

# INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE: CONCEPTUALIZING STYLE

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As stated in the introduction, this collection establishes and advances the assumption that style is central to the whole enterprise of composition, from how we theorize and conceptualize the work we do as a discipline, to how that understanding is communicated among us and to our students via our pedagogy. Treating the centrality of style as a given, however, requires that we subscribe to a definition or definitions of style that align(s) with our values as scholars and teachers. As T. R. Johnson and Tom Pace rightfully point out in the introduction to their 2005 collection *Refiguring Prose Style: Possibilities for Writing Pedagogy*, “style means different things to different people,” and as a result, style can have so many meanings that it ceases to have meaning at all. We do not have a problem with this plurality, as the following summaries will demonstrate that these essays have far more in common than not. A plurality of definitions, rather, speaks to the pervasive and qualitative centrality of style in rhetoric and composition, as well as in other language-oriented disciplines, much like the vast array of available definitions of “rhetoric” speaks to the term’s universality within language use.

Taking a cue from Johnson and Pace’s collection, and from other recent scholarship that has sought to revive style, we begin this collection by presenting a variety of conceptions of style that are both theoretically and pedagogically informed. The definitions of style presented by the following essays in Part One are markedly different from one another, but are joined fundamentally by their objective to increase style’s visibility in composition and explore the value of scholarship that assumes the centrality of style to composition. Further, the chapters in this section offer relevant ways of understanding style that intersect with the current interests and values of our discipline, so as to not simply revive style from the past.

In “An Ethics of Attentions: Three Continuums of Classical and Contemporary Stylistic Manipulation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Composition Classroom,” William Kurlinkus draws upon theories from classical rhetoric to new media to argue that style is a form of deception. He offers a series of three continuums along which he plots the degrees of control that style has on an audience’s attention. These three continuums—point of attention, apparent mediation, and felt agency—reveal the manipulation inherent in every stylistic

choice that a writer makes. This chapter also brings to light the ethical element of style that, despite its power, has been too often ignored. As rhetorical language is commonly recognized as inherently deceptive due to its selection of focus, Kurlinkus's link between style and deception clarifies the central nature of style to the compositional enterprise.

While Kurlinkus's work draws attention to the responsibility style requires, William FitzGerald's "Stylistic Sandcastles: Rhetorical Figures as Composition's Bucket and Spade" calls, rather, for stylistic play. He argues for a return to "the figurative," including rhetorical tropes and schemes and figures of speech and thought in composition, suggesting that while students may not think of themselves as embodying style, they have surely encountered figurative devices. After presenting a brief historical account of the treatment of figures in composition scholarship, FitzGerald offers a curriculum for an upper-division rhetoric elective titled "Go Figure." He provides this curriculum as an example of how figures can be taught and of the further possibilities that they offer the teaching of composition. Further, FitzGerald suggests that the figures are more easily transferable to visual modes of composition than the sentence level pedagogies with which style has been more traditionally associated. This essay's emphasis on the explanatory power of figures demonstrates the unifying value of style's exhaustive terminology.

Denise Stodola's "Using Stylistic Imitation in Freshman Writing Classes: The Rhetorical and Meta-Rhetorical Potential of Tropes and Transitions in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Medieval Treatises," like the previous chapter, presents a new application for a traditional form of style instruction. Stodola proposes a meta-rhetorical method of style pedagogy that follows imitation exercises with rhetorical analysis assignments that ask students to reflect on their stylistic choices. A necessary component of Stodola's pedagogy is transitions, not at the text level, but at the curricular level. Situating her approach historically within Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, she suggests that how assignments are sequenced, and the transitions that lie between them, affects their pedagogical value. Her chapter concludes with a sample assignment on figures of thought from a Business Communication course she teaches, demonstrating the pedagogy set forth in the chapter. Like FitzGerald, Stodola's conception of composition pedagogy as an exploration of stylistic choices on the part of the instructor reflects our central claim, though she metacritically reverses the emphasis from student to teacher.

