

# 1 What Is Style, and Why Does It Matter?

Mention the word “style,” and most writing teachers begin singing the praises of Strunk and White’s well-known handbook, *Elements of Style*. Regarded as the most authoritative treatment of style in English, the manual presents numerous rules for usage and grammar as well as exhortations to avoid “all devices that are popularly believed to indicate style—all mannerisms, tricks, adornments” and focus instead on “plainness, simplicity, orderliness, [and] sincerity” (55). The manual goes on to elaborate on this plainness of style as the preferred absence of “fancy” or foreign words, figurative language, and any non-standard usage or phrases. In short, writers should always take as few risks as possible and write only in the safest, most objective kind of Standard English. They should blend in. Above all, writers should strive for definite, specific, concrete language.

This view of style has its place in certain communicative situations; however, it excludes a range of other possibilities while also maintaining a binary between plain and adorned styles. Today, many writing teachers have difficulty thinking outside of the Strunk and White box. They see style only as conformity to standards, as the domain of manuals and handbooks, and they avoid discussing style as a means of expression, experimentation, and risk. In the recent edited collection, *The Centrality of Style*, Nora Bacon (author of the textbook *The Well-Crafted Sentence*) addresses this dilemma head on, stating that writing and rhetoric teachers largely believe that “You can teach academic writing or you can teach style, but you can’t teach both” (176). Bacon critiques the dominant notion of academic writing as plain and literal, and redefines the genre as open to stylistic play. Bacon’s argument builds on Kate Ronald’s 1999 essay, “Style: The Hidden Agenda in Composition Classrooms,” in which Ronald describes academic prose as “objective, impersonal, formal, explicit, and organized around as-

sertions, claims, and reasons that illustrate or defend those claims” (175). For Ronald, academic discourse demands an almost vacant or plain style that carries as little of the writer’s personality as possible, meaning no excess or playfulness via literary style or the idioms and spontaneity that characterize oral discourse.

Ironically, most teachers do not necessarily believe what they teach when it comes to style. As Bacon indicates her essay, teachers may promote a stale version of academic discourse, but secretly hope to see some sense of voice or aesthetic in student papers. Teachers may often give students worse grades for slavishly adhering to the letter of academic style rather than gracefully bending the rules. Both Bacon and Ronald agree that the contradiction between style-as-taught and style-as-graded is damaging to students, leading to lower performance.

Many teachers today may also rely largely on handbooks as crutches, added to whatever they learned about style when they were once students. They may correct what they see as mistakes on student papers, as well as overuse of conversational or subjective language and idioms, humor, personal stories, or the dreaded “I,” “you,” and “we.” They may present a “proper” style for academic writing that precludes certain syntactical choices, such as beginning sentences with conjunctions or using sentence fragments and run-ons. They may also call for “appropriate” lexical conformity to registers defined as “academic” or “slang.” Most teachers agree these are sometimes necessary, but are not sufficient or universal; yet, we still cling to them.

This situation is exacerbated by the textbook publishing industry, an industry that churns out dozens of handbooks and textbooks annually and that contain short chapters consisting of “rules” for effective style from our own professional organizations.<sup>1</sup> In his 2008 book *Out of Style*, Paul Butler refers to these guides as “so-called style manuals,” where “style tends to be conflated with grammar or [is] used reductively” (20). Butler cites the 2003 *Longman Writer’s Companion* as an example, but one need only browse the composition sections of catalogs to find similar titles. For example, Part 3 of William Kelly’s *Simple, Clear, and Correct* contains seven chapters on grammar and mechan-

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1. Consider the seventh and most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The *Handbook* boasts a blurb from *Newsweek* as “the style bible for most college students.” The guide spends a great deal of time on the uniform and mechanical aspects of writing, not to mention formatting and documentation.

ics without any indication that they might be used for stylistic effect. Kelly uses the word “style” only once, to tell writers to place “a period between independent clauses to eliminate a comma splice or run-on sentence” in order to avoid long sentences (253). As with dozens of other textbooks, style is mainly about staying inconspicuous.

