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Out of Style

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BACK IN STYLE

Style and the Future of Composition Studies

Several years ago, I spent more than 100 hours in one of the tiny basement rooms that make up the language laboratory at Middlebury College in Vermont. Using a machine that allowed me to hear my own voice simultaneously juxtaposed with the native French speakers on the tapes, I practiced some of the sounds most difficult for Americans to master: the vocalic /r/, the nasal /u/ sound that does not exist in English, and its contrast with the /ou/ sound that is slightly more rounded and not quite like any comparable sound in English. I also practiced the rhythm of the language, since French intonation is flat, without the rise and fall of accented syllables that exist in every word in English. What I did not realize at the time is that my language lab experience was a study of style, the rehearsal of phonological aspects of the French language that contribute to meaning. In my language practice, I also focused—for the most part tacitly—on other stylistic features: syntax, or the word order in sentences; lexical features, especially variations in vocabulary and the agreement of nouns, including pronouns, with masculine or feminine genders; and register, the different levels of formality that often were signaled by the use of a formal pronoun for “you” (*vous*) in contrast with the informal pronoun (*tu*).

While some exceptions exist, the language lab in many American colleges and universities today has largely become an artifact, part of language teaching and learning replaced by other technological, pedagogical, and theoretical practices. I argue that the study of style has suffered the same fate, its value increasingly lost as style theory and practice have come to represent a kind of anachronism in the field of composition. That fate, I maintain, is both undeserved and unfortunate.

Like the wide range of voices I listened to and learned from in the language laboratory, the study of style offers new language resources for writers. The explicit knowledge of those resources—rhetorical, linguistic, and extending into discourse—can help writers to create and express meaning as language effects. I acknowledge that this is not always a conscious process and that some writers may deploy style effectively without explicit knowledge of its resources. In fact, given the dearth of style studies today, I suspect that many writers use stylistic features without any overt knowledge of them. Nevertheless, just as an athlete with a natural sense of how to play a sport may improve his or her ability after seeing his or her performance on videotape, so a writer, armed with an arsenal of stylistic features, may look at his or her writing with new understandings and develop, adapt, or appropriate new composing strategies.

If we accept the premise that the neglect of stylistic resources by the field has precluded conscious knowledge of valuable language practices, I argue that this loss is the result of composition's fundamental misunderstanding of the role of style in its past studies, pedagogies, disciplinary practices, and history. I have suggested that misunderstanding comes from the field's *retrospective* tendency (1) to affiliate an emphasis on style with current-traditional rhetoric and (2) to see style as the antithesis of invention, even though evidence shows that neither characterization is accurate. In associating style with current-traditional rhetoric—a term that has acquired negative connotations over the years—and thereby discounting it, we have failed to see the study of style for what it actually represented during composition's process movement: a set of innovative practices used to generate and express language through the deployment of rhetorical features. In losing the natural connection shared by the canons of style and invention at that time, we no longer look for ways in which they could be used profitably together in current discourse. While the two canons are often seen as independent, their dichotomization disallows the possibility of an inventional style, the kind scholars demonstrated

through the development of stylistic practices during the process era and Golden Age.

STYLE AS EMOTIONAL FORM AND MEANING

In addition to looking prospectively at new approaches to the study of style in composition, it is instructive to return to one historically recurrent theoretical problem: whether language can be separated from substance, form from content, style from meaning. What most critics claim is at stake is the answer to the apparently intractable question of whether meaning remains the same if something is said in different ways, through different words. If a writer changes even one word in a sentence, has she in effect changed the entire meaning? In other words, are form and content separate—or inseparable? While various scholars have proposed ways to get around the question, I think the best solution might be to frame the problem somewhat differently. First, it seems clear that the distinction falls apart at the point when the study of style leads to meaning. For example, even if we read something that we remark as having a certain style, later we generally do not remember what we have read verbatim (unless, of course, we have memorized it). Instead, we recall the meaning. At some point, then, and on some level, it seems we must agree that style and meaning necessarily converge. To suggest otherwise is to deny the way in which form and content are inextricably linked in recollection. However, even if this connection is certain, one question that no one has adequately explored is the impact of style on the *kind* of meaning retained. Another question is the effect of style on memory.

