MAKING STYLE PRACTICALLY COOL AND THEORETICALLY HIP

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Style still has an image problem in composition, despite substantively strong restoration efforts like those of Paul Butler, T. R. Johnson, and Tom Pace. Certainly, scholarly interest in style has been expanding, but this expansion has had limited range. While composing this chapter, I reviewed the last four years' worth of articles in *College Composition and Communication*, finding only two regular articles directly engaged with style: Ian Barnard's "The Ruse of Clarity," and Steve Lamos' "Language, Literacy, and the Institutional Dynamics of Racism: Late 1960's Writing Instruction for 'High-Risk' African-American Undergraduate Students at One Predominantly White University." Lamos, in an argument few style advocates would dispute, demonstrates the racist effects of "emphasis on the supposed superiority of white mainstream language practices" (2008, p. 49). Certainly, any responsible approach to style will need to consider such effects and account for them. Barnard's article more directly presents the problem facing style scholarship. Barnard positions Williams, Lanham, and other advocates of "clarity" as simply old-fashioned types left behind by the postmodern, social turn. Rather than turn his advocacy for more complex writing into a vision of what "style" might be in that light, he simply claims victory for the right to defy clarity advocates, then leaves the field. Apparently, advocates of "style," reduced to being advocates of clarity, become simply stodgy enemies to be vanquished and left to our nostalgic reveries. That popular view, however, is a severe mischaracterization. Effective work on style connects with invigorating classroom practice, and theoretical work on style directly engages contemporary and progressive work on matters such as cultural boundaries and multimodal composing, as this article will demonstrate.

Nevertheless, style advocates bear the onus of changing these common misperceptions by clarifying the nature of our progressivism and making style hip and cool once more. I use "hip and cool" playfully here and throughout this article, but being hip and cool is a serious matter, and increasingly so. As Richard Lanham argues, we have entered an age of information overload, so that the ability to draw attention to a message in the first place becomes a much larger part of designing effective messages. Whether we understand

the shaping of opinion as "rhetoric," or as a matter of framing (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill), or even of marketing and "branding" (Rhodes), there will be no broad revival of interest in style scholarship unless style scholars and teachers can make style practically "cool" as classroom work and theoretically "hip" as a scholarly subject. If we are to fulfill the prospects of style as the core of composition, style advocates need to recognize that style scholarship, despite capable intellectual efforts in recent years, has remained something like a stale brand or passé fashion, a message that too many potential audiences think they know fully and no longer need to hear—even when they do. Style needs re-framing, rebranding, and more eye appeal—in short, to become hip and cool among composition and rhetoric scholars once more. Without sharp focus on the hipness and the cool of style, whatever it is that style advocates have to offer will not gather the level of attention that increasingly becomes the key to the rhetorical effect of any message—even scholarly publication.

Thus, I first want to focus attention on what is fresh, new, and exciting about contemporary style scholarship. It can be tempting simply to wrangle with critics like Barnard, to unpeel their reliance on the ironic hegemony of postmodernism as a silent "foundation" for their views, to examine their failure to point out what exactly is *wrong* with clarity of expression, when it can be achieved, to interrogate their unwillingness to engage carefully Joseph Williams' thoughtful arguments on the ethics of clarity in the final chapter of *Style*. More productive, however, would be to generate a new frame for style by harking back to the original senses of the word—the interestingly complex concept, beautifully explained in Lawler's article-length definition of the term (an etymological *tour de force*), of an impression that we intentionally hold out to the world to enhance our image (2003, p. 233-34). Or, in short, we need to think of style in composition in ways more like what "style" means in other contexts—the very art of the cool and the hip. Style scholars badly need to give "style" some *style*—or, as Victor Villanueva put it in his review essay on recent scholarly books on style, some "*stylin*" (2011, p. 727).

