

# AN ETHICS OF ATTENTIONS: THREE CONTINUUMS OF CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY STYLISTIC MANIPULATION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Western rhetorical tradition, rhetors and stylisticians have consistently claimed that some styles are more ethical than others: “Let the virtue of style be defined as ‘to be clear;’” “It is good prose when it allows the writer’s meaning to come through ... as a landscape is seen through a clear window;” “We owe readers an ethical duty to write precise and nuanced prose;” “Write in a way that draws attention to the sense and substance of writing, rather than to the mood and temper of the author” (Aristotle, trans. 1991, 1404b; Sutherland, 1957, p. 77; Strunk and White, 1979, p. 70; Williams, 2007, p. 221). Thus, popularly, the best style has been the one that *styles the least*; transparency is next to godliness; see the meaning not the writer—clarity is ethical. But clarity, as the existence of every style manual and every writer struggling to be clear exemplify, is also constructed and controlling. “Simplicity,” as novelist William Gass reminds us, “is not a given. It is a human achievement, a human invention ...” (305). It is hard work to be clear, and clear authors ask/direct/coerce/manipulate the reader into looking at the meaning behind their words often hiding the act of writing, the medium of construction, and the author.

Yet, if the ethics of alphabetic writing style are often founded on clarity and transparency of language, the stylistic ethics of new media composition appear to be based on an entirely opposing standard. In new media composition, theorists since Marshall McLuhan have argued that “the medium is the message” and,

thus, honest new media compositions make readers aware of materiality and how it affects an audience's reception of a text. As Anne Wysocki explains:

I think we should call “new media texts” those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers and readers—doesn't function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody. (2004, p. 15)

Consequently, the best style becomes the one that *styles the most*. But as Kenneth Burke reminds us, “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (1968, p. 45). “Every way of seeing is a way of not seeing,” so when new media authors ask/direct/coerce/manipulate the reader into focusing on specific points of constructedness, author, and medium, what is the audience distracted from (Burke, 1984, p. 70)?

Through comparing classical and new media stylistic theory, this chapter explores what stylistic venues become available when one acknowledges that every choice of style and every act of rhetoric is one of manipulation; when one understands that concealing in rhetoric is neither immoral nor escapable; when one gets beyond a singular “styles the least” or “styles the most” mindset and comes to understand that the best style is the one that *serves the best*. Thus, this chapter asks: If composition is style, and style is the manipulation of attention, what are the ethics and options for controlling an audience's attention? Upon what values is the current system of stylistic ethics constructed? When is it appropriate and inappropriate to reveal one's stylistic operations to an audience? And to what effect?

Though, as the rest of this collection illustrates, definitions of prose style are wonderfully multifarious, here I discuss style as the aesthetic control of an audience's attention along three different “ethical” continuums—point of attention (where do the author's stylistic devices direct the audience's attention?); apparent mediation (does the rhetor's style appear deceptive or just?); and felt agency (does the audience feel silenced or encouraged to analyze and critique the text's construction, reasoning, etc.?).

In order to elucidate composition's current anomalous notion of stylistic ethics I explore these continuums using a trio of classical and new media

pairings—progressing from traditionally<sup>1</sup> unethical to ethical styles. I begin with the Greek rhetorician Longinus’s “unethical” notion of the sublime, a stylistic concept that attempts to move listeners to action through an aesthetic arrest that “enslaves the hearer,” conceals stylistic device and orator, and makes the topic of oration appear to be present and in need of an immediate response (1972, p. 161). I compare this “unethical” sublime to new media theories of immediacy and erasure, which discuss how many technologies (virtual reality simulators, for instance) are designed to, or simply have the effect of, disappearing when the rhetor and audience use them, making the experience all the more real. Next, I move to Renaissance rhetorician Baldesar Castiglione’s slightly more “ethical” concept of sprezzatura or “the art of artlessness.” Sprezzatura focuses on disguising the preparation of art so that the orator can appear all the more natural, kairotic, nonchalant, and amazing in delivery: “He who does well so easily, knows much more than he does” (Castiglione, 2000, p. 38). As sprezzatura’s new media counterpart I discuss the web, magazine, and advertising design trend of mimicking analog technological markers by using digital technology, a simulacral style I term “leaked constructedness.” Finally, I move to an “ethical” conception of style in St. Augustine of Hippo’s concepts of confession and Christian oratory, which I argue seek to put the power of authorial and biblical interpretation into the hands of the audience rather than the orator. Similarly, exemplified in the reference to Anne Wysocki above, I compare such confession to several notions of new media construction (Wysocki’s new media, Bolter and Grusin’s hypermediacy, etc.) that seek to empower the audience by giving them the ability to see, interpret, and construct multiple personal readings of a text.

I pair these classical and new media notions of style to highlight that ethical evaluations of style do not disappear as writers move from paper to screen and to ward off the notion that either a styles-the-least or a styles-the-most approach is always the best option in textual or new media construction.<sup>2</sup> I hope such a pairing elucidates the contradictory nature of a fixed system of stylistic ethics, where “ethical” can mean both the revealing and concealing of textual construction, author, and medium. If notions of ethics change with audiences and mediums, style must also constantly adapt. Thus, multiple notions of style must always be taught seriously, escaping what might be seen as the binary—formal or creative<sup>3</sup>—stylistic system of many contemporary composition classrooms. On a more comprehensive note, I also pair these stylistic options in hopes of offering style as a bridge between classical and new media rhetoric, two fields that (as I hope this chapter illustrates) have much to learn from one another and that must necessarily come together to make a contemporary composition classroom whole.