In examining the kind of meaning we retain, scholars in the 1970s like Richard Ohmann and Virginia Tufte developed the idea of style as “emotional form.” While they looked at the study of style—Tufte specifically explored the way syntax operates—as a way of fulfilling expectations (see Burke 1968), no one has reexamined that question recently. In many ways, however, the notion of style as emotional form that Tufte and Ohmann

reinvigorated is fundamentally a question from classical rhetoric, one the Sophists took up in ways later reprised by Cicero and Quintilian (see Chap. 2). To examine that question here, I quote below, in translation, from *My Mother's Castle*, the second volume of a memoir, subtitled *Memories of Childhood*, by French writer and filmmaker Marcel Pagnol (1960). What his nonfiction style evokes for me is an emotional response to a place I have not seen (the environs of Marseilles, France) and a time I did not live through (the early 1900s). How does the author achieve a version of Tufte and Ohmann's "emotional form"? I argue that it is Pagnol's style—his choice of words, syntax, variation of the length and tenor of sentences, use of periodic sentences, and particularly conciseness and amplification in discourse—that controls the nature of the meaning for readers. Thus, if it is true that what remains after the author's actual words are forgotten is the meaning—and the way we remember it—I suggest that meanings are necessarily determined by a writer's emotional style. The excerpt below appears at the end of Pagnol's memoir and recounts, within the space of a few paragraphs, what has happened over the course of approximately 15 years in the author's life:

Time passes and turns the wheel of life, as water turns the mill-wheel.

•

Five years later, I was walking behind a black carriage, whose wheels were so high that I could see the horses' hooves. I was dressed in black, and young Paul's hand was gripping mine with all its strength. My mother was being borne away for ever.

•

I have no other memory of that dreadful day, as if the fifteen-year old that I was refused to admit a grief so overwhelming that it could have killed me. For years, in fact until we reached manhood, we never had the courage to speak of her.

•

Paul . . . was the last of Virgil's goat-herds. . . . But at the age of thirty he died in a clinic. On his bedside table lay his mouth-organ.

•

My dear Lili did not walk at my side as I accompanied [Paul] to his little graveyard at La Treille, for he had been waiting for him there for years, under a carpet of immortelles humming with bees; during the war of 1914, in a black northern forest, a bullet in the forehead cut short his young life, and he had sunk, under the falling rain, on a tangle of chilly plants whose names he did not even know.

•

Such is the life of man. A few joys, quickly obliterated by unforgettable sorrows.

•

There is no need to tell the children so. (1960, 338–39)

In this excerpt from Pagnol's memoir, it is important to acknowledge that the words would be meaningless without the current and prior meanings attached to them. In that regard, the reader already has extensive knowledge of Pagnol's mother, brother, and childhood friend, Lili, whose deaths the author recounts here toward the end of the second in a series of two memoirs about Pagnol's childhood (the first is *My Father's Glory* 1960). I propose, however, that when a reader wants to recall the emotion evoked—the “feeling” he or she has about a time, a place, a memory, a history—that feeling is not reproduced simply through its propositional meaning (the meaning that can be evaluated as either true or false, partly from prior knowledge) but through its style. In other words, it is not only the events Pagnol relates about the death of his mother, brother, and Lili that have an impact on the reader, but the emotion conveyed through the stylistic resources Pagnol employs. Style, then, is important because it conveys emotion, enriching meaning beyond denotation to include connotation and nuance. A slightly different approach to the same problem, using terms from speech act theory, suggests that the perlocutionary meaning (the effect on or reaction of the reader) can be as determinative as those meanings that are locutionary (concerned with the act of saying) or illocutionary (concerned with the act of doing).