In the end, that effort might be surprisingly easy, and not merely because the groundswell has already started—or, as Villanueva notes (citing Butler), re-started, given style's hidden importance during the recent heyday of "invention" scholarship (2011, p. 736). We simply need to tap into the style that "style" still has and has always had as classroom work with students who are eager for it. My regular teaching rotation Grand Valley State University's writing major often includes a course titled "Writing with Style." Invariably, most students, innocent of our scholarly wrangling and new to the "brand," enter the class hoping that we will be wearing berets, smoking dark oval cigarettes, and writing vivid, daring prose. And indeed, at least part of the agenda for the course—a

foundational course for our writing major, taken by students on both creative and professional tracks—is writing vivid, daring prose. As Crystal Fodrey explains, the rise of creative non-fiction as a form of "creative," journalistic, and academic writing brings issues of style into particular focus (this volume). More than ever, style is not, to its practitioners, a simple matter of sitting up straight and behaving well. Style-focused practices like imitation are not, to most style advocates, slavish copying, or even earnest emulation. Indeed, at its best, imitation is ironic, playful, even carnivalesque, as in Gregory Roper's imitation-based textbook (2007), a paradoxically postmodern take on classical imitation. As our students—particularly our writing majors—know, style is inherently cool. As a cool craft, it has its own instruments, like the variations in tone arising from variations in "psychic distance" between the writer and the topic (Ellis, this volume)—that is, changes in how much I am feeling the heft and texture of my own words, right now, while I write about language (to show a couple of variations on that distance). Style advocates should not have great trouble getting that message about the freshness of style out to our several audiences—even fellow scholars. In the first part of my argument, I will examine our prospects for doing that. Then I will return to how work on style with our students amply demonstrates that a progressive theoretical hipness is style's real stock in trade.

In sum, "style" needs a fresh style. Writing scholars have learned a great deal in recent years about the role of linguistic "frames" and other non-rational influences on decision-making. Such frames pre-dispose audiences to decide in certain ways rather than others. Led by prominent figures like Linda Adler-Kassner (*The Activist WPA*) and her co-author Peggy O'Neil (*Reframing Writing Assessment*), writing scholars have urged us to use the concept of frames in efforts to argue for better methods of both writing instruction and writing program administration. Of course, for even longer, writing scholars have used postmodern thought to urge that we must make the "social turn" in scholarship, acknowledging that discourse communities frame and shape our judgments about writing, language, and reality itself. We can usefully summarize much of this advice as asking us to take fashion sense seriously—to consider the hip and the cool as having weight and substance, and to consider the tactic of being a fashion leader as a part of any effort to encourage changes in practice. While few have come right out and argued for an end to rationality in writing scholarship (and fewer still have acted consistently with any such implicit faith), we must certainly grant that any argument for a significant change in view must attend to its own frame and set what is in essence a new fashion trend. Advocates of style would do well to attend to the larger issue of framing—to examine the current "stodgy" frame for style, avoid reinforcing that frame, and look for

ways to reframe the discussion of style. Style advocates should invest deeply in seeing style as a progressive force in writing pedagogy, writing scholarship, and ultimately, as Paul Butler has explained so fully and well (2008, pp. 114-41), writing pedagogy's public image. I will open this section by tracking the style trends that have created our current, largely regressive, frame for discussing style. Then, I will address the kinds of new, progressive work that style advocates can use to refresh that frame and make style work stylish again.

THE OLD FRAME: STYLE GOES DOWN WITH GRAMMAR

Particularly from the viewpoint of style, we can rehearse the familiar narrative of writing education in short strokes. As Berlin usefully summarizes, the study of literature and the teaching of writing emerged in rough synchrony in the late nineteenth century, part of an impulse to teach a new wave of lower-class students the ways of the upper classes. Upper-class readers mainly noticed the grammatical error in the writing of these new students. Thus, in the spirit of the Industrial Revolution, then in full swing, colleges set about industriously to call out those errors in written "themes" and correct them. The new class of literature scholars, whose expertise included close reading of language, became the natural leaders of those efforts. But quickly the sheer volume and repetitiveness of the work generated an intermediary class of labor to do the actual work, managed by the most accomplished (or simply most advantaged) of the literature scholars (Berlin, 1987, pp. 20-57).