*Style: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy* charts a more diverse understanding of style than is seen in such guides, one based on a resurgence of interest in style as an area of research and pedagogy. The last several years of work in rhetoric and composition have seen a number of scholarly and pedagogical projects that promote style as a continuum of choices from plain to lively, rather than as a set of dichotomies. For instance, the authors collected in Christopher Schroeder, Helen Fox, and Patricia Bizzell’s book *Alt Dis* each argue for an alternative conception of academic writing style, one that embraces a both/and approach. These scholars assert that academic writing can be clear and concise without requiring adherence to prescriptions; it can adhere to conventions while also producing a sense of satisfaction (even pleasure). Michael Spooner’s contribution to *Alt Dis* effectively represents this purpose. Speaking about teachers as well as editors, Spooner defines their goal as “not to correct a text toward what the handbooks or readability indices allow, but to understand the writer’s ideas and processes . . . to imagine small ways to help the writer deliver those ideas effectively” (160). Ultimately, Spooner envisions an “alt’ style” that permits a wider degree of experimentation with stylistic conventions (163).

A major premise of *Style* is that an in-depth, historical, and theoretical understanding of style helps teachers make writing more satisfying and relevant to students.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, students will more likely produce writing that is rhetorically effective. In particular, Jeanne Fahnestock promotes reclaiming classical style for college academic writing in a special issue of *Language and Literature* about rhetorical stylistic

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2. T.R. Johnson makes a similar point in his essay 1999 *JAC* essay, “Discipline and Pleasure: ‘Magic’ and Sound.” For Johnson, teachers and academics too often present writing as a highly disciplined and rigorous activity, in which anything approaching “fun” or “pleasure” raises immediate suspicion. As explored in the second chapter of this book, Johnson’s solution to this problem lies in a return to sophistic and classical rhetorics, which placed a high priority on the sonic qualities of language, in order to invest our writing and teaching with more enjoyment.

tics, arguing for recovery of the lost “interconnectedness of argument and style” in the Western rhetorical tradition (224). As one example, Fahnestock presents the rhetorical device *sorites*, an argument made “through interlocking propositions which in effect produce the figure *gradatio*,” sometimes described as “a series of compressed or overlapping syllogisms” (225). For example, I might use *sorites* to argue the following:

Teachers care about their students. Teachers care about writing. Scholarship shows that teaching style to students improves their writing. Therefore, teachers should care about style.

Phrasing my argument through this device could have several effects on readers. First, it sounds direct and forceful. It is simple and clear. Therefore, it may serve as a memorable way of conveying this book’s central purpose. Conversely, it also serves as a reminder and catalyst to me, as I develop and revise this book, to be aware of my audience and my own goals. *Sorites* is one of many such devices rediscovered by Fahnestock, all of them once seen as part and parcel of education in grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. An entire tradition of correspondence exists between argumentative and stylistic strategies in treatises by Aristotle, Cicero, Agricola, and Melanchton.

The new momentum in our field calls for a thorough historical investigation into this long undervalued canon. My intention is to describe key shifts in studies of style from sophistic Greece through the contemporary era. By providing an orientation to where style has been during the last three thousand years, I aim to carefully assess the current state of stylistic studies and project possible futures regarding its impact on theories and pedagogies in the field. This assessment identifies the core principles, debates, and methods of teaching style as they evolved from one historical era to the next, explaining the relevance of these moments in the study and teaching of style to contemporary college teachers and students. Regarding the future of the study and teaching of style, this book articulates connections between approaches to style in rhetoric and composition and other disciplines to encourage further research and pedagogical innovation.

## DEFINITIONS OF STYLE

Style has been defined in a variety of ways by scholars working in areas within and related to rhetoric and composition. Style has been discussed in terms of classical rhetorical devices and amplification of discourse, as the manipulation of punctuation and syntax for rhetorical effect, as risk and deviation from norms, and as voice and authenticity. Some definitions are precise, such as Louise Phelps's definition, given during a personal interview with Paul Butler, as "the deployment of linguistic resources in written discourse to express and create meaning" ("Diaspora" 7). Other definitions are vague, such as Jonathon Swift's motto, "proper words in proper places."<sup>3</sup> This book endeavors to arrange a series of lenses on style without becoming mired in the particulars of a single, totalizing definition.