How, then, does perlocutionary meaning work specifically in this excerpt from Pagnol? Even though some of the syntactic impact is lost in the translation from the original French, this excerpt, most of it from contiguous paragraphs, illustrates the way that stylistic effects exist in stretches of discourse beyond sentences. The real impact, in fact, lies in the way Pagnol, after carefully presenting other aspects of his memoir, creates a fast-forward effect and, in just a few paragraphs, encapsulates years of significant events of life and death. Each death is recounted in its propositional detail—simply as a fact of time passing—with the image of the mill-wheel a metaphor that underscores the inevitability of time and death. It is significant to note that Pagnol achieves greater emotional impact specifically by using an economy of words, or conciseness, in conjunction with amplification, which involves elaboration or copiousness. Nevin Laib (1990) calls conciseness and amplification “companion arts.” He states that conciseness “focuses the mind and reflects concentration. It suggests decisiveness, maturity, and strength” (457). In this instance, conciseness is achieved not through individual words or sentences but through the economy of units of discourse beyond the sentence. Pagnol uses concision almost as a catalog of events, with the few words that mark each death evoking the idea of “less is more.” The intensity of the emotional impact is thus achieved through the author’s ability to focus time, death, and loss through a “compression of content” (Erasmus 1978, 300).

The idea that style gives rise to meaning that goes beyond propositional meaning also changes the way we think about memory. It is possible, in fact, that memory may be as much the emotional force created by style as it is the recollection the reader has of propositional statements. In this sense, I suggest, style produces a remnant or remainder, that is, a feeling that lingers after other aspects of the text have escaped our immediate memory—aspects like the author’s meaning or the meaning we have constructed from the text itself. Marcel Proust (1981) attempted to capture this elusive quality through his evocation

of the *madeleine*, a small cookie whose taste and smell evoked memories that were otherwise buried in a distant time and place. I propose, then, that style serves as a kind of madeleine, the essence of what remains of an author's writing. I argue that Pagnol, in effect, engenders this type of memory through stylistic devices, among them Laib's idea of a conjunction of conciseness and amplification. Pagnol achieves this in successive paragraphs first by amplifying the reality of the death of his mother, affiliating it with the horses and coffins, the black dress, the silence, an approach he repeats in giving salient details of his brother's death (e.g., the mouth-organ on the table) and of Lili's (e.g., the flowers, immortelles, that cover the land in which he is buried, and the irony of Lili's lack of knowledge of northern plants when he had taught the author about the vegetation of Provence). He couples this expanded language of memory with his succinct staccato-like interpretation of that memory: the inevitability of man's fate; the sadness of the human condition; the reluctance to share that knowledge with children. Thus, the connection of conciseness and amplification in successive units of discourse beyond the sentence, referring back to the entire two-volume memoir, suggests that memory can be recalled, and focused, through stylistic resources.

RECOVERING HISTORY

If it is true that part of our attitude toward the study of style today is based on a misunderstanding of its history in our field, why is that significant? I have argued that our disavowal of stylistic practices has deprived the field of many useful language resources in the teaching of writing: not only such teaching practices as syntactically based generative rhetoric and sentence combining, but also features of language like sound and rhythm; vocabulary and diction; cohesion, coherence, and variation in sentence types (loose, periodic, balanced, etc.); questions of rhetorical usage, rhetorical grammar, and rhetorical imitation; and the given and new contract, punctuation, and spelling. These stylistic interests, which represent just a small

sample of the overall possibilities, coincide with a period of the field's history identified not only as the process era (the Golden Age of style), but also the beginning of modern composition studies. Thus, in our neglect of these interests, we also ignore a part of our roots, including disciplinary ties to the revival of rhetoric and an interest in science (e.g., cognitive theories). Therefore, the reanimation of stylistic study contributes to reformulating the history of that period and, by extension, the history of our discipline. It forces us to ask whether we want the study of style to remain hermetically sealed even after we have begun to reconstruct some of the reasons for its isolation, and concomitant dispersion, in the field.

