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Out of Style

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Williams's analysis is part of a fine collection of articles in *Written Communication* about a pedagogical essay on writing style written by Bakhtin in 1945, "Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistics as Part of Russian Language Instruction in Secondary School." Charles Bazerman gives an excellent summary of the recently translated essay for the journal. It begins: "Without constantly considering the stylistic significance of grammatical choices, the instruction of grammar inevitably turns into scholasticism. In practice, however, the instructor very rarely provides any sort of stylistic interpretation of the grammatical forms covered in class" (334). Bakhtin proceeds to offer his analysis of the virtues of a paratactic style, virtually absent from his students' writing before he begins instruction, and a hypotactic style that students find "colder, drier, and more logical" (335). The volume includes individual responses to Bakhtin's essay by Frank Farmer, Joseph M. Williams, and Kay Halasek, followed by further responses in which the authors respond to each other. Bazerman ends by suggesting that Bakhtin, ostensibly like most teachers, struggles with "how to maintain the freshness, uniqueness, and local responsiveness of utterances, even as we provide students more sophisticated tools of analysis and reflective choice making" (371).
2. While the "public turn" in composition studies arguably occurred several years ago, Mathieu (2005) is the first person to coin the term in her book *Tactics of Hope*, subtitled *The Public Turn in English Composition*. Mathieu suggests that the public turn involves "a desire for writing to enter civic debates; for street life to enter classrooms through a focus on local, social issues; for students to hit the streets by performing service, and for teachers and scholars to conduct activist or community-grounded research" (1–2).

CHAPTER 2

1. This chapter, which argues that there is a tension throughout stylistic history in terms of virtues of style and levels of style, is not intended to chronicle the history of style or to be an exhaustive survey. Indeed, it would be impossible to undertake such a task within the limits of a chapter tailored specifically to the issues I address in the rest of the book. Instead, I focus primarily on relevant theories of style in classical rhetoric and Renaissance rhetoric before moving to contemporary theories and issues of style. While my approach is chronological, it is necessarily selective. For example, I omitted a section on Medieval rhetors because I did not find their work to be as relevant to the argument in my book as those from other historical periods.

CHAPTER 3

1. Pace's use of the term "renaissance" is apt, and I adopt it to describe the flourishing of style studies during the Golden Age of style. Pace investigates the stylistic options provided by Francis Christensen, Edward P. J. Corbett, and Winston Weathers and interprets them as a way to improve students' rhetorical success in composition pedagogy.
2. Johnson's book is highly readable and engaging and offers a useful appendix of "stylistic principles and devices." In his appendix, Johnson reproduces his instructions to students: "When you revise your papers, I want you to think very deliberately about eight different stylistic principles: transition, clarity, emphasis, balance, figurative language, syntax, restatement, and sound. These principles have been identified by Robert Harris as essential elements of style" (99).

CHAPTER 4

1. Jim Zebroski's *JAC* article, "Theory in the Diaspora," points in useful ways to the plight of theory in the field and suggests that "theory, theories, and sometimes theorists are moving around, dispersing to a wider range of sites in and out of rhetoric and composition, no less pervasive or powerful for all that movement—though at times theory is harder to see and hear than it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (664).
2. While the idea of a diaspora in composition studies is relatively new, it seems to be a promising theoretical concept that could enable the field to make overtures to other disciplines in order to see where other areas that the field has abandoned have migrated. In addition to the areas of style and invention, for instance, it seems that a case could be made for exploring the dispersion of interest in arrangement and delivery.

CHAPTER 5

1. The journal *The Public Interest* ceased publication with its Spring 2005 issue, after 40 years. The founding editor Irving Kristol suggested that the journal did not have a particular ideology, but most would describe the journal as conservative or "neo-conservative," and it's clear that Mac Donald's article presents a view of composition studies that is far from balanced.
2. Warner's view of clarity is highly relevant to composition and rhetoric. He asks, for instance, "What kind of clarity is necessary in writing?" After stating the conventional wisdom that "writing that is unclear to nonspecialists is just 'bad writing,'" Warner goes on to make an argument relevant to compositionists writing in the public sphere: "People who share this view will be generally reluctant to concede that different kinds of writing suit different purposes, that what is clear in one reading community will be unclear in another, that clarity depends on shared conventions and common references, that one man's jargon is another's clarity, that perceptions of jargon or unclarity change over time" (138).

CHAPTER 6

1. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA's) Network for Media Action has begun to address this problem. According to the group's Web site, "The WPA-NMA both monitors mainstream media for examples of these stories [e.g., about first-year writing, the SAT, and plagiarism], and provides tips on how to begin entering the conversation about them on your campus and/or in your community." See <http://www.wpacouncil.org/nma>.