As we now know, the entire idea was mostly a construct of its times. Studies questioning the effectiveness of the approach appeared almost immediately and have persisted ever since (Daniels), culminating in Hillocks' pithy chart graphically showing grammar as the least effective of "treatments" for teaching writing (1995, p. 220). Even so, pockets of resistance and better ideas rose and faded like niche species in evolutionary charts. For decades, no other approaches seemed to have any power against the larger narrative that the "right" way to teach writing was to teach grammar and mark up all the errors. While it nominally focused mostly on the "style" of student writing, it converted concern for effective style almost entirely into concern for grammatical editing. In hindsight, the whole plan seems quite preposterous; faculty trained to apply interdisciplinary vision to the most challenging and exalted texts were then somehow supposed to improve the writing of every new first-year student, using the never-tested, never-proven method of grammatical study and critique. Of course, those who needed this treatment least were most likely to thrive in those circumstances, and so they became those who applied the treatment to the next

round of students. This grammar-based model survived for a very long time on a combination of wishful thinking, neglect, and cheap labor; nevertheless, it never had any genuine pedagogical foundation, and it could not withstand close study.

Supposedly, a new paradigm started as far back as the early 1960s and transformed collegiate writing education. In short strokes, writing scholars finally got the news about grammar's failure, learned the benefits of writing processes, made the rhetorical turn and the social turn, professionalized writing program administration and writing teacher preparation, and grew a substantial new field of composition and rhetoric. That whole movement purported, at least, to leave "grammar" behind. While all along there has been criticism of the research opposed to teaching grammar, there has not been positive research in its favor. Furthermore, the most effective model of teaching writing requires no grammar study (Hillocks, 1995, pp. 54-57). In the new paradigm, sentences mostly take care of themselves while teachers focus on developing the rhetorical and scholarly abilities that produce the most highly valued writing.

Supposedly. In truth, a review of almost any public evidence about writing teaching shows that the grammarian paradigm has never died. Handbooks replete with correction codes have massive markets. Every composition administrator of any experience has observed that grammatical correction remains a large portion of teacher response to student writing, even in the most "enlightened" program. Anyone who spends any time, as I do, considering and ruling on transfer equivalencies knows that vast numbers of colleges have preliminary "grammar" courses for the least prepared students—despite a complete lack of evidence that these courses do more good than harm for those who take them.

This entire scuffle has had the marked effect of diminishing the role of style in talk about writing. What grammarians practiced had little if any focus on the rhetorical appeal of language, and opponents of teaching grammar tended, to paraphrase Robert Connors, to erase the sentence as a visible area of any focus. Certainly, most teachers of all kind nevertheless attended to style all along, but in mostly invisible or misunderstood ways. As a result, very little writing scholarship addresses style issues any more, and much of that which does mainly laments that we even have such concerns. Thus far, the scholarship urging the revival of style has had little impact on the larger conversation.

Despite the grim story of grammar, there has been an alternative story about style. Nobody seriously contests the stylistic advantages of sentence combining, imitation and Francis Christensen's generative sentence rhetoric, at least not since Connors' "Erasure of the Sentence" re-established that such approaches remained effective in first-year composition. As Connors reported, all of these methods have backing in our theoretical and experimental scholarship.

No mainstream textbooks make much use of them, but teachers can find well-informed niche textbooks for all of them. Somewhat like bowties, such approaches to style always seem fashionably permissible, even if never truly chic. Like a good warm parka, fleece boots, or high-function rain gear, such approaches win favor by proposing methods that simply work. Even so, such results sound mundane and weak. Sentence combining, imitation, and adding trailing modifiers will help students win higher evaluations of their writing, but they sound old-fashioned, and partial—and they probably are.

Work with written style actually does much more than just work with grammar and manipulate sentence parts. Done fully, work with style challenges boundaries of grammatical convention, genre expectation, standard usage, effective expression, aesthetic form, and the ethics of expression, all at once. As Butler has explained, style has always also been part of advanced work with invention. As my students eagerly anticipate upon entering the class entitled "Writing with Style," nothing could be cooler than style, for a writer. We already know how to start this work. Mainly, what we need is a plan, one that reframes style as a part of the progressive work of composition.

THE NEW FRAME: MAKING COOL STYLE A HOT TOPIC

Paul Butler concludes *Out of Style* with a summary plea that "compositionists redefine style in a way that is meaningful to the field and that makes the study consonant with our disciplinary vision" (2008, p. 157). I would like to expand Butler's call by pointing out three specific areas in which a rhetoric of style connects directly with very current and vital threads of composition scholarship. Loosely speaking, we can, and should, explore style through the lenses of art, philosophy, and technology, all fully informed by the social and pragmatist epistemologies to which the best-received composition scholarship currently resorts. As I will address at the end, we might also usefully connect style more visibly with the burgeoning, cutting-edge scholarship on intercultural, international, and interlingual writing. It may well be that forging this somewhat complex connection between style and culture simply requires a revival of interest in style.