In any attempt to recover the history of the process era, it is important to think about the way that era has been constructed retrospectively. Bruce Horner reminds us of this point in his essay "Resisting Traditions in Composing Composition," where he writes that "advice on the 'search' for traditions leaves unchallenged a tacit conception of traditions as inert objects, hidden but nonetheless discoverable by those with the requisite time, access to materials, and sensibility. Overlooked is the *process* by which traditions in composition are constituted and maintained" (Horner 1994, 495; emphasis added). The problem is that the process era has itself undergone an interpretive process in which rhetorical features of style have been constructed as inert objects, and composition scholars have accepted that process without questioning the discipline's "final word" on the tradition. For instance, in their afterword to the volume *Teaching/Writing in the Late Age of Print* (Galín, Haviland, and Johnson 2003), the editors suggest that one instructor's "social-minded" classroom teaching is actually informed by "tenets of current-traditional . . . rhetorics" (385) and cite as evidence the instructor's use of the words "genre," "research," "style," and "tone" in her syllabus (386). The editors' search for evidence of a pejorative current-traditional paradigm among other social features that the instructor uses rhetorically and dynamically suggests their reliance on what Horner calls an inert tradition. Clearly, this is

an inaccurate tradition—and interpretation—perpetuated by a process that has gone unchallenged, and in its place I am proposing a revisionist history of the period with respect to style.

One way to reexamine traditions and to question some of the process movement's assumptions is to reread composition scholars who participated in that era. In that regard, I propose to revisit the work of scholars who are not normally associated with style, and two potential choices are Peter Elbow, most often associated with expressivism, and James Britton, thought to have made an important distinction between poetic and transactional knowledge. In the same way that Horner (1994) rereads the work of William E. Coles, Jr. and David Bartholomae and their reception in composition studies, I suggest a rereading of figures like Elbow and Britton and, in the process, as Horner proposes, "critiquing common identifications of their work with particular traditions and arguing for an alternative identification of their work" (497)—in this case, in the stylistic tradition. What were the operative concepts and traditions that each worked from and how can those traditions be reconciled with different views of style during that era? From what perspectives and on what terms would such a rethinking of their work occur? How did these views enter their pedagogies? The aim, then, is to examine precisely how their work is suggestive of style when, in fact, it is generally thought not to be about style at all. I have mentioned a few of the figures in composition who were central to the process era; there are many others. For example, two scholars more closely affiliated with the study of style during the Golden Age, Ross Winterrowd and Richard Young, are worthy of study. I propose, then, a broad-based reassessment of individuals during the Golden Age and an examination of how their work might be reread through the lens of style.

In addition, it would be productive to reexamine the study of style through composition's rich textbook tradition, particularly during the process era. Some of the textbooks that would serve as a place to start include Young, Becker, and Pike's (1970) *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, which has a rich but largely

unknown section on style; Ann Berthoff's (1982) *Forming/Thinking/Writing*, which has important things to say about imitation and focuses its work, as a general rule, at the word and sentence level; Patrick Hartwell's (1982) *Open to Language*, with several chapters on style and other language features; Edward P. J. Corbett's (1971) *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, with its series of rhetorical exercises and readings on style; and one of the five editions of Daiker, Kerek, Morenberg, and Sommers's (1994) *The Writer's Options: Lessons in Style and Arrangement*, organized around the idea of sentence combining and extended into various areas of composition. One question to ask is how textbook practices reflect the scholarship going on at the time and how they perpetuate views about style that support or contradict those views. To what extent are these textbooks indicative of efforts on multiple levels to use style to generate language? In what ways do they confirm or contradict some of the practices labeled "current-traditional" by the critics of the time? How do the textbooks accept or resist popular conceptions of style regarding clarity or grammar (see Chap. 5)? For example, Berthoff's text is often thought of as creating a new space for thinking about language. In what ways might she be working against her own formulation of new thinking? In other words, how does *Forming/Thinking/Writing* reflect or resist conventional notions of style and invention?

EXPLORING THE DIASPORA

I have argued that style, despite its apparent invisibility, has migrated to various areas of the field where it is not called style but functions as such under different theories and practices. I have given examples in genre theory, rhetorical analysis, personal writing, and studies of race, class, gender, and cultural difference. These are not the only areas of composition's diaspora, however, and it would be productive to explore other spaces where the study of style has migrated in the field. Some of these include studies of literacy, including multiliteracies, technology, and globalization. In addition to examining the way in which

style has diffused in these areas of composition, it is important to draw on the disciplines that inform them. For example, if we look at the innovative area of multiliteracies, we discover that the study of style is having an impact there in important ways, sometimes identified as style and sometimes not called style but functioning in that way (e.g., the idea of “design”). It is important to note, too, that the pedagogy of multiliteracies does not function alone but takes as its assumption the challenges of a global world and advances in technology, both of which invoke the canon of style in innovative ways. Collin Brooke (2002) points to this problem in an article in *Enculturation*, “Notes toward the Remediation of Style,” where he introduces the importance of style as “remediation,” defined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) as “the representation of one medium in another” (45). Brooke suggests a view of a style remediated through new technologies in a globalized world. Drawing on the work of Lanham (1993), Brooke states that “one of the implications of electronic prose is that style escapes the cage that print technology represents.”