## DEFINITIONS

Before examining these stylistic pairings and continuums, however, I must establish a few definitions—attention, style, manipulation, and ethics. In his *Economics of Attention* Richard Lanham argues, “Information is not in short supply in the new information economy ... What we lack is the human attention to make sense of it all ...” (2006, p. xi). In such an economy, then, neither material possessions nor raw information are the capital; the human attention that interprets, focuses on, and deconstructs that data is. Whoever can get an audience to pay *attention* (and the right kind of attention) to his or her idea, product, or celebrity rules such an economy. Lanham posits that *style* (and this is the definition I build from here) is what directs such attention. Therefore, the best definition of rhetoric might be the stylistically focused “economics of attention.” The crux of Lanham’s argument is “oscillatio,” a rhetorical figure that illustrates how “we alternately participate in the world and step back and reflect on how we attend to it” (2006, p. xiii). We switch between looking at content and the stylistic devices that organize that content, but we have a hard time looking at both sides of the oscillation simultaneously. *Manipulation*, then, is the way in which writers attempt to focus their readers’ attentions on either the content of the argument or the style.<sup>4</sup> Like all terministic screens, stylistic manipulation is inescapable because readers will always focus on something and good rhetors aid in that focusing. Something Lanham does not give much attention to, however, is the system of ethics that often gets applied to his concept of oscillatio.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter I use the framework of manipulation and *ethics* in hopes of challenging the common misconception in rhetoric, composition, and the general public that style is attached in fixed ways to morality. The three continuums I examine are the unsteady formulas upon which these fixed notions are calculated. For too long because style and rhetoric (and specific styles and rhetorics in particular) have been misconstrued as unethical slights of hand in popular thought, compositionists and stylisticians have responded by studying and teaching style as neutral and ethically transparent. Such a fearful reaction to accusations of rhetoric as trickery (and these have been present since Plato<sup>6</sup> at least) has perpetuated the notion of “plain style” and severely limited stylistic options, especially in student writing. In this chapter I offer three diverging but equally “ethical” ways of performing style to disrupt the notion that clarity, or any other style claiming universality, is always the best option. I thus define ethics, like style, as an always local and contextualized process by which one negotiates an “appropriate” relationship between rhetor and audience. I do not endeavor to argue that style is never used unethically or that stylistic devices

are neutral. In fact, style is never neutral. Because all style and language hides and reveals, all style is politically charged, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't use it. Style, like language, is unavoidable, and all its manifestations should be embraced as rhetorical possibilities.

## II. SUBLIMITY, IMMEDIACY, AND THE CONTINUUM OF ATTENTION

### SUBLIMITY

The Greek rhetorician Longinus (fl. ca. 50 C.E.) is the devil of stylistics.<sup>7</sup> He illustrates what every lay audience finds wrong with rhetoric and what every rhetorician finds wrong with the study of style. His willingness to throw off any guises of dialogic persuasion, embracing, rather, an oratorical force that “tears everything up like a whirlwind” and “get[s] the better of every hearer” perpetuates an ideology that a brilliant rhetor should not allow his audience any sort of agency, ability to resist, or even a chance to respond to an argument (1972, p. 144). Such an “unethical” treatment of style is, in part, what has led to Longinus's relative excommunication from the rhetorical tradition in favor of viewing him as a literary critic. Yet, Longinus discusses rhetoric and designs his sublime to serve rhetorical purposes: “addressing a judge ... tyrants, kings, governors ...”, “hitting the jury in the mind”—“[sublimity] enslaves the reader as well as persuading him” (1972, pp. 164, 166, 161). And if one looks closely at Longinus's *On Sublimity*, one begins to discover not unethical madness but, rather, a serious mode of rhetorical style designed around engaging an audience.

Early in *On Sublimity*, Longinus defines the sublime:

A kind of eminence or excellence of discourse. It is the source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers and the means by which they have given eternal life to their own fame. For grandeur produces ecstasy rather than persuasion in the hearer; and the combination of wonder and astonishment always proves superior to the merely persuasive and pleasant. This is because persuasion is on the whole something we can control, whereas amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer. (1972, p. 143)

Sublimity trumps persuasion because persuasion is controllable and permits an audience response, whereas sublime rhetoric is uncritiqueable because it overwhelms the listener. But what is most interesting about the machinations of Longinus's style is where sublimity seeks to keep the audience's attention. Although Longinus says the goal of the sublime is the goal of any great piece of literature, "eternal life" for the author, the sublime act doesn't focus the reader on the greatness of the author: "The speaker vanishes into the text" (Guerlac, 1985, p. 275). Rather, it is the greatness of the oratory that captures the reader—the attention of the listener is so fully transfixed on the world created by words that when the listener snaps out of this sublime ecstasy they are "elevated and exalted... Filled with joy and pride ... [and] come to believe we have created what we have only heard" (Longinus, 1972, p. 148). Within the Longinian system, the audience doesn't know from where ideas originate. As Suzanne Guerlac explains, "The transport of the sublime ... includes a slippage among positions of enunciation ... the destinateur gets 'transported' into the message and the destinataire achieves a fictive identification with the speaker" (1985, p. 275). The aesthetic arrest created by the sublime is so great that the actual moment of hearing and the author appear to have disappeared: "The artifice of the trick is lost to sight in the surrounding brilliance of beauty and grandeur, and it escapes all suspicion" (Longinus, 1972, p. 164). Longinus seeks to eliminate the constructedness of language by erasing the reader's memory, "hitting the jury in the mind blow after blow" with majesty (1972, p. 166). The sublime is a stylistic concussion. The listener remembers solely the ideas as if they experienced the subject of the speech for themselves. Longinus creates this immediacy and reader absorption through the numerous stylistic devices he lists in *On Sublimity*—complexity of emotion, asyndeton, anaphora, hyperbaton, and hyperbole to name a few.

Visualization (phantasia) is the first sublime device Longinus explores at length. He describes how image production through "Enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker *see* what he is saying and bring it *visually* before his audience... . There is much it can do to bring urgency and passion to our words..." (1972, pp. 159, 161).

Mark Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is an example of such visual urgency. Antony is attempting to gain control of the Roman crowd in order to help him avenge Caesar's death. The first part of Antony's oration relies on rhetorical persuasion and logic, resulting in analytical responses from the crowd: "Me *thinks* there is much *reason* in his sayings... . Mark Ye his words" (3.2.108, emphasis mine). But once Antony begins his sublime phantasia, reenacting the scene of Caesar's murder using Caesar's corpse ("Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd"), there is a

mass identification (3.2.176). The crowd becomes a mob, is elevated through a Longinian communal sublime, and seeks a somewhat mindless revenge,<sup>8</sup> marked by the murder of the wrong Cinna. Antony uses the Longinian sublime to make Caesar's death and the danger of Caesar's murderers immediate to the audience.

## IMMEDIACY

In new media composition, such a proximity and a transparency of style is apparent in Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's discussion of immediacy: "The ultimate mediating technology ... Is designed<sup>9</sup> to efface itself, to disappear from the user's consciousness" (2000, p. 3). Marshall McLuhan expands upon this effect with his concept of technologies as "extensions of man," illustrating how mechanisms (for better or worse) become our body parts through immediacy (2003, p. 67). Video game designers, for instance, create controllers that fade away, becoming actual extensions of players' hands as they are absorbed into the game and the virtual environment becomes more immediate. Only when the technology fails, we drop the controller or a button sticks, does the player again become conscious of the mechanism.

