TOWARD A RHETORIC OF SYNTACTIC DELIVERY

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In this dissertation, I claim the sentence is a form of rhetorical delivery. Building on scholarship expanding delivery beyond voice and gesture—redefining it as (among other terms) medium, circulation, presentation, distribution, and rhetorical velocity—I work toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery, one that depends upon Performance, Display, and Location. With a chapter devoted to each, these three terms allow me to interrogate the work of the sentence, to think through the performativity of prose, to claim that the sentence moves on the page and that those moves constitute a rhetorical delivery that brings discourse to its readers.

This project intervenes in two bodies of scholarship. To work in stylistics calling Composition back to the sentence, I offer a sentence re-theorized in light of its rhetorical delivery, a sentence necessarily bound up in the social, the political, and the rhetorical by way of how its grammar holds ideas in relation one to another. To current scholarship in delivery, I offer the sentence as a mediated and embodied technology delivering discourse. This is a performative sentence, one that asks teachers and students to read and write the sentence differently, looking not to error or argumentation as benchmarks of good writing but instead toward the performative drama unfolding as the sentence moves across the page. But, given that the sentence is the foundation of both a writer's work and a writer's education, this dissertation

reaches beyond Composition to anywhere the teaching of writing takes place, the methods of engaging the sentence I demonstrate here applicable in a variety of rhetorical and pedagogical settings.

A note on method: I rely solely on student writing for my corpus of sentences. I do so because most books on the sentence look to the prose of famous writers (Presidents, Martin Luther King, Jr., Didion, Wolfe, Updike, and the like), and student sentences, if they do appear at all, serve as examples of error. The argument is subtle but clear: students cannot write good sentences. I disagree, and this project teaches other ways we might read student work.

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PREFACE

I came to this project through the 2010 film *The King's Speech*, a movie about Prince Albert, the Duke of York, a man who stuttered and a man who would be forced to wear the crown following the death of his father and the subsequent abdication of the throne by his brother, Edward VIII. The film focuses on the relationship between the Prince (who later assumes the title King George VI) and his speech therapist, Lionel Logue. In the film's culminating scene in Buckingham Palace, King George delivers an historic radio address declaring war with Nazi Germany. Logue stands facing the King in the broadcast booth, the two sequestered from Palace staff. Logue is in black tie. The camera lingers over the King's speech; it is heavily marked with slashes and accents to guide his delivery. As he speaks, the King pauses between phrases, gathering himself, while Logue, holding a copy of the speech in one hand, gestures with the other as if conducting a symphony. The scene cuts regularly to the British people listening on the battlefield, at the gates of the Palace, in their work places, in the halls and drawing rooms and cramped quarters of their homes. Churchill, Edward VIII, and the Queen listen intently, the King calling his country to steadfastness during the looming war. The King delivers the speech fluently and calmly, the scene a demonstration of all Logue has taught him.

After the speech, as the King puts on his coat and he and Logue pack up, Logue quips, "You still stuttered on the *w*." The King responds, "Had to throw in a few, so they knew it was me." Logue smiles. They exit the broadcast booth, Logue following behind the King, the Palace

staff standing in the halls, applauding. The King sits before a desk, shuffles some papers and pretends to read them, and a photographer snaps a picture for the daily. Exhausted, the King sighs, and to Logue's congratulations on his first wartime speech, responds: "I suspect I should have to do a great deal more."

I am interested in how *The King's Speech* highlights the rhetoricity of stuttering and the rhetoricity of speech therapy. Because disability evokes pity and sympathy (as in the case of Tiny Tim Cratchit) or distrust (as in the case of disabled villains Captain Hook, Darth Vader, and the One-Armed Man), the King's stuttering calls into question his ethos. Consequently, it calls into question his ability to rally and lead a country through war.   His stuttering is, then, an issue of rhetorical practice. Because *The King's Speech* focuses on the political and social contexts and exigencies of the King's stuttering, it resists framing itself solely as a triumph narrative wherein the dignity of an individual lies in the ability to overcome disability. Martha Rose argues such triumph narratives have far-reaching negative consequences because they frame disability as a matter of "personal misfortune rather than a political situation" (65). While there certainly is a triumph in the film, the King's statement that he will have to do many more of these wartime speeches foreshadows that his stuttering is not so easily contained and that he will contend with it regularly in the years to come.

The King's Speech is a film about rhetorical practice, about ethos, about delivery, and this is made apparent in the many pedagogical moments in the movie. Though they have a therapist-patient relationship, Logue takes on the role of teacher and the King becomes his student. Logue has a reputation for unorthodox methods; their first session together has the King reading Shakespeare aloud while classical music blares. Some 35 minutes into the movie, more of his methods are revealed: Logue has the King sing, breath deeply with the Queen sitting on his

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chest, sway forward and back while speaking, perform facial exercises to loosen the jowls and tongue, hold a single sound while yelling out a window 15 seconds. It's a teaching montage of sorts, Logue and the King meeting every day to practice speech. This is not a pedagogy of memorization, of lecture; this is not the "banking method." Rather, it is a pedagogy predicated upon play and experimentation. It is a pedagogy of production—the production of sounds, the production of bodily movement. So too, it is a pedagogy of invitation, Logue's methods asking his student to work within a linguistic and physical and rhetorical space the King had previously avoided and had not been welcome to engage because of the societal, cultural, and political forces governing disability within the public sphere.

For some time, I had been trying to find a connection between my wife's work as a speech therapist and my own work in Composition. *The King's Speech* showed me the link. We both teach delivery. When my wife works with a teenager who stutters, a child who cannot pronounce *r*, an adult who lisps, she is teaching the canon of delivery in its most traditional sense (as was Logue), refining the use of the voice. She is, on the one hand, addressing issues of pathology—her job title is a Speech Language Pathologist—but she tells me she thinks of her job not as much in terms of that pathology but instead of evaluation. She tests her students regularly, determining how often and in what situations they make certain sounds, working with her students until they reach "mastery," pronouncing their trouble words and sounds correctly 80% of the time. She understands her job as teaching a skill, her students learning that skill and transferring it to various contexts.

I note how situational speech therapy is: her students only stutter in certain contexts, or they only mispronounce a certain sound when it appears in the middle of a word, for instance, but not when it appears at the beginning or end of a word. Speech production is contextual. The

goal is for her students to transfer the speaking skills they learn to other settings, other contexts, other sentences, other words—that is, other rhetorical situations. Though she never uses the term "delivery" in her practice, I see my wife addressing issues of rhetoric. The pathological feeds into the rhetorical, affecting how her clients speak, and how they speak affects how they are perceived by whomever they are talking with, speaking a matter of delivery and of ethos. This is the link between her work in the speech therapy room and my work in the classroom. When I teach students to write essays, I too am teaching delivery. It is a delivery quite different than what my wife teaches in speech therapy—a delivery of writing rather than speech—but we are both concerned, in one way or another, with how discourse reaches an audience. I am careful, though, in this connection between her work as a speech therapist and mine in the writing classroom; I do not want to frame the writing classroom as one of disability or deficit, using the metaphor of medicine to characterize the teaching of writing.[1] I do, however, want to think through what it might mean for a writing teacher to teach delivery.

As I was coming to this understanding of the relationship between speech therapy and the teaching of writing via delivery, I was reading Quintilian, trying to think through the implications of his claims regarding rhetoric and the *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (the good man skilled at speaking) (12.1.1). Quintilian's definition of rhetoric connects a skill at speaking—that is, delivery—with morality and rhetorical practice. The three are linked. In the introduction to *The Orator's Education*, Quintilian clarifies who his audience is:

> There is one point I must emphasize from the start: without the help of nature,
>
> precepts and techniques are powerless. This work, therefore, must not be thought

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[1] See Mike Rose, "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University," for more on how medical metaphors have framed writing instruction.

of as written for persons without talent, any more than treatises on agriculture are meant for barren soils. And there are other aids too, with which individuals have to be born: voice, strong lungs, good health, stamina, good looks. (1.prooemium.26-27).