Since classical Greece, one central debate on style has centered on the view of form versus meaning, or both. Seeing style as form means that it can only decorate discourse; it does not play a primary role in invention—the generation of ideas and arguments. In this view, style comes after the fact. Style as meaning, on the other hand, implies that the use of devices, as well as the manipulation of sentence length and choice of words based on sound (and so on), has an undeniable impact on the development of ideas and their interpretation by audiences. Style as meaning entails that the decisions writers make regarding imagery, metaphors, sounds, length, syntax, and punctuation all contribute to an idea rather than to its mere expression. Style as inventive entails that these decisions become part of the process of discovering and shaping arguments, and therefore part of the entire composing process—not simply the editing and proofing stages.

In a 1980 *College English* article, John T. Gage grapples with the knotted concept of style as "at once a linguistic, a rhetorical, and a

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3. Barry Brummett's *A Rhetoric of Style* analyzes the canon in terms of language, image, fashion, gender, and a commodity that encompasses all of popular culture in late capitalist societies—style as excess. For Brummett, style is an entire system of signification that enables judgment and identification between different socioeconomic classes. Although this definition is ambitious and helpful in understanding the relevance of style in a broad sense, this book takes more narrow approach, and limits its scope to prose style, albeit with nods to ways in which other modes of signification have been influential.

philosophical concept,” and explains that it is a contentious term because “It is possible to be satisfied with a definition of style on one of these levels . . . only to discover that it raises problems in another” (615).<sup>4</sup> Gage’s piece is of particular interest to contemporary stylistic studies because he ultimately adopts a flexible position that writing teachers must draw on multiple theories, rather than cling to one. We often see definitions of style in contest with one another, rather than in cooperation. Consider the central debate mentioned earlier about whether “Style is either separate from invention or . . . one of the aspects of invention” (Gage 618). New Critics often argue that “every change in style is a change in meaning,” in opposition to an idea among linguists that the same propositional content can be expressed in many similar ways (618). What Gage struggles to explain in 1980 as the need “to have it both ways” has been taken up in the projects of stylistic revivalists (616). Seeing style through these central questions helps students and teachers as they encounter different orientations to style. The rest of this chapter presents a set of distinctive definitions.

### *Style as Form and Meaning*

Many writing teachers view style as a way of altering the form of an idea, but not the idea itself. They might see the most appropriate style for academic writing as plain and transparent. Stylisticians tend to argue the contrary: that these differences *do* alter meaning—sometimes slightly, other times drastically—and that thinking about these differences helps writers shape their ideas. In *A Matter of Style*, Matthew Clark warns us to resist the notion “that meaning simply exists, prior to language, and that the job of language is merely to represent that pre-existing meaning” (45). Clark insists that “expression often helps to form meaning, and . . . the possibilities of expression influence the possibilities of meaning” (45). Consider the following short sentences that express the same basic idea:

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<sup>4</sup> Gage shows as much through Varro’s treatment, in *De Lingua Latina*, of analogist theories (i.e., that language is representative of an ordered universe) and of anomalists ones (i.e., that language is disordered, irregular, and inadequate). Such disagreements carried over into debates about generative grammar, a theory that Gage sees as conveying the analogists’ faith in mapping a coherent and logical structure onto language.

1. Professor Chapman gave me a lot of feedback on my dissertation chapter last week.
2. Chapman ripped apart my dissertation chapter a few days ago.
3. The second chapter of my dissertation had a lot of problems, but Dr. Chapman helped point them out and gave me suggestions on how to revise.

Here, it is easy to see how different choices in diction, tone, and sentence position convey different notions of the speaker and his or her relationship to the professor. The first sentence might seem straightforward and objective. The second sentence implies an antagonistic relationship with the professor. By contrast, the third sentence suggests a sense of gratitude, framing the conflict around the writer's own problems with the dissertation. It would be hard to imagine these three sentences as spoken by the same person.

Part of the reason why teachers and scholars might resist such a nuanced view of language and meaning is that we think of meaning itself as a monolithic concept, but, in fact, several types of meaning exist. Leonora Woodman's 1982 *JAC* article, "Teaching Style: A Process-Centered View," defines these different types of meaning. First there is "sense," or the essential information conveyed in different grammatical forms. Take the sentence "Man bites dog" and the passive form, "Dog is bitten by man." These two sentences emphasize different aspects of an event, but fundamentally convey the same sense. The difference between active and passive voice is not unlike switching camera angles to emphasize one actor or another in the same scene.