The connection between Bolter's immediacy and the Longinian sublime is, perhaps, best seen in virtual reality environments: "In order to create a sense of presence, virtual reality should come as close as possible to our daily visual experience. Its graphic space should be continuous and full of objects and should fill the viewer's field of vision without rupture" (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 22). The best virtual reality (like the best sublime oration) occupies all the participant's senses so that the device is forgotten, and the virtual experience approaches the real, as if the gamer's own senses, not the machine, are creating the sensorial world. Like the Longinian sublime disguises its own artifice, most websites are designed so that the surfer can easily navigate through beautiful content, unaware of the code or the designer behind the art. Operating systems are designed around metaphors of windows and desktops that make the content easily navigable and more apparently "there," but that also disguise the code that perpetuates them. Immediate technologies, just like sublime stylistics, are designed to make stylistic mediation (alphabetic, oral, or technological) disappear.

## CONTINUUM OF ATTENTION

In Longinus's sublimity and digital immediacy, we discover our first continuum upon which ethical evaluations of style and manipulation are

judged—the object of attention. The Longinian sublime, and to a lesser extent technological immediacy, are sometimes seen as unethical because the orator/programmer seeks to focus the reader's attention on content and message rather than how knowledge of media or rhetoric affect and shape that content. Under the aegis of narrative theory, Erik Ellis labels this rhetorical move a closeness of “psychic distance” in his chapter in this collection. A familiar ethical critique of these tactics might be: If something is being revealed, then something is being concealed; if something is being concealed, then something unethical must be going on. Critics may liken such a focus to the sleight of hand of a magician—look at the shiny kerchief, not the rabbit coming out of the magician's sleeve. In alphabetic writing Lanham calls this effect “an aesthetics of subtraction”: “Print wants us to concentrate on the content, to enhance and protect conceptual thought. It does this by filtering out all the signals that might interfere with such thinking . . . By choosing a single font and a single size, it filters out visual distraction as well. Typographical design aims not to be seen or more accurately, since true invisibility is hard to read, to seem not to be seen . . .” (Lanham, 2006, p., 46).

But is such an aesthetic unethical? We like to lose ourselves in books. We often get annoyed when speakers are too self-critical in speeches. When typing in a word processor we don't want the programmer constantly diverting us from our writing.<sup>10</sup> When we go to the movies we don't like to see boom mics hanging in the shot, fake props and settings, or other such signifiers of constructedness that call attention to artificiality. DVDs are designed with the ability to turn director's commentary on and off. One of the biggest questions for a stylistician regarding the continuum of attention, then, is when do audiences enjoy immersion in artificial environments and when do they feel such an immediacy is unethical? Alternatively, when do audiences enjoy viewing the constructedness of writing, and when is such a focus distracting?

The problem with point of attention, as Lanham, Burke, and McLuhan all argue, is that it is difficult to pay attention to more than one thing at a time. It's hard to become absorbed in a book's plot, proofread its grammar, analyze its binding quality, and apply theoretical interpretations simultaneously. This may be the origin of the literature student's common complaint of “you ruined my favorite book!” Once an instructor teaches a student to read in an analytical manner, the point of attention shifts from plot to construction and theory, and the level of absorption changes. This is the “economics of attention.” This is why sleight of hand magicians can perform their tricks. We have examined the Longinian sublime as focusing the audience's attention on content and as being “unethical,” but the “clear” and ethical style discussed in the opening of this chapter does a shockingly similar thing.<sup>11</sup> Each seeks immediacy of content,



but in opposite ways. As Strunk and White direct, “Write in a way that draws attention to the sense and substance of writing, rather than to the mood and temper of the author” (1979, p. 70). If a style of transparent immediacy is offered in so many style manuals, a sublimely immediate style could easily be offered as an “ethical” option as well.

The two other styles this chapter explores, which seem to get more and more traditionally “ethical,” similarly direct the audience’s attention to two other places. Sprezzatura places the audience’s attention on the rhetor and the act of writing, whereas confession places the audience’s attention on the medium and the audience’s relationship to the text. Each is an act of concealing and an act of manipulation yet, to their champions, each one appears more ethical than the sublime, perhaps because what each conceals, especially in confession, is less apparent than in the sublime. Though Longinus uses some ethically troubling phrasing, “get[s] the better of every hearer,” “enslaves the reader,” “hitting the jury in the mind,” proponents of the more “ethical” styles should investigate whether their style of choice does the same thing. If “Art [and rhetoric] is whatever the artist wishes to call our attention to,” every rhetor needs to ask what is and is not being focused on in their composition (Lanham, 2006, p. 43).

Thus, before writing, rhetors should consider what they want their audience to pay attention to at each point of their text and choose a style accordingly. At points where writers want their audience to participate emotionally, a sublime and immediate style is the strongest; where writers want their audience to examine the author and their ethos, a sprezzatura style can be invoked; where writers want their audience to participate in logical and critical analysis of production, a confessional style might be more appropriate.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. SPREZZATURA, LEAKED CONSTRUCTEDNESS, AND THE CONTINUUM OF APPARENT MEDIATION**

#### **SPREZZATURA**

Renaissance stylistician Baldesar Castiglione (1478-1529) wrote his *Book of the Courtier* to educate courtiers on how to speak, perform, and impress in the presence of royalty. Much of Renaissance rhetoric, especially that of Castiglione’s Italy, which underwent massive court restructuring with the invasion of Louis XII in 1499, was built on a system of kairos. A true courtier needed to know how to identify the opinions of the shifting center of power and to adapt not only his speech but also his entire identity to the delight of that authority in

order to gain its patronage. Founded upon this intense kairos is Castiglione's primary stylistic point of counsel, sprezzatura:

To use possibly a new word, to practice in everything a certain sprezzatura that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought. From this I believe grace is in large measure derived, because everyone knows the difficulty of those things that are rare and well done, and therefore facility in them excites the highest admiration; while on the other hand, to strive ... is extremely ungraceful, and makes us esteem everything slightly, however great it be. (2000, pp. 35-36)

Sprezzatura, often defined as “the art of artlessness,” requires a rhetor to be well-prepared to argue but also well-prepared to disguise the effort it took to gain and organize that argument. It is key that one's identity not appear constructed to please the court but instead give the impression of being naturally in alliance with the seat of power. Like Longinus's sublime, Castiglione's sprezzatura disguises style. But rather than obscuring artifice through a mesmerizing focus on image and immediacy, sprezzatura controls perceived artifice by focusing on the acting of the casually unprepared orator. In *The Book of the Courtier* such performances usually begin with the courtier feigning ignorance on a topic then slowly unfold into a display of wit and wordplay on a theme the orator has secretly prepared in advance. Part of sprezzatura, therefore, involves steering the course of conversation into an area in which one can thrive. Thus, unlike sublimity, sprezzatura still retains some perceivable styling and the semblance of a creationary act but only enough to illustrate that the act was easily constructed. All hint of the artifice is filtered by the careful hand of the rhetor.