These are the very physical traits my wife's speech therapy students lack. Hardly any have a strong voice, strong lungs, or good health, many are weak and have no stamina, and few possess "good looks" by societal standards of beauty. Quintilian concedes that some of these physical traits "can be further developed by methodical training"—as in the case of Demosthenes—but then he doubles down on his initial claim: "but sometimes they are so completely lacking as to destroy any advantages of talent and study" (1.prooemium.27).

These assertions are troubling not only for their frankness, but also for how they restrict rhetorical training and practice to the able-bodied. Thinking now about *The King's Speech*, speech therapy, the writing classroom, delivery, and Quintilian's claims regarding the able body and rhetorical practice, in 2012 I published my first study of delivery, "Revealing Rather Than Concealing Disability: The Rhetoric of Parkinson's Advocate Michael J. Fox." The article is an effort to push back against Quintilian's claims concerning disability and rhetorical practice. Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1991, and he kept it secret for seven years. He did this by timing his public appearances to compliment his medication schedule and later undergoing a thalamotomy, a process that destroys part of the thalamus in the brain in an effort to reduce tremors. Pressured by tabloids, Fox came out in 1998 to *People*: "It's not that I had a deep, dark secret … It was just my thing to deal with. But this box I had put everything into kind of expanded to a point where it's difficult to lug around. What's inside the box isn't inhibiting me. It's the box itself. I think I can help people by talking" (Schneider n. pag.).

Soon after the exclusive article in *People*, Fox began advocating for Parkinson's research funds. His first act of public advocacy was an address given to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education in September 1999 seeking increased funding for Parkinson's research. That speech marks not only Fox's first advocacy, but also the first time Fox appeared in public without having taken his medications. Of the speech, Fox writes in his memoir, "It seemed to me that this occasion demanded that my testimony about the effects of the disease, and the urgency we as a community were feeling, be *seen* as well as heard" (247 qtd. in Moe "Revealing" 449, emphasis in original). This speech, and those that followed, elicited a firestorm of responses, including accusations of deceit and pandering. Fox's sans-medication advocacy calls attention to delivery, to how it functions at the intersection of the social, the political, and the rhetorical. As I wrote in the article, "Fox's display confounds traditional, limiting, and reductive responses to disability, establishing Fox as a rhetorical agent and asking, even demanding, that rhetoricians and audiences both within and beyond disability studies reevaluate whether the disabled body necessarily obstructs rhetorical efficacy, rethink conventional framings of disability, and reconsider the rhetoricity of the disabled body" (445).

As I look back on my article on Fox, I see that it is, first and foremost, a piece of rhetorical analysis. Though it contributes to a growing body of scholarship on delivery as well as disability studies while also speaking to classical rhetorical theory, the essay makes no gesture toward the classroom, toward the student, toward the teacher. And, as I am a teacher of writing, the Fox article leaves questions unasked and unanswered: it assumes a traditional model of delivery, that is, a speech delivered within an oral setting via the voice and gestures; what

relevance, if any, might delivery have for the teaching of writing? And how might this notion of a written delivery change the work of the writer, of the reader, of the student, and of the teacher?

This dissertation, then, makes the pedagogical turn.

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To describe the shape of this project, allow me to work through the terms of its title, beginning with Delivery. As readers will recall, classical rhetoric teaches there are five parts to rhetorical practice. First, a rhetor finds his ideas.[2] Second, he organizes them. Third, he picks a style, formal, informal, or somewhere in between. Fourth, he memorizes the speech, and fifth, he delivers it using the voice and gesture. Quintilian, Demosthenes, Cicero, and Aristotle (though he, begrudgingly) believed delivery to be the most important part of rhetorical practice. But as rhetorical instruction and practice shifted over the years from the stage to the page—that is, from the senate, the courtroom, the pulpit, and the theatre to the written word—delivery became less a concern for teachers and students. After all, why teach how to gesture or use the voice when teaching how to write? Delivery fell from its place of prominence within the classroom, largely due to defined solely by voice and gesture. In the early 1990s, delivery made a comeback, rescued by rhetorical theorists searching for a way to theorize secondary orality and new media. These theorists redefined delivery, looking to terms like circulation, distribution, presentation, and medium to describe how discourse reaches its audience. The narrative here is this: delivery disappeared but new media brought it back. Ben McCorkle refutes that narrative, claiming

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[2] I use the masculine pronoun here to reference—though not endorse—the gendered classroom classical rhetoric assumes.

delivery did not disappear with the advent of writing but rather how it operates evolved. In this project, I build upon McCorkle's work, thinking through what delivery would look like in writing.

This question of what a written delivery would look like leads to my second term: Syntactic Delivery. I suggest that syntax is where delivery occurs in writing. It is through sentence craft that the writer delivers discourse to the audience. I make this claim not only to find a way for delivery to operate within writing, but also in response to the lack of attention paid to the sentence in Composition's current literature and classrooms. Part of this project aims to deliver the sentence—that is, to recoup it—from the pedagogical leftovers of the 1980s, to show that the sentence is a vital and vibrant site of pedagogical possibility. I seek to reclaim the sentence prompted not by some literacy crisis, but rather because the sentence offers an avenue into the relationship between language and performance, between language and display, between language and ethos, between language and how a writer moves within the world.   I intervene in scholarship on both delivery and style: whereas much current work with delivery focuses on technologies, I remind the field that writing, too, is a technology, one that delivers discourse, and that sentences are the primary agent of that delivery.

Syntactic delivery necessitates a fundamental revision of how the sentence is read, written, taught, and studied, and in this sense, I am suggesting a Rhetoric of Syntactic Delivery. I use rhetoric here not in the limited sense of persuasion or argumentation alone, but rather in the more full sense of a method, a way of thinking, a way of approaching a topic, a system for generating critical thought. This is a rhetoric as a course of study, a curriculum even, a rhetoric as a way of being, a rhetoric of engaging the written word. This project works to unseat entrenched ways of reading sentences, and to do so, I resist argumentation as the sole purpose of

writing, proposing instead a rhetoric predicated upon performance, upon display, upon the ways a writer locates herself within a community.

And I am moving Toward this Rhetoric of Syntactic Delivery. My use of Toward signals (1) that this rhetoric is inchoate and (2) that this rhetoric recognizes the contingencies inherent to all rhetorical practice. That is, it is foolhardy to make any hard and fast claims about rhetoric for all rhetoric contextual, dependent upon the various exigencies governing the rhetorical situation. I am ever aware that rhetorical theory is difficult to pin down, ever aware too that rhetorical theory is always a work in process.

I work Toward a Rhetoric of Syntactic Delivery over the course of five chapters. In Chapter One, "Delivery, Style, and the Sentence," I explore the relationship between delivery and style. The rise of delivery in the early 1990s sits amid the fall of the sentence in the 1980s and its supposed return in the early 2000s, suggestive of a relationship between delivery and style. Looking to a handful of teachers whose writing suggests a tacit understanding of delivery operating within writing, I claim that syntax is a form of rhetorical delivery, albeit one yet to be recognized and theorized by the field. Following the work of recent scholarship in delivery that has set aside voice and gesture as delivery's defining terms, I propose three terms to describe the work of syntactic delivery: performance, display, and location. In the chapters that follow, I take up these key terms. I note, though, that the figures I rely on sit at the fringes of Composition. While I do cite significant names in Composition and Rhetoric, they play a small role. Because Composition is not paying attention to the sentence, I must look to the margins of the field, to teachers and writers whose work I find most provocative, teachers and writers across disciplinary lines. This project is necessarily interdisciplinary, drawing on Philosophy, Linguistics, and Literary Criticism.

In Chapter Two, "Reading and Writing Performativity," I take up Performance, using the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin, the literary criticism and reader-response theory of Stanley Fish, and a touch of Chomsky's transformational grammar to claim that the sentence performs on the page. I use this performative sentence to read Virginia Tufte's 1971 *Grammar as Style* and her 2006 *Artful Sentences*, two projects all but dismissed by Composition. I claim the performative sentence demands teachers, students, readers, and writers move away from grammar instruction predicated upon error and toward a pedagogy governed by the performative possibilities of the delivered sentence.

