Out of Style

Butler, Paul

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On a recent summer morning, unable to write in my office because a fire had disabled a transformer on campus and cut power to most of the university, I piled approximately twenty books and my laptop computer into the backseat of my car and headed to the Truckee Book and Bean, near Lake Tahoe, California. As I pulled onto I-80, the main east-west route in the area, a sign said the town of Truckee was just nineteen miles from my home in northwest Reno, with all but a few of those miles across the California border. Along the way, I passed through some of the West’s most scenic terrain, with Truckee the first leg in a route that ascends through the Tahoe National Forest and Donner Pass before eventually descending into Sacramento and San Francisco. The Book and Bean, which I had discovered earlier in the summer after a colleague suggested it, is one of a handful of coffeehouses or similar venues that have seen me through the writing and revising process of this book. For those like me who do our best work in public spaces, it is gratifying to know that the European café tradition is alive and well in the American coffeehouse, whatever shape or vision that takes in different locations. For me, those spaces include, roughly in chronological order, Borders in Syracuse; Space Untitled (now Pomegranate) and the Reading Room of the New York Public Library in Manhattan; Baker Boys and Basic in Jersey City; Barnes and Noble, Bibo, Borders, and Walden’s Coffeehouse in Reno; and the Book and Bean. I appreciate the cheerful reception I received in all these places and the long, uninterrupted hours I spent at their small and large open tables with laptop in hand.

Along with these scenes of writing, I would also like to acknowledge the institutional spaces that informed the writing of this book. While grounded in theory rather than pedagogy,
Out of Style’s origins clearly benefited from the teaching of a number of fine professors in composition and rhetoric. First, I thank those with whom I was privileged to study at Syracuse University: Collin Brooke, Fred Gale, Xin Liu Gale, Margaret Himley, Becky Howard, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Kendall Phillips, Eileen Schell, Catherine Smith, Gay Washburn, and Jim Zebroski; at the University of Arizona: Theresa Enos and Roxanne Mountford; and at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette: Ann Dobie and Jim McDonald. Without the help of several extraordinary mentors at Syracuse, this book could not have come to fruition, and in that regard I thank Collin Brooke, Dana Harrington, and Jim Zebroski for patient, productive, and wise counsel that always exceeded my expectations. Jim continued to offer unfailing encouragement through a process that he often, and appropriately, described as a “marathon.” I am particularly indebted to Louise Wetherbee Phelps, a scholar whose dedication to and passion for the study of style opened up a treasure trove of understanding through the incredible knowledge and wisdom she generously shared with me. As scholars and teachers of composition and rhetoric, we too often wonder about the impact we have on students’ lives, and I want to affirm here the power of teaching to make a difference; teachers have made an important difference in my life.

My trajectory in completing this book has certainly been aided by a number of fine colleagues in a profession I feel thankful every day to have found. To that end I thank my talented and supportive former colleagues at Montclair State University, especially First-Year Writing Director Emily Isaacs, Laura Nicosia, and Jessica Restaino. At the University of Nevada, Reno, I am fortunate to work with a superb group of colleagues in rhetoric and composition and more generally in writing studies: Kathy Boardman, Shane Borrowman, Chris Coake, Jane Detweiler, Christine Norris, Gailmarie Pahmeier, Susan Palwick, Mark Waldo, and Mary Webb. I am grateful to the many other English Department colleagues who have offered support during the year, especially Michael Branch, Joe Calabrese,
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Finally, I dedicate the book to Joan L. Baxter, affectionately known as Mrs. B., a committed and gifted teacher who always said she believed that teaching and writing were my natural inclinations and showed me how they can make a difference in others’ lives. In a culture that doesn’t seem to admire teaching or the life of the mind very much, we are fortunate to have exemplary individuals like Joan Baxter who remind us daily of the real values that sustain us.

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