For instance, an orator might plan a digression into his speech that at first appears to be completely detached from the course of conversation but then skillfully connects back to the topic, evoking new thoughts on the subject. Such a digression highlights the orator's quick wit as nonchalant, natural, and kairoitic, hinting that “He who does well so easily, knows much more than he does” (Castiglione, 2000, p. 38). Of course, Castiglione is only one champion<sup>13</sup> of natural style and “flow,” but, with sophistic echoes, he seems the most honest in holding that the idea of naturalness (as well as the identity of the perfect orator) is subjective and constructed; to survive an orator needs to be deceptive in constructing the strongest “natural” ethos possible.

Beyond casting Longinian shadows in the disguising of art, sprezzatura has a similar effect on the mind of the listener, “[W]hoever hears and sees us

may from our words and gestures imagine far more than what he sees and hears, and so be moved to laughter” (Castiglione, 2000, p. 120). Where the concussion of the sublime leaves the audience thinking it was they who came up with the idea they experienced, the manipulation of sprezzatura urges the audience to look carefully into everything they hear; deeper meaning, produced communally by author and interpreter, is always just below wit and style. Thus, casual construction and stylistic devices that encourage interpretation like juxtaposition, subtle extended metaphors, and digressions perpetuate a sprezzatura style.

Castiglione also discusses the fate of rhetors who fail to conceal their art, or worse, fail to conceal the concealing of art: “If it is discovered, it quite destroys our credit and brings us into small esteem” (2000, p. 36). Further, he reminds readers that such failure has consequences, both for creating more wary audiences (“men who are ever fearful of being deceived by art”) as well as for compromising an author’s ethos (“If it had been detected it would have made men wary of being duped”) (2000, p. 36). Audiences are suspicious of the art of concealing because style might cloak bad ideas, intentions, and people. And in the case of the court, a constructed style might reveal that the courtier does not truly agree with the sovereign. At times, though, Castiglione seems less concerned about breaking an audience’s trust and more worried about destroying the orator’s beauty. The ultimate goal of sprezzatura is grace. An ice skater who performs a nonchalant triple lutz is more graceful than one who performs it while showing great effort.<sup>14</sup> Or, as Castiglione explains, “Do you not see how much more grace a lady who paints (if at all) so sparingly and so little, that whoever sees her is in doubt whether she be painted or not; than another lady so plastered that she seems to have put a mask upon her face” (2000, p. 54).

## LEAKED CONSTRUCTEDNESS

A nonchalance similar to that which Castiglione instructs appears in numerous modern publications, advertisements, and websites in the form of what I dub “leaked constructedness.” To create leaked constructedness, graphic designers and artists employ bibliographic signifiers that appear to be casual and handmade but which are probably digitally created, such as seemingly hand-scripted fonts, crayon and marker drawings, collage aesthetics, photocopier mimicry, and smudged inks. Highly complex digital design programs are carefully employed to replicate the smear of a fountain pen or a hapless collage in order to cater to an audience that is nostalgic for signs of less mediated personal connections in an impersonal digital world. Thus, leaked constructedness

plays to its audience through sprezzaturic styling that has the look of art that was created with ease or through accident. Such a Do-It-Yourself (rather than digitally) aesthetic plays a key role in what is often dubbed “hipster culture” with its postmodern code of radical nonchalance and can be viewed in such magazines and websites as *Adbusters*, *Found* magazine, and the websites of most “indie” music labels and “zines.” Though it seems inaccurate to claim that digitally created texts aren’t DIY or handmade, analog art often holds a more “authentic” appeal, possibly because it is less mediated and somehow represents the artist more immediately.

But sprezzaturic nostalgia has also been harnessed since computers went personal as seen, again, in the metaphors that govern it—the desktop; the dashboard; the trashcan; the folder and file; copying, cutting, and pasting; space on a hard drive; etc. Just as the metaphor on the computer seeks to focus the reader on content rather than construction, it seeks to revive the physicality of those metaphors through familiar images like the trashcan and the folder. Such a nostalgic immediacy<sup>15</sup> keeps the user’s attention away from the fact (and fear) that he or she has no idea how the device is actually operating and focused on the idea that it might be functioning as easily as the metaphor that represents it. Thus, the connection to sprezzatura—the technology seems to be working at a much simpler level than it really is.<sup>16</sup>

## CONTINUUM OF APPARENT MEDIATION

Through Castiglione’s sprezzatura and the concept of leaked constructedness we begin to explore another continuum upon which ideas of stylistic ethics are formed: apparent mediation and manipulation. Since the time of Sir Francis Bacon, Petrus Ramus, and empiricism, scientists have sought to purge rhetoric and style from language because they felt it obscured truth; it deceived; it mediated too much. Thus, plain style was born because people don’t like being, or more precisely *feeling*, deceived. But in examining the U.S. population’s hatred of “The Media” we can complicate this continuum as well.

We often don’t like too much mediation in our media because we want to create our own views of the news from objective evidence. We want to get as close to pure objective data as we can—we want language to be immediate. Thus, newspapers usually seek to keep the opinion of the writer, and many times any reference to the author, out of journalism.<sup>17</sup> As veteran journalist and pop culture guru Chuck Klosterman explains, “Being a news reporter forces you to adopt a peculiar personality: You spend every moment of your life trying to eradicate emotion. Reporters overcompensate for every nonobjective feeling they’ve ever experienced” (2003, p. 205). Reporters and editors purge opinion

in order to avoid libel and media bias, but, as Klosterman further discusses, such a quest for objectivity, “really just makes them [news stories] longer and less clear. The motivation for doing this is to foster objectivity, but it actually does the complete opposite. It makes finding an objective nearly impossible, because you’re always getting facts *plus* requisite equalizing fiction” (2003, p. 209). Rather than producing objective facts for the reader to interpret, equalizing fiction (like transparent language) functions as *sprezzatura*, creating the appearance of easy objectivity and disguising another layer of mediation. Such an artificial objectivity smacks of deception and the spin that Americans hate and has a somewhat contradictory effect: “Skeptical news consumers often find themselves suspecting that deeper truth can be found on the newspaper opinion pages, or through talk radio.... The assumption is that—since these pundits openly admit their biases—you can trust their insights more” (Klosterman, 2003, p. 209). Thus, an audience trusts confession as a rhetorical style because it makes its deception and spin readily available where *sprezzatura*, although based on similar selectivity and styling, hides its bias.

