hospital is problematic and getting out without money to pay for the treatment is nearly impossible. Without money, one becomes dependent on other people, who are likely to be—even in their kindness—erratic in their support and despotic in their expectations of return. Zora was forced to rely, like Tennessee Williams's Blanche, "on the kindness of strangers." Can anything be more dangerous, if the strangers are forever in control? Zora, who worked so hard, was never able to make a living from her work. (90)

In her analysis, Royster refers to Walker's use of a rhetorical scheme that Edward P. J. Corbett (1971) calls *anaphora* ("repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses") (472) in the phrase "without money," as well as in the rhetorical question (i.e., "Can anything be more dangerous?"), both of which are promising stylistic areas. In a more formal stylistic analysis, Royster might also observe how Walker uses this repetition to achieve a strong emotional effect precisely because it illustrates the futility of what Hurston tries to accomplish. The greatness of her accomplishment stands in direct contrast to her impoverishment. Thus, with the use of anaphora—and the result that Hurston, Blanche Dubois-like, had to rely on the "kindness of strangers"—the subsequent posing of a rhetorical question, "Can anything be more dangerous, if the strangers are forever in control?" has the typical effect of asking a question in order to assert something obliquely rather than eliciting an answer. While this is often the province of impassioned speeches, Walker's use of the rhetorical question in this instance serves to elicit a certain response from the audience and to make the suggestion much more powerfully than if she had made the statement directly.

Given the purpose of Royster's work, the stylistic practices could also show the plight of poverty among African-American

women and allude to Walker's point that it served to delay or deny greatness among African-American women. These results are achieved through style, and Royster is showing how style is being used effectively by Walker. Royster's contribution to the diaspora is therefore laudable. Her work is a promising step toward integrating stylistic analysis into a site of the diaspora that holds great interest for the field.

IMPLICATIONS

The idea that the study of style has not disappeared from the field of composition completely but has migrated into other areas offers several opportunities for the field. The idea of the diaspora, brilliant in conception, is nonetheless troubling if it is thought of as a "forced" migration. Yet, evidence suggests that with respect to style, for composition scholars the diaspora represents more a state of self-imposed exile than a forced flight. Regardless of the popular cultural forces that may have led to a flight from stylistic study in composition, there is really no reason for the field to consider the expulsion forced. If that is the case, the field needs to acknowledge the examples of stylistic study found in many areas in which that work has diffused. Several are mentioned here; many others exist.

While it would be useful to students to have access to these stylistic resources as they develop as writers, I argue that it would be equally beneficial to composition scholars. My analysis has attempted to show that scholars with excellent rhetorical skills are not exploiting the full range of stylistic—and thus analytical—options that would allow a more complete understanding of textual objects. Stylistic analysis includes a rich tradition of practices and resources that are available for writers to use, and their neglect, I contend, leaves important gaps in any written work. While the stylistic work that currently exists in diffused areas may hint at some of the possibilities, an analysis that exploits the resources of style explicitly would have a greater command of the uses of language in different contexts. If it is true that style, like invention, has not only migrated but

“entered, settled, and shaped many other areas of theory and practice in rhetoric and composition” (Lauer 2002, 2), then it seems important for the field to acknowledge an important source of its work. It will require a change in attitude, however, for the field to embrace the study of style and, in redeploying it in useful ways, effectively redefine it for the field. The diaspora of composition studies offers an ideal site for the discipline to begin that change.²