In Chapter Three, "Rhetorics of Display and Rhetorics of Education," I claim the sentence enacts epideictic rhetoric (rhetoric that shows forth, rhetoric that displays). Walter Jost, Jeffrey Walker, and Dale Sullivan each argue epideictic rhetoric displays the shared values of a community; I offer that the sentence enacts that same display through its syntax, students adopting what they believe to be the ways of writing the academic community values. I use this epideictic sentence to read William E. Coles's 1978 *The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing*, and I claim that the displayed sentence necessitates teachers read not to be persuaded but instead to observe how a student shows forth on the page.

In Chapter Four, "Locating a Syntactic Self," I consider how delivery shapes audience perceptions of a rhetor. As Composition redefines ethos, moving away from its associations with character and toward its etymological roots of dwelling and inhabitation (Applegarth; Christoph; Halloran; Miller; Reynolds), I look to the sentence as a locative device, a means to situate the writer within a discourse. Setting Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* against Verlyn Klinkenborg's *Several Short Sentences about*

Writing, I claim the writer inhabits the sentence, the locative sentence asking readers and writers, teachers and students to revise their understanding of ethos.

This project is a defense of the sentence, a declaration of its value for the classroom, and in Chapter Five, "Delivering the Sentence," I make this apology outright. I respond to Richard Miller's question concerning what good the literate arts offer a society besieged by violence and conflict. I suggest the sentence, through how its grammar demands that words be placed in relation to each other, offers an avenue into working toward engagement and reconciliation outside the classroom.

I rely on Performance, Display, and Location for how they challenge dominant paradigms of engaging the sentence, but so too, I rely on these terms because each lays claim to being the most important part of rhetorical practice. Consider, for example, how J. L. Austin, in seeking to differentiate between the performative and the constative, concludes that the two cannot be so easily distinguished, recognizing that the constative is performative. The performative, for Austin, becomes the bedrock of language practice (*How To* 91; *Philosophical Papers* 236-37). Or consider that Lawrence Prelli claims rhetorics of display are the "dominant rhetoric of our time" (2, 9). And consider, too, Aristotle's reluctant assertion that ethos is the most important, most effective, most authoritative of the rhetorical appeals (*Rhetoric* 1.2.4). These claims to primacy are not coincidental. Ben McCorkle argues that delivery is the most important of the rhetorical arts, because without the delivery of discourse, rhetoric could not exist (xi, 172). The same could be said about any of the canons of rhetorical practice, but if I entertain McCorkle's argument, then the claims to primacy on the parts of performativity, epideictic rhetoric, and ethos are justified. Performance, Display, and Location fall under the umbrella of delivery, and if delivery is the most important part of rhetorical practice—as Demosthenes famously said it was,

claiming it was the only faculty needed (Quintilian 11.3.6)—it follows that Performance, Display, and Location are close behind, the three operating in a interconnected manner.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

On sentences: when I refer to "the sentence," I am speaking of the written word, of a sentence composed on the page. On working with sentences: Sentences are portable. They can be easily read, rewritten, revised, imitated, and questioned, easily written on the chalkboard, easily reproduced from one text to another. And sentences are a starting point from which readers, writers, and teachers can scale up or down to consider larger or smaller units of discourse, from the word to the phrase to the clause to the paragraph to the page to the chapter to the entire work. But these characteristics of the sentence—its portability and its scalability—create problems for teaching it. They easily lead to decontextualizing the sentence. Countless sentence-appreciation websites and books present the sentence as a museum piece, plucked from its original context, arranged in a new setting. Often the only context given is the author and title of the work from which the sentence was lifted. Such a method has its merits—it allows the curator to draw attention to a particular part of the sentence and the particular move it makes—but this method is also problematic. Through decontextualizing the sentence, sentence appreciation makes the sentence a-rhetorical, such that any claim made about that decontextualized sentence risks trivializing and essentializing that sentence. So too, the museum-piece sentence presents itself as finished, the work of the writer done and now on display, the implication being that revision is out of the question at this point.

A second problem when working with sentences: which ones to consider? Stanley Fish

offers one approach to sentence selection in his 2011 *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read

One*. Fish confesses he is a "sentence watcher … always on the lookout for sentences that take

your breath away, for sentences that make you say, 'Isn't that something?' or 'What a

sentence!'" (3). He compares these sentences to the sports highlight reel: "[Y]ou know, the five

greatest dunks, or the ten greatest catches, or the fifteen greatest touchdown runbacks" (3). The

result: Fish praises a sentence like Updike's "It was in the books while it was still in the sky," a

sentence describing Ted Williams's home run in his final at-bat at Fenway Park (9-10). He gives

no mention to sentences like "The Sox won, 5-4" from the same Updike piece. The problem

with this method is that if only the homerun sentences warrant the reader's attention, the

mundane sentences that do little more than catch a routine fly ball in left field—those sentences

that do the daily, ordinary, lackluster tasks of prosaic prose—those sentences warrant little, if

any, critical attention. Reading becomes a treasure hunt for rhetorical figures of speech and

thought.[3]

These concerns govern my method for reading sentences. I offer here a way of working

with sentences that keeps them in their original context as best I can. I seek to value the work of

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[3] Fish's method for sentence selection resonates with the problem linguist Adam Kendon faces in
discerning how to define a gesture. Kendon acknowledges that he cannot study each and every
movement a person makes; there are just too many. He narrows his scope by not considering
"visible bodily expressions of thoughts or feelings that are deemed inadvertent or are regarded as
something a person cannot 'help' " (*Gesture* 8). Waving your hand is considered a gesture, but
not scratching your arm or sneezing. So too with how Fish pulls sentences from Updike. Surely
he can't analyze each and every sentence, so Fish reads just the ones that take his breath away.
The alternative approach would be linguist David McNeill's, who studies gestures that are
"everyday occurrences—the spontaneous, unwitting, and regular accompaniments of speech that
we see in our moving fingers, hands, and arms. They are so much a part of speaking that one is
often unaware of them" (3). My approach to the sentence—reading not only the ones that take
my breath away but also the sentences of ordinary writing—falls more in-line with McNeill than
Kendon. See Moe "Scorebooks and Commonplace Books."

everyday sentences, sentences without the flare of "It was in the books while it was still in the sky." To do so, this dissertation rests solely upon student sentences because student sentences rarely appear in print. Granted, student *essays* do occasionally appear in Composition scholarship and textbooks (see Harris; Salvatori and Donahue). But if student *sentences* appear in print, they most often serve as examples of error. Contrasted against sentence-appreciation books curating Didion, King, Milton, Stein, Woolf, and their ilk, the argument is subtle but clear: students cannot write good sentences. I disagree. Students can and do write good sentences, and teachers need to learn to read them as such. My project here is not one of sentence-appreciation, and I do not present sentences as showpieces. The decontextualized sentence—whether by a student or Updike—is always a problem. I resist the sentence museum in an argument not only for the value of student sentences, but also as an illustration of how one might engage student work. As best I can, I present these student sentences within the context of both the sentences and the classroom instruction surrounding them, recognizing, of course, that the sentences are still necessarily and unavoidably decontextualized.

Because student sentences are the centerpiece of this project, I've created space between the chapters proper to read them. In these Interchapters, I exemplify, test, and further the claims made in the main chapters. Some Interchapters read student sentences; others read students reading sentences. By giving student writing in its own space within the project, I do not intend to endorse or reinforce a divide between theory (in the Chapters proper) and praxis (in the Interchapters). Rather, I set student sentences in their own space so as to value student work. The Interchapters do not attempt, nor are they meant, to solve the problems introduced in the previous chapter, nor are they intended to give an authoritative answer concerning the delivered, performed, displayed, or locative sentence. They are not lesson plans or resources for teaching

style (see Carillo; Johnson *Rhetoric of Pleasure*; Lanham *Handlist*). Neither are they hero narratives. Rather, they are where I try to find ways to read student writing—their sentences integral to the project—while working toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery.