Style *does* have a significant impact if we think of meaning in other terms. Woodman describes other types of meaning as she revisits I. A. Richards's point that meaning exists in layers, including "mere sense, sense and implications, feeling, the speaker's attitudes to whatever it is, to his audience, the speaker's confidence, and other things" (qtd. in Woodman 117). Using a different verb or a longer sentence, or introducing harsher sounding words to generate cacophonous sounds adds implications not explicitly stated; it also generates emotions that do not rest on semantic content. Regardless of whether they see style as a matter of meaning or form, all rhetoricians note the impact that style has on audiences. The actual ability to produce emotional or rhetorical effects by manipulating language is often referred to as eloquence, explored in the next section. Rhetoricians who take a view

of style as form and meaning tend to place a great deal of importance on eloquence. As Chapter 2 shows, the Roman rhetoricians Cicero and Quintilian established a vital link between eloquence and good character.

### *Style as Eloquence*

The term eloquence often appears synonymously with style, especially in the classical period through to the Renaissance. When rhetoricians speak of eloquence, they usually describe the writer as having mastered a range of styles. As such, style as eloquence has particular connotations with emotional value and sensation. Cicero and Quintilian saw eloquence as the chief end of all discourse, and they defined three main styles for different rhetorical situations—the low or plain, the middle, and the grand.<sup>5</sup> Eloquence often refers to the grand style, reserved only for serious topics or sections of speeches where a rhetor wants to drive home the major points of a case, making them vivid.

Scholars in stylistics are currently trying to recover and repurpose such terms as eloquence by tracing their histories and making a case for their reintroduction into college writing instruction. T. R. Johnson's work on style emphasizes the magical, transportive qualities of language in the sophistic era. Johnson promotes Gorgias as an exemplar of classical eloquence that conflicts with contemporary understandings of style as a matter of mechanical correctness. An eloquent style is not usually a plain style, and Gorgias's eloquence, like Cicero's, appeared, even to some of his contemporaries, as bloated and Asiatic (as alien or strange). Gorgias was a crowd-pleaser, but his style grated on the more conservative tastes of Aristotle. As Johnson observes, today, the Aristotelian or Attic model persists in college writing instruction as well as the public discourse on style that emphasizes clarity, efficiency, and overall plainness.

We must also remain aware of the ethnic and classist associations of eloquence at points in history. Feminist and postcolonial writers view eloquence with some suspicion given its often privileged advocates that define eloquence via expectations or "tastes" that are endorsed by a ruling establishment that perpetuates itself through educational and cultural norms. What qualifies as "eloquent" often depends on a subject

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5. A number of classical rhetoricians in William Dominik's 1997 edited collection, *Roman Eloquence*, treat this subject within the contexts of antiquity.



position with power and influence over others. The Greeks and the Romans defined their language in contrast to the supposedly barbaric ineloquence of other cultures—that same attitude formed the foundation of linguistic discrimination from Renaissance England through to contemporary debates on college education. Thus, the term “eloquence” carries heavy undertones of judgment about ethnicity, gender, nationality, and social class.

In the 2009 book, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*, Ian Smith highlights the linguistic xenophobia of classical Greece and Imperial Rome that set a costly precedent for early modern Africans during Renaissance England, as the rising intellectual culture of Anglo-Saxons sought to displace its own barbarous reputation by projecting it onto linguistic others that were far less “eloquent” in their “failed language” (Smith 8). For Smith, “eloquence became the marketable norm [in Athens and elsewhere] . . . the *de rigueur* commodity in the fifth century” (24). In the 2006 book *Vulgar Eloquence*, Sean Keilen takes a similar stance on the need felt by Renaissance poets to reinvent themselves and their history in order to become inheritors of Greek and Roman traditions. Seen this way, eloquence has been to style what prestigious varieties of English is to other languages around the world today—a risky investment in a dominant code, to borrow a metaphor from Catharine Prendergast’s *Buying into English*.