The importance of globalization, including the impact of technology, is evident in all aspects of composition studies today. For example, in the afterword of *Teaching/Writing in the Late Age of Print*, editors Galin, Haviland, and Johnson (2003) consider the implications of globalism for composition:

Our discipline faces now daunting responsibilities as post-modernism is pressed by globalism on both theoretical and material planes. This confluence of diversifying and unifying cultural forces confronts us on theoretical planes when aims and praxis collide. For example, we have begun to theorize alternative texts and invite our students to write them; yet we are faced with increasing pressures to prepare our students for the global corporate workplace. . . . Faculty can teach themselves and their students to consider seriously the multiple ways texts can be composed and read, working to “illuminate rather than mask” the possibilities emerging from cultural and other differences. (403)

In their emphasis on a diversity of texts composed and read on the basis of “difference,” the editors are essentially calling for the very kind of alternatives proposed in “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (Committee on CCCC Language 1974). The Students’ Right authors recognize the study of style as part of composition’s disciplinary responsibility, and the editors of *Teaching/Writing* seem to come close to the idea of style as part of global interdependence when they suggest the “confluence of diversifying and unifying cultural forces . . . [where] aims and praxis collide” (403).

Whereas the editors of *Teaching/Writing* stop short of explicitly including style in their vision of composition in a globalized world, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (2000), the editors of *Multiliteracies: Literacy, Learning, and the Design of Social Futures*, make it an indispensable part of their project. Like the editors of *Teaching/Writing*, who look for ways to increase both local diversity and global connectedness, *Multiliteracies* editors argue that “the proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the key facts of our time” (6). Yet, the *Multiliteracies* writers propose to enter global diversity by means of a key concept: “Design.” The authors define Design as a way to “conceptualise the ‘what’ of literacy pedagogy”:

The key concept we developed to do this is that of Design, in which we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning while at the same time active designers of meaning. And, as designers of meaning, we are designers of social futures—workplace futures, public futures, and community futures. (7)

I propose that the authors’ idea of Design is a rhetorical concept very much in line with what I have been describing in terms of style. In explaining the social idea of Design, the collective authors of *The New London Group* write, “We propose a metalanguage of Multiliteracies based on the concept of ‘Design’” (19), and go on to define that metalanguage:

Design is intended to focus our attention on representational resources. This metalanguage is not a category of mechanical skills,

as is commonly the case in grammars designed for educational use. Nor is it the basis for detached critique or reflection. Rather, *the Design notion emphasizes the productive and innovative potential of language as a meaning-making system*. This is an action-oriented and generative description of language as a means of representation. (25–26; emphasis added)

I contend that the authors' conception of Design is similar to the definition of style I have explored in this book. Just as I have argued that style has often been used for productive and creative purposes, the *Multiliteracies* authors suggest that design emphasizes "the productive and innovative potential of language as a meaning-making system" (26).

It seems, then, that the authors have essentially redefined style as Design. In doing so, they have also proposed a possible way to overcome the form/content dichotomy that has been so much at the heart of the disciplinary division about style for years. The New London Group hints at this resolution when they write:

The notion of design connects powerfully to the sort of creative intelligence the best practitioners need in order to be able continually to redesign their activities in the very act of practice. It connects well to the idea that learning and productivity are the results of the designs . . . of complex systems of people environments, technology, beliefs, and texts. (19–20)

In the eyes of the *Multiliteracies* authors, Design is necessarily a combination of form and content because the two are connected in an ongoing process of renegotiation and redesign. While looking at various systems of meaning like people, technology, and texts, the authors recognize that language is a productive and innovative way of making meaning through representation. It is clear, then, that language is a fundamental part of any Design activity—any feature of style—according to the New London Group authors.