1.0   DELIVERY, STYLE, AND THE SENTENCE

> Delivery is weakened if it refers only to the gesture, physical movement, and expression that many commentators have dismissed it as doing. It includes this aspect of communication in person, but it includes much more as well.
>
> Kathleen Welch
> "Reconfiguring Writing and Delivery
> in Secondary Orality" (21)

Born in Conflenti, Italy, in 1885, Antonio Porchia moved to Argentina when he was 17. Porchia had no formal education, worked at a printing press for a time, and spent his life writing and refining some 600 aphorisms.[1] After reading a selection of Porchia's aphorisms, I asked my students to write in response to one of their choosing.[2] The following comes from a student writing on this aphorism from *Voices*: "My poverty is not complete: it lacks me."

> This is really funny to me, and I don't know why. The first time I heard it read in
>
> class, I legitimately laughed out loud. It was the only aphorism that we read

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[1] For more on Porchia's life, see W. S. Merwin's prefatory remarks to his 2003 translation of Porchia's *Voces*.

[2] A sampling of Porchia's aphorisms are collected in the ninth edition of *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. The student essay I discuss here responds to the second Assignment for Writing, which asks that students write a series of ten responses to a single aphorism (Bartholomae and Petrosky 480-81).

which made me have a perceptible reaction. As soon as I heard it, I thought, "this

one is going to be my favorite." And it was.[3]

I recall the day we read Porchia's aphorisms aloud, and I recall this student's laugh. It was the

only laughter during the reading. The student's affective response becomes the starting point for

her inquiry:

> Why is this line so funny to me? I don't think that Porchia meant to make a joke.
> However, there is something about the written delivery of the line that just makes
> it comical. It's almost deadpan in a way? No, I don't think deadpan is the right
> word. Honestly, this line reminds me of the classic one-liner joke used by stand
> up comedians all the time. Or, and maybe this is reading a little bit too far, a rap
> punch line. There is currently a trend in hip-hop/rap where rappers will make
> one-liner jokes that start with a premise, and usually have a one or two word
> punch line. An example of this would be when Nicki Minaj raps "I'm the one
> making the plays, now you know why/These b****es calling me Manning, Eli" in
> her song "Roman's Revenge". The Eli Manning punch line at the end is what
> creates all of the humor in that lyric. In my mind, adding that last "it lacks me" to
> the end of this aphorism does the same type of thing.

The student leaps from Porchia to Minaj, connecting the poet's aphorism to the rapper's punch

line. This association across genre, across culture, across time is possible, the student says,

because of "something about the written delivery of the line."

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[3] Convention requires a [*sic*] following the student's un-capitalized "this" of "this one is going to
be my favorite." Rather than insert [*sic*] into student prose—which muddies the text, distracts
from what the student accomplishes as a writer, and reinforces the notion that what distinguishes
student writing is error—consider this footnote a blanket [*sic*] for all quoted material in this
dissertation.

Pushing against her initial reading of Porchia, the student admits, "The aphorism is less funny to me now." It is "something about the written delivery of the line" provoking this interpretative shift:

> As my attitude towards the nature of this line has changed, so has the way which I read it. When I first read this aphorism, in my head it sounded like "My poverty is not complete (beat) it lacks me." It sounded like a joke followed by a punch line. Now, it sounds like "*My* poverty is not complete: it lacks **me!**" The sort of deadpan humor is gone, and instead is replaced with this positive energy. I now read this line as a bona fide statement of assurance.

The student is searching for language to describe "something about the written delivery of the line." Notice how she articulates it: "in my head it sounded like 'My poverty is not complete (beat) it lacks me.'" The student hears the prose in her head as it is read. She engages the text aurally through reading and represents that reading on the page by inserting a beat into the sentence. The parenthetical "(beat)" replaces the colon. Both are in service of rhythm. That beat creates the punch line (humor is always a matter of timing), the pause baiting readers and listeners for the witty conclusion, the delivery of the line shaping its interpretation, its form governing its meaning.

In the student's revised reading of Porchia, the inserted "beat" vacates the aphorism and the colon returns, formatting instead carrying the cues for written delivery: "*My* poverty is not complete: it lacks **me!**" I am not sure how to read what I assume are varying degrees of emphasis in the student's italics, bold-face font, and exclamation point, but all result in what the student calls "positive energy." In this delivery, Porchia's aphorism becomes triumphant, or, as the student writes, "a statement of power. It's not a joke, but instead something that someone

said to ensure that themselves and others knew that their poverty was not all consuming. I like the idea of that more than a joke anyway." The student notices that she is "reading the aphorism differently" and that she is "putting stress on different words." This leads her to "wonder how the nature of the statement would change if other words besides the ones I had chosen were stressed." She continues this line of inquiry:

> "My poverty is *not* complete: it lacks me."
>
> Stressing not makes the aphorism feel more like a mantra. This is something that I can imagine someone muttering to themselves every day to remind them that its not as bad as it could be.
>
> "My poverty is not *complete*: it lacks me."
>
> Stressing complete makes the aphorism feel like that much more of a retort. Like someone came up and accused the person of being in complete poverty, and the person felt the need to clarify the severity of his poverty.

In her first reading, this aphorism was a joke, the colon creating a pause followed by a punch line. When "my" and "me" were emphasized, the aphorism became a "statement of power." Stressing "not" turns the aphorism into a "mantra," and stressing "complete" makes it into a "retort." Four different deliveries, four different genres, four different readings of Porchia. The student notes that her readings all "[depend] on which words the reader emphasizes." She concludes, "This statement is a lot more pliable to the reader's own way of reading than I had originally thought," such pliability a product of delivery.

What makes this student's reading of Porchia possible is "something about the written delivery of the line." Consider how she sees this written delivery at work. First, she turns to the rhythm of the sentence, the pause following "My poverty is not complete" creating a joke. Here,

written delivery is a matter of beats. The student then manipulates the typeface, using bolded and italicized words to change the delivery of the aphorism: delivery as display. Later in her paper, she turns to syntax, imitating Porchia and writing her own aphorisms:

> My means define my circumstances, but they don't define me.
>
> My beauty is not my body, but my body is my beauty.
>
> I am what I am, not what you tell me to be.

The student refers to these as "some attempts at self-assuring aphorisms." She moves away from the joke and toward the mantra and retort. There is a feeling of triumphant resistance in her aphorisms. Each is balanced, its opening statement answered by what follows after the comma. The student smartly imitates Porchia's mid-sentence pause (he does it via colon; she does it via comma and conjunction) as well as Porchia's negation. That "not" and its comma or colon are important: together, they create the pivot that makes the aphorism a joke, a statement of power, a mantra, a retort—they create the aphorism's sense of defiance.

This student's reading of Porchia illustrates how "written delivery" depends just as much on what the reader brings to those sentences as the sentences themselves. The student activates Porchia's aphorisms, her manipulations of their delivery making possible her reading of that work. What is most provocative here is the student's joining of delivery and style. In an effort to read the aphorism, instead of looking to the content of the sentence, or its placement within the larger work, or to Porchia's biography, the student instead looks to the sentence itself. Hers is a reading grounded in the work of the delivered sentence. "Written delivery," as she calls it, governs her reading of Porchia while offering a framework for her own aphorisms, the delivered sentence shaping both her reading and her writing practice.