Eloquence has become an infrequent term in college writing classes, given its associations with ornament and literary texts. As Chapter 3 explores, part of the reason lies in the origins of college composition at Harvard in the late 1800s, when Adams Sherman Hill emphasized the rules of correctness and clarity over and above other qualities of writing, including aspects of style concerned with effective deviation from such rules. Style as eloquence carries the stigma of simply ornamenting discourse in the latter stages of drafting rather than throughout the composing process. When we praise the eloquence of a writer or speaker, it may seem as though we are suggesting that a speech sounds nice despite its lack substance. If teachers embrace a redefinition of eloquence, one flexible enough to accommodate non-standard Englishes and other languages, it might assist in destabilizing the stereotype of academic writing as rigidly formal, impersonal, and authoritarian. An eloquent academic essay will never read or sound like an eloquent play or poem, but it can still draw on aspects of style to achieve a balance

between the goals of analysis and knowledge production on the one hand, and emotional engagement on the other.

### *Style as Grammar*

Style and grammar have almost always been discussed in relation to one another, though classical rhetoricians tended to elevate style. Classical rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian maintained that eloquence was the crowning achievement of rhetoric, and that grammatically accurate writing and speaking were necessary preconditions for eloquence.<sup>6</sup> While grammar was technically a part of style, it was not the whole of style. This basic view of grammar as a subordinate component of style, held through the nineteenth century until the formation of college composition courses in the US, saw correctness and clarity as the chief purpose of writing—eloquence or distinction was ancillary. Toward the end of the twentieth century, scholars such as Martha Kolln and Joseph Williams advocated the use of grammar in the service of style. Patrick Hartwell defines these approaches as “stylistic grammars” because they rely on the terminology of descriptive grammar, or linguistics, to help students develop an awareness of language as a rhetorical tool. Such approaches differ from school grammars because they focus on choice and effect, not merely on correctness.

Grammar and style cover much of the same territory, albeit through different terminologies. In the linguistic sense, grammar is a technical language that helps explain how sentences and passages function and how they achieve meaning. In the opening to her 1971 book *Grammar as Style*, Virginia Tufte states that “grammar and style can be thought of in some way as a single subject” (1). Although different definitions of grammar exist, Tufte defines them fundamentally as syntax, or the arrangement of words, where the rhetorical effects described as style become the most apparent.

Style as grammar, or grammar as style, drives arguments by Joseph Williams, Martha Kolln, and Laura Michicche, all of whom use terminology from linguistics as fundamental principles in teaching awareness of style. In particular, Kolln and Michicche use the term

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6. George Campbell sums up the traditionalist view nicely that “the grammatical art hath its completion in syntax; the oratorical, as far as the body of expression is concerned, in style” (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 35).

“rhetorical grammar,” meaning instruction in the rhetorical effects of grammar, to help students realize the many choices they have when organizing information at the sentence-level. A rhetorical view of grammar and style is summed up nicely by Mikkel Bakhtin’s assertion, in “The Problem of Speech Genres,” that “the speaker’s very selection of a particular grammatical form is a stylistic act” (66). In many ways, style is the exercise of choice among grammatical options.

### *Style as Voice*

Teachers can and should teach style partly through grammar, since the styles of the writers we admire can be broken down, analyzed, explained, and imitated using the specific vocabulary of grammar. However, stylistically effective writing is not merely the sum of its parts. However precise and technical our terms, every writer develops a unique style or voice in ways that teachers and theorists cannot ever completely compartmentalize and dissect. The term “voice” is often used interchangeably with “style,” though it is helpful to distinguish them. Voice refers to the impressions readers develop of a writer or speaker that exceed the explanatory power of grammatical and stylistic vocabularies. Paul Matsuda defines style as a component of voice, specifically as “the use of particular sets of discursive features. . . that contribute to—as well as constrain—the construction of voice” (“Voice in Japanese” 41). To get at the distinctiveness of someone’s use of stylistic resources, it may help to think in terms of voice.

Peter Elbow explains voice and its relationship to style in a 2007 *College English* essay titled “Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries.” A long-time advocate of voice in student writing, Elbow defines the term as “language as sounded, heard, and existing in time” (175). Voice refers to any aspect of writing or speech that lends a sense of distinction or uniqueness—a presence or a way of marking someone’s use of language as different from others. Students should learn to write with a sense of voice because, as Elbow argues, “Readers usually experience ‘audible’ voiced writing as clearer than writing they don’t hear” (177), and so it enhances their rhetorical effectiveness. Moreover, helping students balance academic writing with their own voices—the way they speak in their everyday conversations—can help make writing a less intimidating task.