But at some point as we begin to trust such confession and the focus of attention switches from spin back to content, do we forget the spin? When bias is confessed, sometimes an audience no longer feels the need to criticize that bias, and when people aren’t critical of bias, it fades to the background. This is true, for instance, of both conservative and liberal news programs—at some point, to liberals *The Daily Show* seems less and less biased because it admits its bias; to conservatives, the *O’Reilly Factor* has a similar effect.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes it seems that an audience is more aware of bias and willing to pick it apart when it isn’t confessed. Thus, the second continuum of stylistical ethics is related to the first and is labeled *apparent* mediation because audiences react to mediation differently when it is or is not made evident.

Klosterman’s discussion of removing the author from the news and the idea of trusting confessors makes ready another important reality of stylistic ethics. In the first continuum I discussed how sublimity is viewed as unethical because it focuses the reader only on content; yet, shouldn’t a style that focuses a reader on the author be somehow more ethical? Of course, *sprezzatura* (and confession, as we will see below) demonstrates that what an author reveals about him or herself is not always the full truth and opens debates about whether the self is socially constructed or not. But shouldn’t we want more of the author so that we can decide for ourselves whether we trust their bias or not? Such a complication opens up numerous stylistic moves that are often excluded from “serious writing” because they reveal too much of the author and obviate such advice as “don’t use ‘I’ in a formal paper.” The balance between revealing and concealing mediation is a tricky and often contradictory proposition.

Writers, therefore, should consider when it is appropriate to reveal their subjectivity and mediating power and when they should be elided in a sprezzatura-like style. When will readers respond well to confession of bias and when does such a style become a distracting repetition of “seems to me,” “I think,” and “might”?

#### **IV. CONFESSION, HYPERMEDIATION, AND THE CONTINUUM OF FELT AGENCY**

##### **CONFESSION**

Progressing to a more typically “ethical” stylistic presence, Saint Augustine of Hippo’s (345-430 C.E.) *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Confessions* offer models of style (Christian oratory and confession) that do something few teachers of style had done before him; they give power to the audience through instruction on analysis as well as open the orator to critique and discussions on the subjective nature of confession.

Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was trained in, instructed on, and won declamation competitions through classical “pagan” oratory (*Confessions*). After he converted, he sought to take what he saw as a powerful rhetorical model (classical Greek and Roman oratory) and apply it to the radically differently styled Christian rhetorical tradition in order to convert pagans who often disdained the comparatively muted Christian style.

Although Augustine seems to take up Cicero’s divisions on the purposes of rhetoric (to teach, delight, and persuade) in his three divisions of style (subdued, moderate, and grand), Augustine’s discussion of ethos in Book Four of *De Doctrina Christiana* is somewhat more complex and radical than his classical predecessors. For Augustine the ethos of God, not necessarily the Christian orator himself, is what certifies the reliability and efficacy of the message:

Now Christ is truth and still, truth can be preached, even though not with truth... . Thus, indeed, Jesus Christ is preached by those who seek their own ends, not those of Jesus Christ... . And so they do good to many by preaching. (2008, 4.59-60).

Though Christian orators should strive to do justice to the word of God, corrupt people can still preach effectively because the power of Christian rhetoric is housed in God and the listener, not necessarily in the orator.

Indeed the idea of audience in Augustine’s works (and in the Hebraic rhetorical tradition more generally) differs from classical models because of

the relationship between faith and persuasion. Faith cannot be induced in an audience through persuasion; the Christian rhetor must give his audience information and let God (and the mind of the would-be convert) do the rest, otherwise it wouldn't be faith. As Christine Mason Sutherland explains, "For Hebrew rhetoric, persuasion is vested in the audience, not the speaker... . The object is to enlighten the audience, not to persuade, to empower by knowledge the individuals" (2004, p. 4, 10). Thus, Books Two and Three of *De Doctrina Christiana* contain instructions on "analyzing and resolving the ambiguities of the scriptures" with rules that may be distilled down to four basic concepts that leave room for multiple correct interpretations of the text:

1. The Bible cannot contradict itself;
2. The Bible always promotes love of God and neighbor;
3. Consider the sentence you are interpreting within the context of the sentences around it;
4. In order to interpret correctly, similar to what Cicero outlines in *De Oratore*, you need a broad background of knowledge (about snakes, metals, animals, astronomy, history, law, etc.) (Augustine, 2008, 3.2).

In his *Confessions* Augustine further elaborates on this concept of interpretation and readerly agency in Book Ten when he discusses his relationship with his audience and their belief: "Although I cannot prove that my confessions are true, at least I shall be believed by those whose ears are opened to me by charity... . Charity which makes them good tells them that I do not lie about myself when I confess what I am, and it is this charity in them which believes me" (2010, 10.3.4). Augustine cannot persuade his audience to believe his story but can only give them information to interpret in hopes that they take something from it. Thus, Augustine's favoring of the subdued style and its purpose of teaching over the other two styles (though he ultimately concludes, as does this chapter, that one should mix and match styles): "This, of course, is elegance in teaching, whereby the result is attained in speaking, not that what was distasteful becomes pleasing, nor that what one was unwilling to do is done, but that what was obscure becomes clear" (2008, 4.26).

Augustine continues to explain that the content the confessor and Christian orator provide are flawed (similar to the content of the sprezzaturic orator) because of the impossibility of inclusivity in language: "For I pass over many things, hastening on to those things which more strongly impel me to confess to thee—and many things I have simply forgotten" (Augustine, 2010, 3.12). Like any autobiographer knows, recalling every detail of the past is impossible, and even if it were not, such a retelling would make for a tedious and unpurposeful text. Thus, every act of confession is necessarily selective and manipulative of an

audience's attention, despite whether confessional rhetoric makes an audience feel deceived or not. Augustine further elaborates on the subjectivity of memory in Book Ten of *Confessions* saying that "There, in the memory, is likewise stored what we cogitate, either enlarging or reducing our perceptions, or by altering one way or another those things which the senses made contact with ..." (2010, 10.8).

## **HYPERMEDIATION<sup>19</sup>**

New media theorists Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin describe their concept of hypermediation as media that "ask us to take pleasure in the act of mediation" and foster a "fascination with media" (2000, p. 14). Or, as Wysocki states with a slightly more ethical connotation, "What is important is that whoever produces the text and whoever consumes it understand—because the text asks them to, in one way or another—that the various materialities of a text contribute to how it ... is read and understood" (Wysocki, 2004, p. 15). Thus true new media confess their materiality by calling the reader's attention to themselves.

Such a style of media confession is fairly young in the rhetorical tradition and truly comes into power, as Bolter and Grusin, and Lanham discuss, with late-modernist art: "It was not until modernism that the cultural dominance of the paradigm of transparency was challenged," (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 38). For instance, in composer John Cage's "4'33," which consists of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence, Cage seeks to remind the listener that music is just sound, labeled differently: "I'm talking about sound that doesn't mean anything, that is not inner, just outer ... I don't want sound to pretend it is a bucket or that it's president ... I just want it to be a sound." His work makes music confess itself. Marcel Duchamp's "readymades," objects that become art simply by the fact that they are displayed as art, have a similar effect. Such pieces place the burden of the art not on the composer but on the audience, asking whether art can simply be enjoyed as style.