I note that, at this point in the course, I had not yet introduced the class to rhetorical delivery. The term "written delivery" is entirely the student's own. Her reading is made possible by a conflation of factors: the student's prior schooling (I assume), her love of rap, her ability to hear the rhythms of written language when read. But so too, her reading is made possible by this fraught relationship between style and delivery and, perhaps more so, her reading is made possible by the question of what a reader's role is in activating a written text. In oral settings where voice and delivery are the means of delivery, the orator delivers; in a written text, the writer writes, but so too, the reader reads, delivery becoming something of a shared responsibility. The question then arises as to what delivery looks like in a text-based setting, outside of the realm of oral discourse. The student's reading of Porchia points to these issues, and her reading is provocative, too, for its insistence that gesture is not merely ornamental but rather carries meaning; indeed, it is how the sentence moves that enables its different interpretations.[4]

I take this student's reading of Porchia's written delivery as a starting point to inquire into the relationship between delivery and the written word. I argue that delivery did not

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[4] The student's understanding of gesture as expressive of meaning and not as mere ornamentation reflects current Linguistics scholarship. David McNeill, in *Gesture and Thought*, claims there have been two significant "shifts" in how Linguistics understands gesture. The first occurred in the 1930s as the field moved away from a model of gesture based upon rhetorical performance to one where gestures "come to be studied in life, as they occur spontaneously during conversation and other discourse modes" (13). The shift here is from deliberate, crafted, rhetorical gestures to the unintentional, those that occur without premeditated thought, the gestures of the everyday as opposed to the gestures of the courtroom, senate, pulpit, and stage. McNeill pinpoints the second shift on Adam Kendon's 1972 "Some Relationships between Body Motion and Speech." With that article, gestures begin to be "regarded as parts of *language itself*—not as embellishments or elaborations, but as integral parts of the process of language and its use" (McNeill 13, emphasis McNeill's). For more Linguistics scholarship on gesture, see Kendon's *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* as well as Hagoort and Van Berkum; Jacobs and Garnham; Kelly et al.; Kita; Lozano and Tversky, each of whom work through the relationship between gesture and meaning.

disappear with the advent of writing, but rather that the means by which it operates evolved. Building upon recent scholarship expanding delivery beyond voice and gesture to consider how it operates in media not limited to the oral, I claim that the sentence enacts rhetorical delivery, that the sentence, too, is a technology that delivers discourse. In making this argument, I contribute to a line of scholarship that has focused attention on the sentence. I do not, however, return to the sentence because of a literacy crisis, because Johnny can't write. Rather, I return to the sentence because both scholarship on delivery and scholarship on stylistics under-theorize the work of the sentence. Or, stated more boldly, both misunderstand what a sentence does on the page and what it might do. Consequently, Composition fails to account for the capacities of the sentence as a mediated discourse. Paul Butler has argued that Composition's lack of attention to style contributes to the field's lack of credibility in the public eye (*Out of Style* 121-23); I agree, and I would go one step further. Composition's lack of attention to style contributes to the field's lack of attention to style—that is, it feeds itself: by failing to examine the mediated rhetoricity of the delivered sentence, Composition writes off the sentence. And once written off, there is no reason to return.

In what follows, I make a space for this project. I begin with an account of the demise of sentence-level instruction in the 1980s and the resurrection of delivery in the 1990s. Placing these narratives alongside each other enables me to speak to the significant overlap between delivery and style, an overlap I argue has its roots (in part) in Aristotle's use of the vague term *lexis*. In order to work within this overlap, and in order to think through what delivery looks like within writing, I then argue for setting aside voice and gesture, offering instead Performance, Display, and Location as key terms for syntactic delivery.

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1.1   THE TRAJECTORIES OF STYLE AND DELIVERY

This project brings together two beleaguered canons of rhetorical practice. I do not offer, here, an extensive history of style's place within Composition. Others have carried out that project, and carried it out well.[5] Rather, I sketch style in relation to delivery so as to see the broad contours shared by each and the sites of inquiry produced when the two come together. I begin with the 1960s-80s, a time Paul Butler calls the Golden Age of Style (*Out of Style* 7). The Golden Age of Style was marked by scholarship and teaching devoted to the sentence-level of writing, scholarship whose primary concerns, according to Butler, were cohesion, coherence, how nominal and verbal constructions contribute or hinder readability, imitation, usage and convention, and meaning and semantics (7-12). These concerns were addressed through three dominant sentence-level pedagogies: sentence combining, sentence imitation, and Francis Christensen's rhetoric of the generative sentence (Connors "Erasure").

A word on these three pedagogies. Sentence combining has a long history within the teaching of writing, dating back over one hundred years (Rose). Students are given short sentences and they are to combine them, either by any means of their choice or with a specific grammatical construction given by the teacher. From William Strong's popular textbook *Sentence-Combining*:

> 1.1   A young woman sits alone.
>
> 1.2   She sips from her coffee cup.

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[5] For histories of style, see Robert Connors's excellent articles, "The Rhetoric of Mechanical Correctness," "Grammar in American College Composition: An Historical Overview," and "The Erasure of the Sentence." See also Shirley Rose's "Down from the Haymow: A Hundred Years of Sentence-Combining," Paul Butler's *Out of Style: Reanimating Stylistic Study in Composition and Rhetoric*, and T. R. Johnson and Tom Pace's edited collection *Refiguring Prose Style: Possibilities for Writing Pedagogy*.

1.3   It is chipped along the rim. (40)

From these, a student could write, "A young woman, sitting alone, sips from her chipped coffee cup." Or, choosing to emphasize the chipped cup: "Sipping from her coffee cup—chipped along the rim—a young woman sits alone." With a dependent clause: "Although the young woman sits alone, she sips coffee from her chipped cup." The possibilities are endless, and the rationale behind sentence combining is that it teaches students dexterity with their sentences, a nimbleness in how they put ideas in relation one to another. Later exercises ask students to combine a dozen sentences into a paragraph. The latter pages of Strong's textbook breaks the prose of published writers into short sentences and asks students to combine them and then compare their compositions with the original (176).   Through encouraging students to work with, play with, and manipulate language, sentence combining, according to Strong, teaches a "heightened awareness (or 'felt sense') of how prose works on the page" ("How Sentence Combining Works" 335).

Imitation exercises date back to ancient Greece and Rome, students using the speeches and writings of famous rhetors as models for their own prose. Ross Winterowd identifies "three aspects of discourse that can be imitated … (1) subject matter in general, (2) larger form (in the sense of organization and development), and (3) style" (161). The rationale behind imitation exercises hinges upon internalized habit. Through inhabiting the prose of others, working within the sentences of others, students familiarize themselves with those forms, internalizing them, such that when the occasion demands the student can summon up these forms easily, naturally, habitually.

Christensen's generative sentence rests on his claim that composition teachers "need a rhetoric of the sentence that will do more than combine the ideas of primer sentences. We need

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one that will *generate* ideas" (21, emphasis Christensen's). What he proposes is a pedagogy

built around teaching from John Erskine: "When you write, you make a point, not by subtracting

as though you sharpened a pencil, but by adding" (Erskine 254 qtd. in Christensen 21). Students

begin with a simple sentence and add clauses and phrases to it, each addition bringing "layers of

structure" to the sentence (24). An example, as Christensen lays one out on the page, a sentence

from Sinclair Lewis:

> 1   He dipped his hands in the bichloride solution and shook them,
>
> > 2   a quick shake, (NC)
> >
> > > 3   fingers down, (Abs)
> > >
> > > > 4   like the fingers of a pianist above the keys. (PP) (26)

Within Christensen's rhetoric, this is a right-branching sentence, and he labels each part, layer 2

a Noun Cluster, layer 3 an Absolute, and layer 4 a Prepositional Phrase. Christensen argues the

generative sentence "represent[s] the mind thinking," its "mere form" producing discourse: "It

serves the needs of both the writer and the reader, the writer by compelling him to examine his

thought, the reader by letting him into the writer's thought" (23). Sentence combining, imitation,

and the generative sentence define the composition classroom and the teaching of writing during

the Golden Age of Style, and together they dominated the professional discussions within the

field. Connors points to 112 articles published from 1960-85 in "general-composition journals"

addressing Christensen, imitation, or sentence combining ("Erasure" 462).