Traditionally, style is a formal branch of classical rhetoric with its own vocabulary; today, scholars of style in our field sometimes draw

additional terms from grammar and linguistics. This large catalogue of terms can make style seem complex and overwhelming to college students. The loose terminology of voice is more flexible, emphasizing the relationship between readers and writers, not the text in isolation. As such, it can prompt students to reflect more deeply about the social and emotional impact of their writing, and resists giving them a set of ready-made labels. As Elbow acknowledges,

Many of the textual features that people describe in terms of voice can also be described as matters of *style*. And there's a huge and sophisticated scholarly literature about style in writing. But the voice metaphor often works better for students and others who are not sophisticated about language. (177)

A disadvantage of treating style as voice lies in subjectivity and, to some extent, lack of specificity. Elbow admits that “The voice formulation is a personal subjective projection—and it implies a subjective guess about how others will react and even about the mind and feelings of the writer” (178). Teaching style as voice does not exclude other approaches, such as grammatical or rhetorical. Voice is merely another avenue of approach. Comments on student papers and class discussions can use the lens of style as grammar as well as voice, for example.

### *Style as Possibility and Risk*

Since Mina Shaughnessy's opening to *Errors and Expectations*, it has been well-documented that attention to grammar alone can have disastrous consequences for the confidence students have in their abilities as writers (see also Braddock; Hillocks). If students are constantly penalized and punished for their errors, they become so reluctant to take chances with their writing that they become paralyzed, or they only stay within the safety zone established by their teachers. Meanwhile, as Nora Bacon and Kate Ronald argue, teachers then unknowingly penalize students for staying within that zone. Thus, students face style as a double-edged sword. If they take risks with their writing and fail, they are penalized. If they don't take risks at all, they are still penalized for lack of voice or confidence. To take risks in their writing, students must be able to fail without fear of reprisal.

A 1985 *College English* article on feminist styles, Pamela Annas attests to the benefits of breaking this trend, of treating writing as a series of possibilities rather than constraints:

One semester two women in the course blocked when I asked them to write about their backgrounds in relation to writing and language. One said in class, “Thinking about my background. Well, you can’t do anything about it, but . . . my attitude was, I’m mad, I’m angry, I’m bitter, so I’m not finishing this paper.” She was upset at the anger she had found in herself, but she also thought that what she really had to say wouldn’t be acceptable. So she turned in something that was bland, numb, and lifeless. During this discussion I suggested that she rewrite the paper, beginning with “I’m mad, I’m angry, I’m bitter,” and go on from there. When she did that, her writing unblocked, and though much of what she wrote in the rest of the semester had a bitter edge, her writing was pro-lific and vivid. (367)

Such writers block often stems from a limited definition of style as adherence not only to grammatical rules, but also to exhortations about distance, objectivity, precision, clarity, and linearity in academic writing. The revival of style in rhetoric and composition seeks a balanced approach similar to the one seen in Annas’s essay: style as a set of principles designed to open rather than close possibilities in prose.

An earlier 1981 *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) essay, Jane Walpole also problematizes the idea of norms and neutrality, showing them as always inherently subjective. Accepting the idea of synonymous meaning, or sense (see Hirsch, “Stylistics and Synonymity”), Walpole proposes the definition of style as what “encompasses all the alternate choices that make *this* discussion of X different from *that* discussion of X” (206). She cites a similar definition from Richard Young and Alton Becker, that “a particular style is a characteristic series of choices throughout the entire process of writing, including both discovery (invention) and linguistic selection and grouping (arrangement)” (qtd. in Walpole 206). Style as option is intimately related to every stage in the writing process.

This view of style drives from the theories of Quintilian, who saw the end of style in *facilitas*, and also from Erasmus, who saw it as *copia* (abundance in a writer’s language options). It also appears in language

difference, especially Suresh Canagarajah's work on metalinguistic awareness and shuttling between different varieties of English. It also converges with a dialogic view of style in that the stylistic options available to writers include multiple voices that they can shift between as they rotate through various socio-discursive situations (see Halasek; Farmer). Finally, style as option calls to mind work in sociolinguistics on style-shifting, code-switching, and code-mixing, as well as the more recent term "code-meshing" used by rhetoric and composition scholars.