No current writing scholar can step into aesthetics without recognizing that artistic impact is culturally situated, problematized by concerns about the conserving and regressive power of monologic forms of art. Yet we should also be past the naïve notion that anyone can escape the ways in which art exerts influence. The aesthetic appeal of written style remains pervasively influential. In some ways, the obviousness of this point hides it. Kate Ronald bravely

addresses this dark secret openly in "Style: The Hidden Agenda in Composition Classes or One Reader's Confession." When she gets to the heart of that personal confession, she admits to student readers, on behalf of all writing teachers, that "we are still influenced by your writing style more than we admit, or perhaps know" (2003, p. 197)—and that ""I worry that I'm responding to something in my students' writing that I'm not telling them about—their style, the sound of their voices on paper" (2003, p. 197). Indeed, as Derek Soles demonstrates, writing teachers do in fact respond to particular kinds of style in first-year composition classes, in ways that we can explain in familiar and concrete terms—no matter what we might think about the ultimate wisdom of those largely unexamined results, or their likely perpetuation of social norms we might also wish to challenge. As Nora Bacon explains, the path to a genuine response, even from a writing teacher, is not "plain" style, in itself "a disappointingly anemic conception"; instead, it is the ability "to arrange words artfully, striving for beauty, wit, grace, eloquence" (2010, p. 123).

Certainly, we will find it difficult and contentious to examine which particular aesthetic aspects of written style we might emphasize in the writing of our students—or work to de-emphasize in our own evaluations. Yet prominent composition scholars have been doing similar work in closely related areas that are not as fully within the range of our direct expertise. For instance, writing scholars and teachers have heard many calls for working with visual imagery (see, e.g., Fleckenstein). As such authors stress, writing scholars need to expand our horizons to include nonlinear and affective thinking—particularly, as Fleckenstein demonstrates, if we mean to help our students take genuine social action. It should make perfect sense, then, also to work with the nonlinear and affective aspects of written style. If composition scholars can be held to the challenge of addressing visual rhetoric, we can certainly be expected to address the similarly aesthetic rhetoric of style in language, and to generate work as smart as Fleckenstein's to theorize and implement our approaches. That kind of work with language is our more natural expertise, an expertise we already have by preparation, inclination, and feel. As Butler points out, the generative work of composition scholarship in the 60s and 70s was actually intrinsically involved with this rhetoric of style, a matter misrepresented in much of the re-telling of that history within the "epistemic" narrative—as if treatments of style in those days were all about either "Romantic" voice or "current-traditional" correctness (2008, pp. 56-85). Style and invention can instead work together as the work Berthoff joins together as "forming," an act of intelligent imagination (1981, pp. 61-67). Composition scholars have already developed a thorough background in culturally informed approaches to issues of aesthetic rhetoric. Against this entire background, the dearth of intelligent, current developments in "stylistic

rhetoric," the art of shaping language for effect, seem almost appallingly negligent—or at best, just downright odd. Style advocates can re-frame style as part of a fully problematized *art* of writing, addressing in particular ways the complex aesthetics of style.

In addition to the art of style, style scholarship should address the philosophy of style. I am using the word "philosophy" here to grab hold of a large and furiously active body of concerns that we might call epistemology, theory, literary criticism, cultural study, or any of the words scholars use to attempt to find some ground for metanarrative—here, metanarrative about language itself. This kind of thought that I call philosophy has been, for at least two decades now, the most compelling area of exploration in current composition scholarship. To ally style with philosophy, then, would be a powerful move toward making work with style compelling. Further, the trick is easily done. The choice of language and its forms is always entirely bound up in philosophy and never comes free of it. As Rebecca Moore Howard articulates in promoting a socially aware "contextualist pedagogy" of style, "style can become a tool for defining, analyzing, and problematizing cultural forces" and "become a way for students to understand their own stylistic choices and options" in their "sociocultural contexts" (2005, p. 55). Everything that I have lumped into "philosophy," encompassing all the most fashionable authorities used in rhetoric and composition scholarship, can legitimately be brought to bear on the careful and precise turns of style.