Yet the sentence-level pedagogy of the Golden Age of Style is hardly as monolithic as it

might appear. There's Richard Lanham's 1974 *Style: An Anti-Textbook*, which rejects the

premise that prose must be clear and argues the drive toward clarity is what makes writing drab:

"We pare away all sense of verbal play, or self-satisfying joy in language, and then wonder why

American students have a motivation problem and don't want to write" (10). There's Winston Weathers's 1976 "Grammars of Style: New Options in Composition," a precursor to his 1980 *An Alternate Style: Options in Composition*; in both, Weathers argues that "Grammar A" concerns itself with logic, and in response he offers "Grammar B," which values "variegation, synchronicity, discontinuity, ambiguity" ("Grammars" 221). There's Richard Ohmann's 1979 "Use Definite, Specific, Concrete Language," wherein Ohmann pushes against Strunk and White, arguing the advice to write definite, specific, and concrete sentences is ideologically grounded in an a-historic, empiricist, fragmented, solipsistic world view that denies any sort of conflict inherent in the writing situation (184). All three push against what Lanham identifies as a "ludicrous process," the "travesty" depicted in most textbooks: "I have an idea. I want to present this as a gift to my fellow man. I fix this thought clearly in mind. I follow the rules. Out comes a prose that gift-wraps thought in transparent paper" (18). Lanham resists this framing through bringing a sense of stylistic play and pleasure to writing. Weathers resists it by teaching figures of thought and speech that work against simplicity and clarity: the crot, the labyrinthine sentence, the sentence fragment, the list, the double-voice, repetitions/repetends/refrains, synchronicity, and the collage/montage (226-37). Weathers further complicates his teaching by advocating writers work within "*both* grammars [to] have the greatest range of all" (237). Ohmann is, in some ways, the odd man out in this group, for while Lanham and Weathers specifically address classroom instruction, Ohmann's is a critique of standard language as taught in the textbooks, offering no pedagogical turn or guidance for teachers; Ohmann raises awareness of a problem while Lanham and Weathers work toward solutions.[6]

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[6] For a recent piece making a similar argument as Lanham, Weathers, and Ohmann—one that resists clarity as the utmost virtue of writing—see Eric Hayot's "Academic Writing, I Love You. Really, I Do." See also Paul Butler, who argues an obsession with clarity has "held the field

The field did not take up their work. At a time when Composition was heavily influenced by transformational grammar and the descriptive apparatus it provides, Lanham, Weathers, and Ohmann offer something markedly different—perhaps too different. In their work, I see an understanding of the complexity of sentence-level instruction, a complexity within a theory of stylistics, a vision of what teaching the sentence could entail, something I hope to recover within this project.

The Golden Age of Style had a richness in its understanding of the sentence, a richness that extends beyond sentence combining, imitation, and the generative sentence. But despite this richness, the sentence was soon relegated to the margins of classroom instruction, even though Connors notes that sentence-level instruction was never shown to be ineffective at improving student writing (472).[7] The question, of course, is how one defines "improving student writing," which is why, I suggest, sentence-level instruction dwindled away. Sentence-level instruction, as practiced during the Golden Age of Style, values writing that combines sentences well, that crafts sentences well. Good writing is defined by stylistic agility. From Christensen: "I want my students to be sentence acrobats, to dazzle by their syntactic dexterity" (32). Such thinking could not stand up to the changing theoretical orientation of Composition in the mid-1980s. Sentence-level instruction was pushed aside by the process movement, the former suffering a pejorative association with current-traditional rhetorics, "a formalist approach to writing that emphasizes

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hostage" (*Out of Style* 133), and T. R. Johnson, who argues clarity is a "rather misleading metaphor: language is never a transparent window into some extra-linguistic reality" (24).

[7] There were, though, challenges to sentence combining. See Smith and Hull, who suggest that the gains from sentence combining "may not be long lasting" (289). See also Smith and Combs, who claim they can "achieve" "in a single week" what a whole semester of sentence combining does just by being overt, that is, just by telling students to write longer, more complicated sentences (35). For a defense of sentence combining, see Sharon Myers's "ReMembering the Sentence."

the written product (rather than its process), prescriptive rules that often conflate style with grammar and usage, and static language practices" (Butler "Introduction to Part One" 13). These are the "competing concerns" Elizabeth Rankin suggests contributed, along with a lack of a sound theory of stylistics, to the demise of sentence-level instruction (240).[8] Robert Connors offers a different account, suggesting the erasure of the sentence is a casualty of Composition's coming into its own as a field and its growing skepticism of the formalism, behaviorism, and empiricism that can come to govern sentence-level instruction ("Erasure"). The Golden Age of Style coincides with the emergence of Composition's disciplinary identity, and style became a casualty of the field drawing its disciplinary lines, Composition seeking to differentiate itself from "speech, psychology, [and] education" (Connors "Erasure" 473).

These factors come to a head in the early 1980s, and the death of the sentence—if that is not too dramatic a phrase—can be pinpointed to the 1983 Second Miami Conference on Sentence Combining and the Teaching of Writing, a conference that occurred five years after the first. The papers were gathered by Donald Daiker, Andrew Kerek, and Max Morenberg and published by Southern Illinois University Press. On the back cover, the editors proclaim, "Sentence combining not only has survived the paradigm shift in the teaching of writing but continues to stimulate provocative, creative thinking about the writing process itself." Connors later identified this collection as the swan song of sentence-level instruction, "the last major statement made by the discipline about sentence rhetorics" (470). Indeed. The book was

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[8] Paul Butler devotes his 2008 book *Out of Style* to rebutting the thinking Rankin represents. Butler notes that the Golden Age of Style coincides with the process movement, but claims the two are not at odds with each other. Rather, they go hand-in-hand as each is concerned with invention—invention of the sentence, invention of content, invention of the self, invention of a voice. Butler's book builds on a 2003 argument advanced by T. R. Johnson, who notes that "sentence-level pedagogy reached its zenith of popularity in the late '70s and early '80s, the moment that was also nearly the height of the process movement" (32). Johnson, like Butler, points to the shared concern of invention as a possible explanation.

published in 1985, two years after the conference, the same year Elizabeth Rankin claimed "style is out of style" in the college writing classroom (239). From 1986-98, there were a scant 15 articles published on Christensen, imitation, and sentence combining in the major Composition journals—1.15 articles per year—roughly an 80% drop from 1981-85, which saw 28 articles published—about 5.6 articles per year (Connors "Erasure" 462).

The Golden Age of Style comes to an end with the publication of Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg's *Sentence Combining*. There is a 15-year lull, and in 2000 *College Composition and Communication* published Connors's "The Erasure of the Sentence." Butler points to this moment as the start of Composition's "stylistic turn" ("Introduction: The Stylistics (Re)Turn"; *Out of Style* 13). In the early 2000s, a number of pieces worked to revive the sentence, most notably Laura Micciche's "Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar," Johnson's *A Rhetoric of Pleasure*, Sharon Myers's "ReMembering the Sentence," and Butler's own *Out of Style: Reanimating Stylistic Study in Composition and Rhetoric* and edited collection *Style in Rhetoric and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. I hesitate to endorse Butler's claim that there has been a stylistic turn to the same extent that Composition had a social turn and a public turn. Despite the perennial popularity of the sentence in the public sphere—books like Stanley Fish's *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One*, Kitty Burns Florey's *Sister Bernadette's Barking Dog: The Quirky History and Lost Art of Diagramming Sentences*, Steven Pinker's *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Style in the 21ˢᵗ Century*, Lynne Truss's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, and Mary Norris's *Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen*—and despite a surge of interest in the early 2000s, Composition is yet to return to the sentence. I say this because (1) the frequency of these calls—every few years—suggests the field is yet to heed them, (2) the fragmentation and expansion of

Composition's scholarly and pedagogical concerns make it difficult to posit claims regarding the trajectory of the field, and (3) I am not even sure what it would look like for the field to return to the sentence. I will say that the leading journals in the field rarely publish pieces devoted solely to sentence-level instruction (as Connors's data shows). Scholarly work on sentences and style is rare.

The question is why. It could be a matter of the aforementioned fragmentation of the field. Composition has expanded such that there is no longer a central set of tenets as to what writing instruction is, should attempt to do, or might be; the field is no longer organized around, or defined by, basic writing. It could be a matter of the sentence falling by the wayside as course content dominates a curriculum—as Stanley Fish puts it, "Most composition courses that American students take today emphasize content rather than form, on the theory that if you chew over big ideas long enough, the ability to write about them will (mysteriously) follow" ("Devoid of Content" n. pag.).

I suggest, though, that the sentence has not become a place of pedagogical and theoretical inquiry because the sentence is ordinary. We may write dozens in the morning, read a few hundred in the afternoon, by the end of the week having engaged thousands, and by the end of a career, millions. Sentences are a dime a dozen, and as such, their rhetoricity, their potential to be a place of critical inquiry, their ability to teach what it means to put together and represent the world through language can be overlooked. They are small potatoes and, when held against the grand claims of (say) critical pedagogy, seem mundane, trite, conservative. Composition has made its name by linking its concerns to Democracy, Revolution and the meetings of Knowledge and Power, Creativity and Freedom. What has the sentence to do with that? Well, as exemplary units of linguistic performance, everything.