In addition to looking to such areas of style's migration as the concept of Design, it is important to reconsider the vexed term

of the “diaspora” (see Chap. 4). Janice Lauer did not explicitly intend the concept to connote a forced migration into other areas of the discipline, yet that notion seems appropriate in terms of the marginalization of style in composition studies. In other arenas, the field of composition has tried to use its position at the margins to wage a number of battles involving, for instance, the role of contingent labor, issues of gender equity, and the effort to be recognized as a discipline separate from traditional English studies, with its focus on literature and cultural studies. It seems, however, that what was at one time a forced migration of style might now be more accurately described as a self-imposed exile. This is unfortunate for many reasons, including the missed opportunity for a rapprochement that the study of style offers.

The understanding of style I have presented encompasses both writing (invention) and reading (stylistic analysis). In the past, these different views have been emblematic of the “great divide” of composition and literature and the split in English departments (see Tokarczyk and Papoulis 2003). I propose that the study of style is one way to bridge that divide. In line with this thinking, it seems that style could be resurrected from its exile to provide leadership in the debates surrounding the so-called great divide. The unique aspect of this possibility is the leadership the field of composition would provide through its expertise in the study of style to demonstrate the productive nature of stylistic resources for both writing and reading. What would it take for members of the discipline to acknowledge our debt to style in its current scholarship?

CREATING A PUBLIC HISTORY

Along with what today must be viewed as the self-imposed exile of style in composition, I argue that as a field, we have given up opportunities that involve expectations from those outside the field. Regardless of how much compositionists may object, composition as a field is expected to claim a certain degree of expertise in style studies and other areas of language,

sometimes extending to grammar. Because of our ambivalence toward these areas of expertise, however, there has been an unexpected consequence: we have been precluded from having a legitimate voice in other areas of concern to the field. For example, crucial issues involving literacy (e.g., recent questions about computer-based scoring of writing exams), standardized testing, and movements by college campuses to shift writing courses out of writing programs or English departments and place them in schools of business or elsewhere are constantly confronting the field. I argue, however, that we do not have a great deal of credibility in these areas partly because of our reluctance to deal with issues of style. For that reason, I assert that composition itself should produce its own version of the public intellectual, a suggestion that Frank Farmer intimates in his work, urging that the concept be redefined as the “community intellectual.” When is the last time that one of our scholars appeared as a critic or columnist in the *New Yorker*, writing a freelance piece for the *Atlantic*, or sending in an op-ed column for the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*? What is stopping us as a field from developing a more visible public presence?¹

The failure to address stylistic practices as part of our disciplinary theory and pedagogy and to have a public voice about those issues has had the unwitting effect of bringing about a kind of invisibility in the profession. As recent work has shown, the study of style and style-related issues has moved into the public sphere, where it has been the source of tremendous interest and frequent debate. That debate has been controlled, however, by a group poised to project their views of style onto the public. As Edward Finegan (1980) has shown through his study of two controversies over language in the 1960s, public conceptions tend to express absolutist views at odds with the relativistic views the field of composition (and experts in other fields) have adopted. Nonetheless, in the absence of a willingness to take up style studies, composition is left without any response except to disagree. And who is listening? Indeed, it seems we would be hard-pressed to name many composition-trained experts who

have weighed in when significant issues involving the field are raised in the public sphere. If we want to be heard in areas that our research and history have prepared us to lead in, composition needs to take back the study of style. Indeed, as articles in public discourse make clear, stylistic issues often overlap with questions of literacy, grammar, and other subjects in which the public at large has a recurring interest.