In "Architectonics and Style," Russell Greer draws upon Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "surplus of vision"—the ability of an outsider to perceive an individual more fully than that person can see him or herself—to argue that it can further our understanding of stylistic clarity. Greer builds on the established relationship

between style and clarity by suggesting we must also consider how surplus of vision factors into this relationship. He further suggests that it gives us a way to define good style, in that the most effective style is that which has the most surplus of vision. In using this Bakhtinian lens, Greer speaks to the importance of stylistic awareness, not just stylistic savvy. This concept is illustrated through an analysis of a paragraph of a student essay in David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University." Like Cicero, Greer's emphasis on knowledge of the possible options as well as the implementations (like all writers, even if unconsciously) points again toward how style is key to the rhetorical act.

While the other authors in this section relate style to another concept to define it (style as deception, figures, imitation, and vision, respectively), Keith Rhodes find value in style as style. His "Styling: Making Style Practically Cool and Theoretically Hip" draws from linguistic frame theory and argues that we must abandon the current "stodgy" frame for style and invent a new way to frame it, one that is more accepted in our discipline and relevant for students. Rhodes argues for a progressive pedagogy of style that values stylistic variety and is informed by art, philosophy, and technology. The perception of style, then, can be said to determine its control and use, and vice versa.

In "Jim Corder's Reflective Ethos as Alternative to Traditional Argument, or Style's Revivification of the Writer-Reader Relationship," Rosanne Carlo explores how style and ethos are connected, referencing T. R. Johnson's work on style and audience pleasure. She then analyzes Jim Corder's "Notes on a Rhetoric of Regret" to demonstrate how he simultaneously argues for a particular stylistic theory, that of "enfolding," and enacts that theory to establish ethos as he composes. Carlo suggests that it is Corder's personal, performative style that draws an audience into participation with the text, and that this is what should be the desired effect of stylistic prose. While Carlo makes this point, she enacts, as Corder does, the very style she encourages readers to consider. This performative aspect to style, connected to ethos, is particularly important as it examines not just stylistic effect, but how stylistic effect is accomplished.

Chris Holcomb and M. Jimmie Killingsworth, like Carlo, offer a performative approach to style pedagogy in "Teaching Style as Cultural Performance." They encourage us to reconsider the dichotomy in how style is typically defined (broadly as a way of knowing, or narrowly as an author's choices at the text level) and see these two definitions as interrelated. To elucidate the relationship between these definitions of style, they offer two frameworks for the teaching of style that are based on the interaction between verbal forms and culture. One framework uses what the authors define as the "arenas" of interaction (the textual, social, and cultural) to move students from the textual features of style to its cultural implications, while the other reverses this sequence and

begins with style in its cultural context, a realm that is arguably more familiar to students. The chapter outlines in detail, and builds upon, their methodologies for style as performance. We place this essay with that of Carlo's to reflect the growing perception of style as performance, though they have added an important cultural aspect to style.

In "*Inventio* and *elocutio*: Language Instruction at St. Paul's Grammar School and Today's Stylistic Classroom," Tom Pace establishes the curriculum at St. Paul's grammar school in London as a historical precedence to the centrality of style to rhetorical education. Pace situates his argument within recent style scholarship that has highlighted style's inventive potential and public function. This brief overview lays the groundwork for his more thorough historical discussion of the relationship between style and invention in the Renaissance grammar schools. Finally, Pace outlines a first-year composition course he teaches that draws on the historical stylistic pedagogies he presents, by using Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say* as a modern-day equivalent. Pace demonstrates the universality of a style-centric model of composition by borrowing techniques from this historical text as well as Graff and Birkenstein's imitative exercises.

Lastly, Mike Duncan's "The Research Paper As Stylistic Exercise" continues the exploration of the value of past stylistic emphasis. Duncan describes three versions of the genesis of the research paper assignment, and teases apart the assumption that the research paper is both content-driven in form and purpose, placing it firmly within style as a generic stylistic exercise that enables mastery of other, yet-to-be-encountered genres. Furthermore, this piece provides a transition to the discussion of academic style by Nora Bacon that opens Part Two of this collection.