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Let me put this story of the death of the sentence on hold in order to tell another. There is a conventional narrative surrounding delivery, one rooted in the traditions of classical rhetoric in the American university, and that narrative is this: as rhetorical performance and instruction shifted over the years from the stage to the page—that is, from the senate, the courtroom, the theatre, and the pulpit to the written word—delivery became less and less a concern for teachers and students and practitioners of rhetoric. Voice and gesture, it was assumed, were irrelevant to the medium of writing, as they are unique to oral rhetorical practice. This narrative is common sense, and it pervades most discussions of delivery. In 1978, William Tanner, for example, noted, "for many authors in the twentieth century, rhetoric has come to be almost exclusively restricted to the written language" and the consequence of this, according to Tanner, is that delivery is dismissed (27). Edward P. J. Corbett does the same, noting that "discussions of delivery, as well as of memory, tended to be even more neglected in rhetorical texts after the invention of printing, when most rhetorical training was directed primarily to written discourse" (*Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* 39). He concludes: "Writers lack the advantage a speaker enjoys because of their face-to-face contact with an audience and because of their vocal delivery" (39). On that reasoning, Corbett devotes nine pages to delivery in his 653-page textbook, delivery clearly not relevant to the work of a writer.

Even Mina Shaughnessy, whose book *Errors & Expectations* defined a new relationship between the university and the student writer, writes, "In a speech situation, the speaker has ways of encouraging or pressing for more energy than the listener might initially want to give.

He can, for example, use attention-getting gestures or grimaces, or he can play upon the social responsiveness of his listener; the listener, in turn, can query or quiz or withhold his nods until he has received the 'goods' he requires from the speaker" (11-12). For Shaughnessy, delivery creates an economic exchange of energy between speaker and audience, and she too reifies the conventional wisdom that delivery is not applicable to writing: "Nothing like this open bargaining can go on in the writing situation, where the writer cannot keep an eye on his reader nor depend upon anything except words on a page to get him his due of attention" (12). Once again, delivery is irrelevant to writing. There are no visible gestures and no audible voice on the written page.

I take Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy as representative of the thinking that delivery—a delivery defined by bodily voice and gesture—is not part of the writer's work. I do not intend these three to be scapegoats. While they do represent a particular line of thinking I want to challenge, so too they offer a means by which to challenge it: each goes to style as a way to get around this perceived absence of delivery. Tanner asks why, when rhetoric is not limited to the oral alone, "delivery is dismissed when the written word is considered?" (27). He then suggests paragraphs, spelling, and punctuation are forms of delivery. This move marks a shift in understanding delivery, a move away from voice and gesture as defining terms of the canon. Corbett makes a similar turn: Following his claim that writers "lack the advantage" a speaker has because of delivery, Corbett asserts, "[T]he only way in which the writer can make up for this disadvantage is by the brilliance of his style" (39).

And to style, Corbett devotes lavish attention: a 180-page chapter accompanied by a list of figures in the opening pages of the book. With this sleight of hand, Corbett brings together style and delivery, style a way to "make up for" the supposed dearth of delivery in the written

word. Shaughnessy does the same. After claiming "the writer cannot keep an eye on his reader" because all the writer has is the words at hand—no delivery possible—Shaughnessy concludes, "Thus anything that facilitates the transfer of his meaning is important in this tight economy of energy" (12). Shaughnessy then moves into a discussion of error, as error muddles a writer's ability to engage the reader within this economy of energy.

The impulse toward style to replace delivery could be a product of the fact that Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy each write during the Golden Age of Style, a time when the sentence was the answer to any pedagogical or writerly problem. That may be, but I suggest there are two other factors at work here: a fundamental connection between delivery and style (which I will address momentarily) and an instinctive move to redefine delivery when it operates in contexts other than the oral.

Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy tacitly redefine delivery; as I read them, they seem unaware of their use of style as a stand-in for delivery. Other scholars soon followed suit in redefining delivery, and the first to redefine delivery knowingly and explicitly was Winifred Bryan Horner in her 1988 textbook *Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition*. The textbook is similar to *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* in that both are organized around the five canons of rhetoric. Here's how Horner introduces delivery:

> Presentation for the orator and the writer involves the same principle: in the final analysis, it is the presentation of your ideas in the best and most appropriate way. Orators who slur their speech or slouch before the audience are ineffective—so also writers who do not understand the conventions of the essay exam or the research paper and turn in papers without appropriate citations, or with misspelled words and many erasures. (378)

Horner eschews "delivery" as one of the canons and as a critical term, instead titling its chapter "Presentation." [9] The redefinition of delivery continues with Kathleen Welch's 1990 *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse*, where Welch argues for delivery as medium (99). In 1993, John Frederick Reynolds's edited collection *Rhetorical Memory and Delivery: Classical Concepts for Contemporary Composition and Communication* included four pieces on delivery, each one redefining the canon. Welch's contribution is the most significant. Welch retells the familiar narrative of delivery: "A standard explanation for the removal of memory and delivery from the five canons relies on a simplistic idea that the burgeoning power of writing made memory and delivery less relevant because those two canons are said to be more powerful in orally dominated culture" (19). Welch's (and Reynolds's) concern with memory is beyond my scope, but I note here how Welch retells this narrative in order to rewrite it. She argues, "Memory and delivery do not wither with the growing dominance of writing; rather, they change form" (19). Welch echoes the thinking behind Tanner's, Corbett's, Shaughnessy's, and Horner's work with delivery. All have a tacit understanding that bodily voice and gesture are red herrings when thinking about the canon of delivery, and, as Welch argues, they are harmful to it (21). Voice and gesture contributed to the demise of delivery, as rhetoricians could not see the forest for the trees.

The other contributions to Reynolds's collection addressing delivery carry on this thinking. Sam Dragga looks at technical writing through the lens of delivery, considering how bullet points and lists, the size of font, the layout of numbers on a graph, for example, are all aspects of a presented, rhetorical delivery. Jay Bolter argues hypertext is delivery, "a new means

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[9] In the forward to Horner's textbook, Corbett praises her for "having found a way to restore attention to memory and delivery, even in a writing class" (vi). I cannot help but read, in Corbett's comments, a faint recognition of his own inability to do the same for memory and delivery in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*.

of presenting or delivering text (and graphics)" (97). And Robert Connors, building on Horner's work with delivery-as-presentation though he does not cite her, offers a highly prescriptive rhetoric of manuscript presentation, likening it to "the conventions of dress, hygiene, and such, which are preconditions for effective verbal delivery" (66). Connors gives advice on typeface, paper, paperclips vs. staples, and recommends writers "remove the 'frelch' paper with the tractor holes along the sides" (72).[10] With each of these redefinitions, delivery moves further from its classical roots in voice and gesture.

The scholarship on delivery published in the past 15 years continues this work of redefinition. I note that the surge of recent interest in delivery overlaps with Butler's stylistic turn. This is more than a coincidence; it points, I believe, to the tacit relationship between delivery and style, a relationship I will tend to momentarily. In 2000, John Trimbur claimed, "[N]eglecting delivery has led writing teachers to equate the activity of composing with writing

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[10] Connors's piece is curious in three regards. First, it is a revision of an essay published ten years earlier in *Rhetoric Review*. In the reprint for Reynolds's collection, Connors notes, "Given the speech of technological change, it will probably be necessary to update [this essay] every decade" (65). The first piece appeared in 1983, its revision in 1993. Connors passed away in 2000; I do not know if he planned another revision for 2003.

Second, "*Actio*" has its roots in Connors's 1979 "The Differences between Speech and Writing: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos," where Connors claims, "There are only two ways writers can exert ethical appeal (outside the physical appearance of a handwritten or even a typed manuscript), and they are found in a writer's style and in the sort of argument he or she chooses to use" (285). In his acknowledgment that the presentation of a manuscript entails an ethical appeal, Connors is beginning to work toward his understanding of that same presentation as a matter of delivery, an understanding he'd flesh out in his "*Actio*" articles.