Perhaps nobody illustrates the philosophical possibilities of style better than critical linguist Rob Pope, whose extraordinary textbook *Textual Intervention* invites students to explore the cultural meanings of small changes, or "interventions," in the style of texts. For example, in one exercise, students reconstruct the opening of a chapter in *Robinson Crusoe* that begins with the title, "I call him Friday." The introduction to the exercise asks students to think about "who is represented as saying, seeing, and perceiving" (1995, p. 101). Pope invites a wide variety of changes in perspective, each closely tied to specific changes in language—such as the indications of power roles in the simple use of "I" in the title sentence "I call him Friday," or the use of the name for a day of the week as the name for the "othered" human being. As Pope's work displays, it should really be a commonplace that the philosophy of a text is entirely bound up in the details of its style, and that those details are themselves philosophically interesting. To do such work is to work with what Russell Greer more fully explains elsewhere in this collection as the "architectonics" of style. Too often, despite knowing better, composition scholars instead unthinkingly recreate the philosophically defunct metaphor of style as fancy dress put on meaning, escaping talk about full architectonic style to focus on the "larger" political or

philosophical issues to which style becomes connected—discussing students' "right to their own language" rather than engaging deeply with the actual details of that language, how it works and what it does. As Frank Farmer notes, writing about Mikhail Bakhtin's own pedagogy, ambitious teachers might instead wish to explore how students gain a sense of "when and why … one stylistic choice is preferable to another," and ask, "How can they understand the circumstances, or contexts, that dictate the fitness of one substitution over any other?" (2005, p. 340). At bottom, a fully philosophic approach to style pedagogy would be remarkably hip in our current theoretical contexts.

Then, of course, there is technology. Richard Lanham's *The Economics of {Attention}* begins its remarkable exploration of our still-emerging information age with an interesting cascade of points that respond to his seemingly simple question about what changes when communication moves from the page to the screen. Lanham argues most centrally that, with information overly abundant, attention to information becomes the scarce commodity, the real currency of the emerging economic paradigm of the information age (2006, p. xi). In simpler terms, it's all about the eyeballs. Lanham notes the primacy of style in this economics of attention: "The devices that regulate attention are stylistic devices. Attracting attention is what style is all about" (2006, p. xi). That is, those who best understand the rhetoric of style in emerging media will construct our increasingly virtual worlds—and control their material roots. Like many academics, Lanham wrestles with the downright sophistic implications of such powerful knowledge. What is entirely clear, however, is that rhetoric and style will have extraordinary roles in what comes next.

While one could argue that much of the emerging rhetoric will be visual, language is always completely bound up in any form of meaning-making. Those who understand the idea of manipulating language to create changes in attention will have a strong role to play in the emerging economy of attention—as perhaps illustrated by the fact that a leading thinker about this complex economics of attention happens to be a leading stylist who has chosen to write an engaging, but extended, print book (albeit with digital ancillaries). Style is the part of rhetoric where we think about why someone should attend at all to what we have written. As the world becomes increasingly awash in competing messages, it becomes clearer that whether someone will read what we write—will spend attention on our words—becomes increasingly important relative to whatever else might be better or worse about the message. In an age of information overload, a message without style is not just a bad message; it is no message. A scholarship of progressive style can explain how to drive eyeballs to words themselves, a critical matter in this emerging economics of attention.

MAKING STYLE COOL FOR SCHOOL

In the writing department at Grand Valley, "Writing with Style" has become arguably our most central course, bringing together professors with backgrounds in academic, creative, and professional writing. I must note first that my understanding relies mostly on work done by my colleagues Roger Gilles, Chris Haven, and Kay Losey, as well as discussions with many other members of our Department of Writing, though of course I have had the chance to hone my impressions with my own teaching of the course. "Writing with Style" is the one course in our curriculum taught by professors from all backgrounds; it is the most central course for our majors and minors, the one that serves best as an introduction to the field of writing as a whole. Teaching the class requires all of us to stretch, to think about style in ways that will at the same time help students to write a poem, a memo, a hyperlinked menu, even a scholarly argument—and more pointedly, to write the unfolding kinds of writing we can as yet barely imagine. While that course clearly goes beyond the normal concerns of composition and rhetoric, it helps us examine several key points about the role of style in writing education. I must avoid trying to claim too much based on our experience, since much of what we are learning is still emergent and raw, consisting largely of our intuitive answers to the problem posed by claiming to teach such a course. Yet it seems very clear that our experiences point us in the direction of style as a progressive and emerging part of writing education, rather than a regressive and merely historical one. Indeed, what is most fascinating about the course is the way in which it seems to be opening up new pedagogical territory.