Moving to new media, Susan Delagrangé's hypertext, "Wunderkammer, Cornell, and the Visual Cannon of Arrangement,"<sup>20</sup> exemplifies hypermediation through the interplay of its construction and content by creating a digital wunderkammer on wunderkammer. Through a rich collage-like interaction of text and image that calls attention to its own construction, the reader of Delagrangé's "associative knowledge-building" space is encouraged to explore and wander through a history of curiosity cabinets, new media composition, and visual arrangement—propelled on by a design aesthetic that promotes "'critical wonder': a process through which digital media designers can thoughtfully and imaginatively arrange evidence and articulate links in a critical practice of embodied discovery" (2010). Analogy, comparison, and juxtaposition are



the stylistic tropes that perpetuate such exploration. Like Augustine's Christian oratory, such tropes are created collaboratively between the author's arrangement and the reader's interpretation. Where digital metaphors designed with a sublime and sprezzatura stylistic aesthetic seek to focus the reader on content rather than construction, reviving a nostalgic physicality, those designed with a confessional aesthetic (such as Delagrangé's wunderkammer metaphor) seek to aid readers in deconstructing them through a freedom of interpretation and analysis.

## CONTINUUM OF FELT AGENCY

Augustine's Christian and confessional oratory, Delagrangé's "Wunderkammer" and similarly, Geoffrey Sirc's "box logic," all seek to empower the reader by, as Sirc explains, imagining "text as box=author as collector," and, I would add, reader as collaborator (2004, p. 117). Rosanne Carlo's discussion of the generative ethos and "enfolding" rhetoric of Jim Corder in this collection is another example of such an argument towards the power of a confessional style. In all these models readers seem more empowered to explore and create and less likely to be manipulated, hypnotized, coerced, and abused. True literacy becomes, as Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola explain, "the ability to make the instantaneous connections between informational objects that allow us to see them all at once" (1999, p. 363). This notion introduces our third continuum of stylistic ethics—felt or apparent agency.

On this continuum, sublime rhetoric and immediacy become unethical because readers "Lose themselves in reading (and so to come back with different selves that better fit a dominant culture)" (Wysocki & Johnson-Eilola, 1999, p. 366). Such a styling gives us no agency to resist, and we are brainwashed. Yet, such a totalizing view seems to give too much power to the writer and conversely, a viewing of confessional rhetoric as totally empowering might give too much power to the reader. When we delve into a text, we "suspend our belief"; we enter into a contract with the rhetor; and, conversely, we have the choice to refuse: we don't need to fall in; we don't have to enjoy and agree; if we have any sort of analytical training (formal or informal), we can resist.

In *On The Sublime* Longinus analyzes examples of sublimity (Homer, Euripides, etc.), to illustrate how the style functions. Thus, Longinus is able to be critical of the sublime. He can be "sublime on the sublime" (Lamb, 1993, p. 553). As Jonathan Lamb explains, "Being sublime upon the sublime is, according to [John] Dennis, the reader's way of seizing the initiative, just as Longinus himself seizes it from Homer ... converting the servitude of reading into the mastery of writing" (1993, p. 553). The sublime may function as an emollient during the rhetorical act (and even this may be a totalizing fiction),

but its existence is largely kairotic; its true power is fleeting. Once the orator stops, the reader begins interpreting (I liked that movie; I hated that movie; etc.) and has agency.

We also must remember that there will always be situations where the rhetorical audience begins with more power than the rhetor, for example, when the writer is part of a minority and the reader is part of a majority. This is what Michel Foucault warns against in his discussions of the transformative nature of confession in his *History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*:

One does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile ... a ritual in which the expression alone ... produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it. (Foucault, 1990, p. 61-62)

As Carlo, in this volume, reminds in her analysis of Corder, “Enfolding is about vulnerability of self,” “a vulnerability which is not appropriate to expose in all rhetorical situations.” Is it necessary to give even more power to an audience and open oneself up to a critical reading by the majority? Must the writer always play according to the rules set by the audience?<sup>21</sup> Offering any one fixed set of stylistic rules limits authorial moves of resistance as well as those of power. Such thought complicates Joseph Williams’s<sup>22</sup> advice that, “We write ethically when as a matter of principle, we would trade places with our intended readers and experience the consequences they do after they read our writing” (2007, p. 215).

In addition, just because a writer uses a confessional style doesn’t mean that the audience is empowered through, or will want to accept, the power of analysis. Being constantly analytical and explorative is exhausting. Though it may or may not be the best thing for one to do, readers can choose to ignore, choose to participate, choose to lie back, choose to be active, choose to be lazy—it is true that the rhetor can create an openness to participate or can try to encourage the audience to plunge into the sublime or can seek praise through nonchalance, but the audience doesn’t have to respond. As Williams reminds us, “We ought not assume that they [our audience] owe us an indefinite amount of their time to unpack it” (2007, p. 221). Andrew Feenberg espouses a similar view in his *Critical Theory of Technology* surrounding how the democratization of labor “presupposes the desire for increased responsibility and power,” and requires “a *culture of responsibility*,” that we can see developing in techno-rhetorical culture through the call for multiliteracies<sup>23</sup> (1991, p. 17). Such a breakdown of power and a reminder that, as Foucault states, “in order to be a movement [of power]

from above to below there has to be a capillarity from below to above at the same time” make my definition of style transform from “the manipulation of attention” into the *attempted* manipulation of attention (1980, p. 201).

Confessional rhetorics, because they are rhetoric and contain a guiding author or editor, no matter how hard they try, can never entirely cede power to the reader. Hypertext fiction, similar to Delagrangé’s wunderkammer, are groupings of links and nodes through which authors allow readers to explore and often “choose their own adventure,” roving through seemingly random collections of media, creating their own interpretations as they proceed. Such freedom seems to turn readers into authors, but most times the numerous circuits readers roam through are planned in advance. Readers can’t navigate outside of the hypertext. New media theorist Lev Manovich calls the inability for an author to ever fully give up control of their text, “the myth of interactivity”; he argues, “interactive media ask us to identify with someone else’s mental structure ... to click on a highlighted sentence to go to another sentence ... we are asked to follow pre-formed, objectively existing associations” (2001, p. 61). Again, similar to the transport of the Longinian sublime, “we are asked to mistake the structure of somebody else’s mind for our own” (Manovich, 2001, p. 61).