### CONCLUSION: A CACOPHONY OF DEFINITIONS

This introduction outlined some of the major modes of thought on style, but many other definitions exist. In fact, every theorist and author appears to define style in a slightly different manner with emphasis on one or more constituent elements. Paul Butler evokes the definition of style as deviation that is classically-attuned, but that also describes the practices of linguistically diverse students who employ non-standard codes (e.g., dialects, vernaculars) in their speech and writing. Holcomb discusses style as a performance of identity in his *Rhetoric Review* essay, "Performative Stylistics and the Question of Academic Prose," as well as in his book *Performing Prose*, co-authored with Jimmie Killingsworth. Sociolinguists use the term "style-shifting" when describing the linguistic choices users make in different situations with different audiences. Someone may shift between multiple social languages, including registers such as casual and formal, in order to accommodate or resist the perceived norms of their audiences. In a sociolinguistic sense, style thus also becomes an identity performance and a statement about one's position within a discursive community. Fahnestock's 2011 book *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion* contains a multitude of definitions from these areas.

This book encourages teachers and scholars to see the value in multiple, interlocking definitions of style, rather than siding with a particular theory or discipline. Style can describe readers' relationships with texts, the grammatical choices writers make, the importance of adhering to norms in certain contexts and deviating from them in others, the expression of social identity, and the emotional effects of particular devices on audiences. Each use of style has applications for particular contexts and projects, often reflecting unique theories about language,

discourse, and representation. These theoretical frameworks operate in the background and, at times, come to the forefront of scholarly and pedagogical conversations about style. I try to deal with them concisely when they need articulation. Only when one theory begins to exclude others does it become overly rigid or unhelpful.

This book is organized to chart such uses of style historically while projecting current and future directions in stylistic studies. Chapter 1 maps some essential ways of understanding style. Chapters 2 and Chapter 3 narrate a history of style from the classical period through the nineteenth century. Beginning with origins of style in epic poetry, these chapters consider disputing positions on style by the sophists, Plato, and Aristotle as Greece moved from a largely oral to a literate culture. A central disagreement arises in this moment between style as epistemological or as representational. The sophists saw style as foundational to or as conveying meaning, whereas Plato and then Aristotle reduced style's significance to the transmission of meaning. For several subsequent centuries, theories of style cycled through variations on this theme—style evolved in treatises during the Roman era, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. These chapters trace the continued cycle of evolution into the early twentieth century, and focus particularly on the rise of the New Curriculum at Harvard and its preoccupation with grammar and correctness.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 give an overview of contemporary work on style in rhetoric and composition, including sections on language difference, basic writing, multimodality, feminist and alternative rhetorics, and creative writing. In these chapters I describe stylistic studies as an interdisciplinary project focused on reviving its role in invention in order to resolve tensions and disagreements from the past hundred years that, in many ways, illustrate a microcosm of the larger history of style. I also consider the role of style in publics and counterpublics, including the tendency to frame style as a commodity. Educators, academics, and linguistic minorities tend to form counterpublics against a dominant public that is insistent on Standard English and correct, efficient prose as the primary means toward self-improvement and socio-economic mobility.

Chapter 7 identifies specific areas within and related to composition that can help advance the study of style. For each area, I state its primary interest in style and describe its main research methodologies, including foundational texts, modes of inquiry, what qualifies as evi-

dence, what major questions, and what major issues the area negotiates related to style. These areas include specializations within composition, such as historical and archival research, as well as qualitative and quantitative research methods. Areas outside the traditional scope of composition include sociolinguistics and the related fields of corpus linguistics and World Englishes.

Chapter 7 also explores stylistics and pragmatics. Scholars such as Paul Butler, Jeanne Fahnestock, and T. R. Johnson draw heavily on these two areas. I consider the history and methods of stylistics to help readers more fully appreciate their influence on rhetoric and composition. Namely, I describe how stylistics began as a literary enterprise, but has evolved into the study of style in a variety of everyday rhetorical situations. Finally, Chapter 8 offers practical strategies for teaching style in college writing classes, and revisits pedagogies introduced in earlier chapters and sections. Chapter 8 describes several key textbooks, organized by theoretical influences, that devote specific attention to style. For each book, I account for its strengths and weaknesses and its suitability for introductory and advanced writing courses.