As to the aesthetics of style, we have found that attention to style from the viewpoint of writing differs subtly but importantly from the kind of analysis that students do in traditional literature courses. In the words of the title of one of the core textbooks for the course, we find ourselves attending to "the sound on the page" (Yagoda, 2004), the ways in which turns of language—and the invention of contexts for that language—evoke the senses in support of aesthetic and rhetorical appeals. We also become quite fascinated by both the craft of small passages and the ways in which authors situate certain structures in larger bodies of work. As a result, we have decided to create more detailed and advanced versions of this foundational style course, focusing in greater depth on particular authors' work at both the "micro" level of passages and the "macro" level of establishing contexts for the reading of their work. While we do introduce various schematics for analysis—for instance, Williams' concepts of character, action, and modification, or the classical rhetorical figures—we find ourselves increasingly drawn to a more direct sensory description, of a kind

closer to the work of art studios than literature or linguistics classes. We pore over sample passages from a wide variety of sources, try our hands at imitating the most intriguing of them, and break out by inventing our own, entirely new styles based on experimental premises and guesswork. Especially in imitation work, students regularly find themselves intuitively drawn to visual aspects of the page, a critical move that at first caught me by surprise but that I have since learned to feature prominently. The analysis of style in purely lexical terms simply doesn't cut it, doesn't get down to what makes style passionately compelling for writers or effective for readers. Even Yagoda's title does not go far enough; not just sound, but all the senses and the visceral experience of reading have a role to play in establishing the context in which readers respond to style. A writer who focuses only on turns of phrase and fails to consider all the rest considers too little of the craft.

Turning to the philosophy of style, we find ourselves directly involved in practical work with prominent theoretical contentions. Students come to us with a fascinating and diverse mix of hopes and fears. Some hope to develop something they unproblematically call "their own" style, and come prepared to fear and loathe anything that would seem to be culturally conforming. Others hope to find exactly the right formula by which to meet cultural expectations, and fear anything that smacks of interpretive uncertainty. Many seek to become stylistic chameleons, able to adapt to any writing ecosystem. But as we explore a wide variety of schemes and examples of style, students increasingly notice that this tension between the personal and the cultural has no tidy resolution. Authors whose styles had seemed Romantically individualized appear also to have been shaped by history and circumstances; formulaic visions of genre and usage turn out to depend very heavily on particular, even unique circumstances (does *your* boss think you can split infinitives?). We routinely find students duplicating the insights of critical theory before having read it. To become seriously immersed in style is to become acutely aware that language is most essentially interpretive, a never-ending negotiation between vast cultural constructs on the one hand and, on the other, the particular and often unsettling viewpoint of a writer with one unique cultural and linguistic location. "Writing with Style" becomes essentially our most central course in rhetorical theory—not mainly because we "teach" it, but because we end up living in it.

The impacts of technology get shorter shrift in our particular class because we know our majors and minors will learn a great deal more about that in other classes on document design, writing for the web, and composing for multimedia. Yet we routinely teach the class with half or even two-thirds of the sessions taking place in computer lab classrooms, and our aesthetics and philosophies of style come to be entirely infused with our awareness that much

of the writing our students will do next will need to integrate visual design and information theory. To a very large extent, the strong interest some students take in a vivid, unique style has little to do with Romantic notions of voice and very much to do with the intensifying competition for attention that marks online communication. Web sites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts gain status by attracting eyeballs, and the dull and mundane will not cut it. Current media demand concise, vivid prose in ways little has before. As Folk explains more fully, they also demand a "writing" ability that crosses symbolic and visual boundaries, a truly multimodal sense of style (this volume). A very thorough command of style, both as technique and concept, has enormous value in working with new media, in adjusting to their new blends of constraint and opportunity. Our course in style undoubtedly commands more cultural capital than we have yet considered using, opening up onto the full practice of "cultural performance" advocated and explained by Holcomb and Killingsworth. I find myself wondering whether my own aesthetics and philosophy of style would let me advertise the course ethically as the best preparation for writing effective tweets, but it probably is. Ultimately, thinking about technology is what brings thinking about aesthetics down to earth, making the sound and vision on the page a compelling topic for our most committed of professional and technical writers.