This final breakdown of the traditional continuums of stylistic ethics confirms the argument that there is no fixed relationship between style and morality, no most ethical style, thus, welcoming a plurality of styles. As Wysocki states, “I do not want the instructions on my kitchen fire extinguisher to ask me to stop to think about how the instructions compose me as a rational, modern, gendered, raced, classed, fire-fearing, early twenty-first century individual ... I hope that the fire extinguisher is transparently useful without them ...” (2004, p. 22). Writers must ask, then, when space for interpretation and attention needs to be purposefully constructed and when it is to be brought by the audience. When should texts be immediate and when should they confess and complicate themselves? Which audiences will automatically be critical of which texts? Which audiences need to be urged to pay attention to which points? And when does a critical eye destroy an immersive experience? Certain conditions call for certain styles, and we will only discover those most effective through experimentation with as many styles as possible.

## V. BRINGING PLURALISTIC STYLE AND MANIPULATION TO THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

This chapter has asked you to consider what commonly eschewed avenues of style become available when one acknowledges that each choice of style and

each act of rhetoric is one of manipulation and thus equally valid for ethical use. In conclusion, then, I offer three pluralistic and manipulative stylistic classroom activities that attempt to reintroduce composition students to a more complex notion of style, purpose, and exigence. In doing so I also, admittedly, argue for my own personal composition classroom exigencies: to teach students to be critical of their style and communication methods, to purposefully adapt to and control numerous audiences (whether that means to intrigue, disgust, incense, or hypnotize), and to enjoy experimentation in language.

Basic questions in a classroom of pluralistic styles:

- How do you want the audience to participate in the text?
- How does your audience want to participate in the text?
- What stylistic choices will mediate between these two desires?

## 1. THE FOUND OBJECT: ABSORBED IN MATERIALITY

*Style:* Sublimity, Immediacy, and the Continuum of Attention

*Goals:* Learn to capture and focus an audience's attention, create identification between author and reader, and present issues as in need of immediate action.

*Activity:* Many writing assignments ask students to make the assumption that the audience will have some knowledge of the writer and his or her exigence: a memo written for a boss, a speech delivered to the city council, an opinion column composed for the local newspaper. The found object assignment, however, asks students to design a message that must engage an unsuspecting audience with no assumed familiarity of the students or their exigences.

For instance, students might create a "shopdropped" item, a consumer good that is redesigned to subvert its original materiality.<sup>24</sup> A shopdropper might buy a sugary children's cereal, take it home, and use a computer program (or simply markers and paste) to redesign the packaging to highlight the cereal's unhealthy content by the addition of images of rotting teeth and obese children. The shopdropper then places the box back on the shelf for the unsuspecting audience to encounter. Through visual interest and interactivity the object is designed to engross the audience in a type of participation similar to that of a confessional object, but rather than directing the audience's critical eye at the construction of the item or the rhetor, it directs attention to the negative elements of the original product.

Thus, the goal of the found object assignment is to create a materially and stylistically engaging object (a dvd, sign, pop-up-book, comic, sticker, game) which will be found by a rhetorical audience, somehow gain their attention, and immediately absorb them in an understandable argument through interactivity.

Beyond wise object design, I ask students to come up with a hypothetical plan of distribution that explains where their object will be placed, how they will get the object there, what legal considerations might affect the placement of their object, and how the location of the object relates to the immediacy of the argument (arguments about nutrition are placed in the grocery store, arguments about fashion are attached to clothing racks, etc.).

Finally, I ask my students to explain the rhetorical choices they made in their object and placement designs: how ethos, pathos, and logos work in this object, how the context in which they place their object will affect their audience's reception, how they designed their object to avoid misreadings, how they think their audience will respond and why.

The purpose of this activity is to prompt students to think critically about audience interaction and immersion in composition. It also asks them to consider how medium affects such immersion. Students must consider the benefits of one medium over another in terms of the exigence of the author, the point of attention, and the continuums of felt deception and agency. Finally, this assignment asks students to consider the ethical implications of surprising an unsuspecting audience, using public/private space, and redesigning/subverting someone else's composition.

*Further Question to Consider:* When do audiences enjoy immersion in an artificial environment and when do they feel such immediacy is unethical? How does a sublime style occur outside of "creative" venues? How can a sublime author overcome a naturally critical audience?

## 2. MANIPULATE YOUR TEACHER THROUGH CONSTRUCTING YOURSELF

*Style:* Sprezzatura, Leaked Constructedness, and Apparent Mediation

*Goals:* Learn to control presentation of self, the subtle use of style, how to adapt to the opinions of an audience, and how materiality affects image of the author.

*Activity:* Many times in the composition classroom (including in my first activity) students are asked to suspend their belief and imagine that they are writing to a "real" rhetorical audience other than their teacher. This activity asks for just the opposite. In this activity I want my students to manipulate *me* and to do it without my knowledge.

In order to encourage a pluralistic notion of style, students must experiment with simultaneous rhetorical purposes and numerous selves surrounding those purposes. One of the biggest questions I want my students to ask in a style-as-manipulation environment is, "How do I want my audience to react to me?" An easy response like, "I want my audience to be convinced," is not enough. Thus,

in this activity, in addition to their original argument/purpose, I ask my students to choose from a list of (or come up with their own) odd sprezzaturic goals such as: make me think you're cool; make me disgusted by your composition process; make me pity you; make me want to be a member of your family; make me think you're pompous but lovable.

The more weirdly complex the achievement of the secondary ethos goal, the more fun my students have and the higher the grade they will receive. But, the *subtle* manipulation of attention towards the author is key here; if I realize where the student is trying to lead me, the effect won't work as well. Thus, a student attempting the "disgusted by your composition process" prompt (and this is an extreme example), wouldn't overtly describe the composition process but might spread just enough peanut butter on the edges of his or her pages for me to notice and be disgusted on the third page turn. A student attempting the "member of your family" prompt might include several subtle and specific familial metaphors or anecdotes, creating familial subtext.

I ask my students to write their sprezzaturic goal at the bottom of the last page so I can't read it until I've finished the paper. If they've succeeded at manipulating my view of them, they generally will get a few extra points though I don't punish them if they fail.

The purpose of this activity is the ambition that encircles sprezzatura, the manipulation of the audience through the presentation of self. It also imparts the idea that every stylistic choice (whether linguistic or material) affects an audience's reception of message and perception of author. Ultimately, this activity attempts to push students beyond the idea that the best style hides the author.

*Further Questions to Consider:* How does a writer (especially a student writer) encourage an audience to analyze and take seriously the subtle use of language? When does authorial adaptation begin to alter an author's original goals? When is it appropriate to reveal subjectivity and authorial presence (through sprezzatura or confession), and when is such a revealing distracting?

