

Series Editors' Preface

Anis Bawarshi, Charles Bazerman, and Mary Jo Reiff

As one of the five rhetorical canons, style has always had a central place in writing, but what that place is has not always been clearly understood. From the point of view of readers, style is something we prize in texts as providing a pleasurable journey through a writer's thoughts and as a mark of the quality of the writer's mind and spirit. Writers seek to have a style that will engage the readers and will mark their own authorial distinctiveness. Yet what style consists of, where it comes from, and what its value is has undergone constant redefinitions and controversies.

At various stages in its historical treatment, style has been conflated with grammatical correctness and clarity (often associated with plain style) while at other times it has been positioned in opposition to grammatical correctness and conflated with voice and individual expression. Style has been associated, at times, with invention and at other times distinguished from invention. It has been defined both as one of the canons of rhetoric and as the *only* canon of rhetoric. At times style has been used to promote the value of rhetoric, and at other times it has been used to degrade rhetoric as mere ornamentation. It has been synonymous, at times, with norms and standardization and at other times synonymous with innovation, risk, and difference. At the epicenter of this confusion is style's complex, co-dependent relationship with rhetoric and grammar: We cannot study and teach style without grammar, and yet its association with grammar (as grammatical correctness) has rendered style marginal. Likewise, we cannot recognize style as strategic performance without associating it with rhetoric, and yet this very association has also at times relegated style as ornament, at best, and dangerously manipulative at worst.

Because of the way style embodies core, long-standing tensions in rhetoric and composition studies, its study can provide important insights into our attitudes, at various times in the history of the field, about language, discourse, and representation. At the same time, because style is not a fixed concept but is fluid and multidimensional, an examination of its multiple, interlocking definitions can reveal interdependencies in what may seem to be stark contrasts. For instance, recognizing style as a continuum of choices rather than a set of dichotomies (academic or not-academic, high or low, correct or incorrect, standard or non-standard) enables us to understand how style is a condition of all language use and how it participates in a set of relations (grammatical, generic, interpersonal, social, affective) that shape meaning-making.

Style, then, can be fruitfully understood as performative, in keeping with contemporary interests in writing as situated, materially inflected, embodied, evocative performance. To consider style as performative suggests that style is a decision-making, epistemological practice, not only a product to be assessed but a set of relations and interactions readers and writers perform with texts in particular situations. Increasingly, these stylistic relations and interactions are recognized as spanning across media and modalities, involving the negotiation of language differences and cross-cultural relations, and marked by articulations as much as by silences, pauses, and ellipses.

This volume traces the historical roots of how style came to be separated from rhetoric and conflated with grammatical correctness in ways that have limited our understanding of the role of style in meaning making. Rather than fixing or promoting style as any one thing, Ray instead uses its myriad definitions to trace the genealogy of its uses, to examine its current standing and possibilities, and to explore future directions. Along the way, Ray reviews the linguistic turn in composition studies; the debates between linguistic and literary views of style; the relationship between writing process approaches and style; changing perspectives on style in the rhetorical tradition, from the ancient Greeks and Romans to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the new rhetoric of the twentieth century. He traces the relationship between style and contemporary scholarship in language difference, translanguaging, feminism, genre studies, writing across the curriculum, multimodality, new media, and visual rhetorics. The last two chapters offer detailed coverage of research methodologies related

to style as well as pedagogical implications, including a review of textbooks focused on style. The glossary targets key concepts in style, and the annotated bibliography provides useful references for further reading. Covering an impressive range of scholarship from antiquity to the present, interweaving major figures alongside lesser known but significant figures, drawing connections across time (as in the ways that Demetrius anticipates Bakhtin in equating style and genre, or how the Roman obsession with language purity reflects current debates about language standardization), and looking beyond western rhetorical traditions and their contributions to style, this volume reveals style as ubiquitous and crucial to contemporary work in rhetoric and composition studies.