I am not suggesting that the discipline simply return to looking at style in the way scholars did in the 1970s and 1980s, or thoughtlessly adopt, for instance, the use of classical tropes and schemes in the classroom. I am proposing rather that compositionists redefine style in a way that is meaningful to the field and that makes the study of style consonant with our disciplinary vision. Clearly, we can get some guidance from the stylistic practices that have been used in the past. In addition, I have tried to suggest areas outside the field where promising work is being done that impacts the study of style. One of the most fertile resources exists in composition's own backyard, that is, in areas where the stylistic traditions and practices have migrated. How can those areas, through a reverse analytical process, give us an idea of the types of stylistic practices and techniques that would be most useful for scholars and teachers of composition? One possibility is to examine how some of the work applies to areas outside composition. For example, in her recent book *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*, Anne Beaufort (2007) suggests that in learning to write history, one critical aspect of subject matter expertise "is the ability to do critical thinking appropriate to the discipline—specifically, in history, to see similarities and differences across source documents and to apply a critical framework to a particular text, seeing connections or disjunctures" (79). It would be useful to consider composition's critical frameworks in writing in interdisciplinary areas.

In that light, one place we might look for guidance is Susan Jarratt's (2003) *Enculturation* piece, "Rhetoric in Crisis?: The View from Here." In response to a question posed by the journal

editors about whether rhetoric is in a crisis state in composition, “left behind” with scholars in the field “‘over’ rhetoric like a fleeting relationship,” Jarratt responds by saying “no,” arguing that “rhetoric continues to thrive in several corners of academic and public space.” In looking to the public sphere, Jarratt proposes first that evidence of the importance of rhetoric can be found in a significant number of articles published about the war in Iraq by the popular press. She also finds evidence for hope in the number of new books about rhetoric published by university presses, some of which have competed for a new Rhetoric Society of America book award. Jarratt goes on to cite the second edition of the MLA’s *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, which includes two separate essays on “rhetoric” and “composition,” a change from the first edition in which the two words were combined. She also sees the formation of a new “meta-organization,” the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies, as promising. As counterevidence, Jarratt suggests the general tendency among the public and academic colleagues not to recognize rhetoric as an academic specialty; the recent publication of a book, *The Ends of Rhetoric*, with no mention of the discipline of rhetoric and composition; and the presence of only eight full-time faculty in rhetoric and composition in the University of California system in which Jarratt works, whose total faculty exceeds 5,000 members.

This article is important because it gives a way to evaluate the crisis of style in the profession. While Jarratt concludes that rhetoric is not in crisis, it would be difficult to make the same assessment of the state of style studies, especially when style has been isolated from its natural companions in rhetoric. According to Jarratt, rhetoric continues to thrive in several areas of the public sphere, a claim I have also made about style. Jarratt does not see any conflict between public and academic presentations of rhetoric, while I have highlighted that conflict with respect to style. Clearly, the notion of style that gets carried forth into the public sphere is not often the one we hold in the field. Still, it would be instructive to look for other evidence of

style in the public sphere to see the various ways in which it is conceived and to search for areas of rapprochement.

In following Jarratt's example, it would also be useful to look for additional evidence of publications about style in the field. I have mentioned a few recent articles in some of the prominent journals in composition. T. R. Johnson and Thomas Pace (2005) edited the published collection *Refiguring Prose Style*. Despite this small progress, however, publications about style are virtually absent from composition studies and cannot begin to compare with the academic publications on rhetoric cited by Jarratt. It would be useful nonetheless to see if writing about style has been buried in unusual places or if, as I have asserted, there are other sites of the diaspora that could be explored. In terms of institutional practices, which Jarratt finds both abundant and lacking for rhetoric, it would be useful to look to websites for evidence of the state of style in various writing curricula across the country. Where is style being taught, in what ways, using what texts? How is it being defined? A survey of scholars in the field, perhaps on the WPA listserv, could also yield productive results.

Unlike Jarratt's investigation of rhetoric, I do not expect the search for evidence of style to turn up much in the academy, though admittedly, interest in style has been extensive in the public sphere. Jarratt assesses the crisis in rhetoric. In order for a crisis to exist, however, there has to be enough of an exigency for people to believe there's a problem. In the case of style in composition studies, its absence, invisibility, and neglect have not as of yet engendered the type of response that prompted the special issue of *Enculturation* on rhetoric in crisis. I hope this book demonstrates that there is, in fact, a crisis of style in composition and rhetoric. Yet, with some give-and-take between the public and academic spheres, among composition scholars, and perhaps in dialogue with other professions, the study of style could once again be a legitimate area of theory and practice in the field.