### 3. MAKING AN ESSAY CONFESS ITSELF

*Style:* Confession, Hypermediation, and the Continuum of Felt Agency

*Goals:* Learn to encourage active participation and analysis by an audience, highlight the constructedness of a text, enlighten an audience rather than persuade, help an audience to "take pleasure in the act of mediation" (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 14).

*Activity:* By the end of a composition course most students have become somewhat experienced in directing audience attention to the flaws of an

opposing side's argument. Confessional rhetoric, however, asks writers to do something much more frightening: direct the audience's attention at the constructedness, mediation, and limitations of the writer's own argument and guide the reader in a participatory experience that allows them to understand and rewrite the rules and goals of that experience.

This final activity, then, asks students to take an essay they've already composed and somehow make it confess its own constructedness. To prompt my students' imaginations, we think of messages that are designed to do this in the real world: a director's commentary on a film, a musician's blog kept while recording an album, Joseph Williams's infamous meta-stylistic "The Phenomenology or Error." Together, we examine how each of these confessionally-styled pieces draws readers' attentions to some points of constructedness while eliding others. How each confession paints a picture of the author, process, and materiality that supports a certain view and argument.

Students then begin to make their own previously written papers confess their materialities through a variety of methods. Some choose to play on the footnote by equipping their essays with "making of flaps" which can be lifted to reveal authorial commentary on how their own piece subverts or conforms to their argument. Others use a different font to indicate a running self-critiquing commentary. And some students make their papers interactive through elaborate fill-in-the-blank participation that asks the audience to consider how the student constructs and directs them.

Whatever the method, the key point is that students choose confessional techniques that develop their original argument and make the reader aware of how the student's writing process impacts them. Such confessional writing teaches the student that self-awareness and analysis don't have to occur only in the student's head, they can be invaluable on the page as well.

*Further Questions to Consider:* How does an audience's awareness of construction and mediation affect their reception of texts? Which audiences will automatically be critical of which texts? What limitations do you want to place on your audience's exploration and analysis?

## NOTES

1. This paper assumes a current-traditional baseline of concise and transparent style when referring to "traditional" notions of style in order to engage with popular notions of style outside of the academy.
2. Though no theorist of new media I mention in this chapter makes such clear-cut ethical claims.

3. For further information on this false dichotomy see Winston Weathers's discussion of "Grammar B" in his *Grammars of Style: New Options in Composition* (2010).
4. I hope, however, that this chapter and collection illustrate "style" and "content" are indivisible.
5. To see how Lanham does address the ethics of style see chapter eight of his *Revising Prose* (2007).
6. See Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.
7. For a more negative view on Longinus and sublimity see Paul de Man's "Hegel on the Sublime" (1982).
8. Indeed, Julius Caesar and many other Shakespearean tragedies might be investigated as models of Longinian ecstatic tragedy rather than Aristotelian cathartic ones.
9. One should note that the idea of agency in immediacy is infinitely complex. Are technologies designed to erase themselves? Do they simply have that effect without purposeful design? Or are users implicit in the act, causing technologies to erase themselves by not paying attention? All three answers are most likely simultaneously true and help bring insight to discussions of agency and style.
10. We all know how distracting it can be when automatic features like the red and green spelling- and grammar-check lines or "Clippy," the talking paperclip, pop up when we are trying to compose in Microsoft Word. For more on hatred for Clippy, see Luke Swartz's electronically available bachelor's thesis, *Why People Hate the Paperclip: Labels, Appearance, Behavior, and Social Responses to User Interface Agents* (1998).
11. In fact, if one looks closely at popular nineteenth century American rhetoric handbooks (of authors like Day, Hill, and Genung) one sees sublime language (especially references to force, energy, and transport) being applied to the proto current-traditional pedagogy of perspicuity.
12. Though each of these points of attention, like each rhetorical appeal, is almost impossible to separate from one another and should be viewed more as a network of effects.
13. Indeed such an artificial natural style is deeply connected to the history of *kairos* in the rhetorical tradition and can be viewed in Gorgias's "The Defense of Palamedes;" Aristotle's claim that "A writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially," in *On Rhetoric* (1991, 3.2); and in Cicero's statement, "The main object of the orator was that he should both appear himself, to those before whom he was pleading, to be such a man as he would desire to seem ... and that the hearts of his hearers should be touched in such a fashion as the orator would have them touched" (*De Oratore*, 1.19).



14. Similarly, we might recall how Samuel Taylor Coleridge's claim to have written "Kubla Khan" while dreaming makes the mind of the poet seem all the greater.

15. Regarding the convergence of selectivity, manipulation, nostalgia, and digital metaphor, one might question: Where do these metaphors come from? On whose nostalgias are they based? If every act of collective memory and nostalgia is also an act of selective memory and amelioration of the past, whose oppressed and suppressed experiences are being recalled or elided in these metaphors?

16. For further reading on the sprezzaturic design of digital interfaces see Cynthia and Richard Selfe's *Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones*, (2010).

17. Though, a history of yellow and stunt journalism might disrupt this narrative.

18. Such confessions, however, do not seem to mollify opposing critics, as liberals will still critique O'Reilly and conservatives will still critique Stewart. In addition, Stewart has an even stronger confessional defense in his constant claims that *The Daily Show* is "the fake news" despite the fact that perhaps a large number of viewers get their only "news" from the show.

19. Though labeling new media conceptions of hypermediacy as "confessional" may be somewhat troubling because few, if any, of the authors I discuss conceive of their ideologies along an ethical continuum, I think the benefits of drawing a comparison between confessional rhetoric and hypermediation outweigh the risk of misinterpretation.

20. Accessed for free online at: <http://www.technorhetoric.net/13.2/topoi/delagrange/index.html>.

21. See John Schilb's *Rhetorical Refusals* as well as Schroeder, Fox, and Bizzell's collection *Alt Dis: Alternative Discourses in the Academy* (2007) for examples of scholars who agree that writers need the ability to resist the style of the majority.

22. Though Williams's other work on style is richly theoretical, his style manual, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, like those of other stylistic mavericks (I'm thinking of Lanham's "paramedic method," here) falls slightly short of the plurality he suggests in his more academic pieces. Indeed, the "grace" of the subtitle refers more to concision than anything else. But maybe such condensing is simply necessary to create a pragmatic manual. For a more complex analysis of the pros and cons of Williams's (and Lanham's) stylistic oeuvre, see Lester Faigley's *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*.

23. See Warschauer's and Banks's multiple accesses; Mossberger, Tolbert, and Stansbury's multiple digital divides; and Selber's multiliteracies.

24. For further information on shopdropping and other culture jamming examples see: [www.woostercollective.com](http://www.woostercollective.com).

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