Certainly, "Writing with Style" goes beyond what we do currently in our own first-year composition program. Yet as we move forward with the more advanced course, I find myself increasingly moving the simpler parts of what I do there into my composition courses. If, as it seems to me, "Writing with Style" is something of a laboratory for enhanced work in writing, then it might well be that style can center an approach to composition that leaves behind nothing else of importance in a composition class. After all, style invokes rhetoric, culture, politics, philosophy, and technology, not to mention offering a way to consider conventions that is anything but merely mechanical.

I will raise one more such issue somewhat by way of an epilogue. Of course, the richest and most productive work on style in composition should take place in the context of what a reviewer of this article aptly expressed as "cross-cultural and cross-national concerns that surface in the contemporary classroom, particularly among ESL writers." It could not be more clear that in such discussions were are responding to what is, most fundamentally and practically, a question of style. For people concerned with writing, the rubber hits the road on intercultural matters when the style of a student's writing does not fit the expectations of readers. But that transaction also is never simply about style; scholars in the field of writing rightly address the entire context of that transaction in our scholarship. In what I see as work closely related to the

teaching of style, I have begun examining whether the most productive literacy work in the area of intercultural rhetoric might not be educating readers to take on more of the work of intercultural translation, to see such translation as a normal part of any communicative process, and not merely a "problem" for the writer. That is, I see it as consistent with the discussion so far to suggest that in matters of intercultural writing, the relationship between current scholarship and style is reversed. Rather than win favor for connecting style with other scholarship for the benefit of style, as I attempt here, in intercultural rhetoric the argument must be instead to connect this other scholarship with style for the benefit of that scholarship. There is likely to be little advantage in working from the perspective of style and opening up within it a full consideration of intercultural rhetoric. The connections and interactions are simply too complex and expansive to fit under the heading of "style" itself. Rather, the vast amount of current scholarship on intercultural rhetoric would be greatly improved if its scholars had the vision to include matters of style and the teaching of style as a normal, nearly inescapable part of their own inquiry. That they typically do not I see as mainly a consequence of style's undue exclusion from the rest of our scholarly discussions. I do see that resulting deficit as a highly regrettable result, but not one much in need of complicated critique. The absence of practical approaches to teaching style in such scholarship is remarkable, but I would hope that it is a problem easily remedied simply by encouraging writing scholars generally to be thinking, more often and more prominently, about the problems of teaching style as a general topic. The connections between intercultural rhetoric and style should naturally grow much vaster if more of us, more often, think to ask, "Now, how will I teach students how to approach style in light of this problem?" Ultimately, I see this very promising, very underdeveloped area of complex research as a place where a greatly expanded study of style would converge productively with ongoing research. But that would be metaphorically a kind of running that we may well do better once they study of style itself is up and walking.

CONCLUSION

In the end, informed composition scholars teachers need to drive a simple but profound change toward framing style as progressive. Doing so will pay multiple and profound benefits, and it makes substantive sense. Those who overstress traditional concerns like "clarity"—both approvingly and disapprovingly—grossly underestimate the full concerns of style scholarship and pedagogy. Style, we need to urge, does indeed have vitality—in fact, potentially far more

than any other concern in writing. Such changes in the frame for thinking about style could well have explosive potential, and style advocates should have faith that changes in the conditions in which writing is taught and studied increasingly support such a change in the best ways. A discipline of writing should not mainly look backward at what writers have done; it should look forward, toward what writers might do. At every moment of actually doing the work of writing, of going forward with both the text and the underlying ability, a writer applies concepts of style. As a discipline, we should want to offer the best advice we can about approaching that aspect of the work. Style, after all, like coolness and hipness, is always about the next big thing—not the last one.

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