And third, Connors's piece does not know its audience. It seems directed at students, given that teachers and professional writers would likely already be familiar with the conventions concerning font, margins, paper, printer frelch, etc. Yet, Connors refers to the editors reading these manuscripts, which suggests Connors's audience is actually colleagues submitting articles for publication (which is not to say students do not publish, but if they do, they are the exception). And here is the trouble: if writing for students, Connors's remarks concerning editors seem unnecessary; if writing for colleagues, Connors's remarks concerning a coffee- or blood-stained manuscript seem patronizing; and if writing for writers in the general public, are those writers really going to be reading Reynolds's collection?

itself and to miss altogether the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (189). In response, he applies a Marxist understanding of economic circulation to delivery and asks, "How can we see writing as it circulates through linked moments of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption?" (196). Following Trimbur were a flurry of pieces redefining delivery. In 2003, Roxanne Mountford pressed against the traditional model of delivery privileging the male body. In 2004, Carolyn Rude argued for delivery "not just as publication but also as a series of strategic actions. … Delivery is outreach after publication" (276). In 2005, Lindal Buchanan furthered Mountford's project, troubling the "corporeal terms" that define delivery in such a way that "assum[es] … rhetors are male, privileged, and able to speak publically," Buchanan searching for "alternative forms of rhetorical presentation" (159). In 2006, Dànielle DeVoss and James Porter framed copyright law as a matter of delivery, "as a set of guidelines governing the relationship between writers, readers, and publishers" (185). In 2009, James Porter re-theorized delivery for digital rhetorics, offering body/identity, distribution/circulation, access/accessibility, interaction, and economics as its governing concepts; Jim Ridolfo and DeVoss transformed delivery into "rhetorical velocity" to describe how discourse circulates through a community; and Collin Brooke recovered delivery, like those before him, with performance and circulation. In 2012, Ridolfo turned to circulation and distribution to study how activists deliver manifestos. The spirit of this scholarship is captured well by Paul Prior et al., who in 2009 claimed the classical model of delivery "was never intended to address" the "cross-historical practices of contemporary rhetoric," and who "argue for remapping rhetorical activity and for re-situating and re-mediating the canons, rather than continuing to pour even more, and even more alien, content into those ancient vessels" (n. pag.). This is the same thinking Welch articulated some 14 years earlier: delivery is more than voice

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and gesture, voice and gesture limit what the canon can do, and the canon needs to be re-theorized.

In 2012, with the most ambitious and compelling redefinition of delivery to date, Ben McCorkle argued that delivery is, first and foremost, concerned with technology, with the means of delivering discourse to its audience. McCorkle pushes against the narrative of delivery I mentioned earlier, the one that suggests delivery disappeared with the advent of writing. That narrative has a second part: new media has prompted delivery's return. Such thinking appears, for instance, in Dragga's claim that "Prior to the introduction of computerized word processing, graphics creation, and page design, writers virtually ignored the canon of delivery" (79). McCorkle refutes such thinking, arguing delivery never disappeared and never reappeared, but instead has always been the central concern of rhetorical practice.

According to McCorkle, the reason delivery has been overlooked until the advent of new media is that delivery operates invisibly. Borrowing the term remediation from Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, McCorkle claims new media fashions itself after old media to ease the transition from old to new while simultaneously erasing its own presence. McCorkle cites several instances. For example, the remediation between oral discourse and alphabetic writing in ancient Greece: rhetors were "incorporating verbal forms of discourse in writing, [and] incorporating the increasingly complex linguistic structures of writing in oral discourse" (65). The new technology of writing appropriated characteristics of the old technology of speech, and vice versa, so that the differences between the two media were ameliorated. Another example, from the advent of print:

> Printed texts and handwritten manuscripts tended to resemble one another by
> adopting hypermediated elements such as ornately decorated drop capitals,

illumination, rubrication, and so on; in other cases, print and manuscripts tended

to minimize their existence as media forms by adopting a less ornate, stripped-

down aesthetic. (70)

In all the instances McCorkle cites, new media influences and is influenced by old media, and

because of such remediation, McCorkle claims, delivery is often invisible. By refiguring the

novelty of technology, remediation hides the work of delivery. (I think of my Kindle housed in a

leather case to look like a Moleskine notebook, or the Notes app on my iPhone that looks like a

yellow notepad.) Hence, the narrative that delivery disappeared when bodily voice and gesture

were no longer primary concerns of rhetorical instruction and practice, and hence the narrative

that delivery reappeared with the advent of new media: rhetorical theorists could not see delivery

at work in the interim because delivery operates invisibly.[11]

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These two narratives—the death of the sentence and the resurgence of delivery—are connected.

The sentence falls easily within the realm of a technology that operates invisibly, one that people

use every day and yet think nothing about, one that is foundational to the work of any classroom

and yet one that receives little, if any, attention. All the scholarship on delivery I've cited can be

read as working within McCorkle's framework of invisibility; each labors to make visible the

invisible work of delivery. So too with the sentence. Setting the fall of style alongside the rise

of delivery calls attention to the mediated sentence, the redefinitions of delivery away from voice

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[11] A prime example of the invisibility of delivery comes in William Fitzgerald's *Spiritual Modalities: Prayer as Rhetoric and Performance*, which looks to the various technologies—rosaries, candles, writing, song, etc.—that mediate prayer. Fitzgerald argues prayer is delivered through those technologies, technologies that operate, for the most part, invisibly.

and gesture allowing for areas of rhetorical practice not previously under the purview of delivery to be studied as such.

I place the narratives of the rise of delivery and the fall of style alongside each other because of their unavoidable overlap. I've already noted that Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy use style as a stopgap for delivery. There is another overlap in Tom Pace's and McCorkle's respective claims concerning style, delivery, and the advancement of Composition. Pace claims that every major theoretical and pedagogical movement in Composition has been brought about by the field's fraught relationship with style. The move from product-oriented, current traditionalist pedagogies to process was accomplished, in Pace's understanding, "by arguing that current-traditionalism was interested in 'mere' style—that is, on the surface correctness of the finished product, with no attention given to invention and revision" (1). So too, when process pedagogy gave way to the social turn in the late 1980s, it was again style that prompted the move: "[S]ocial constructionist theorists … suggested the process approach was too interested in an expressivist, individual style … and neglected the ways factors of context and community shape meaning far more powerfully than any particular feature of the author's individual voice" (1). There is a relationship, Pace argues, between advancements in the field and the field's relationship to style; similarly, Ben McCorkle claims major advancements in rhetorical practice are related to technological advancements concerning delivery. The shift from orality to literacy, the advent of the printing press, the rise of television, radio, and film, the emergence of hypertext—these developments in the means by which discourse is delivered coincide with developments in rhetorical theory and practice, these different and novel technologies dramatically influencing how the canon of delivery functions and vice versa.

Pace and McCorkle's arguments are somewhat similar: they each argue advancements in the field are tied to Composition and Rhetoric's relationship to style and delivery, respectively. I do not read this as a matter of Pace being concerned with style and consequently seeing the field through style-colored lenses, nor is it a matter of McCorkle having an investment in delivery and consequently laying delivery over his understanding of the history of rhetorical theory and practice. Rather, that each would pin significant developments in the field upon style and upon delivery speaks, again, to the relationship between the two, a relationship hinted at decades before in the writings of Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy.

This relationship between style and delivery has a long history, dating back much further than the Golden Age of Style to (at least) Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. The *Rhetoric* is divided by the canons of rhetorical practice, the bulk of books one and two handed over to invention, book three devoting itself to style, delivery, and (briefly) organization. (Even less is said about memory.) The opening of book three, so characteristic of Aristotle's orderly presentation of rhetorical practice: "The next subject to discuss is *lexis*, for it is not enough to have a supply of things to say but it is also necessary to say it in the right way" (3.1.2). Aristotle's use of "the next subject to discuss" implies *lexis* is its own subject apart from invention.[12] But any tidiness here quickly comes undone with "necessary to say it in the right way." I read that phrase two ways, referring either to delivery or to style. Aristotle begins with a (reluctant) discussion of the former, noting it is necessary to address delivery only because of the "corruption of the audience" (3.1.5). After

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[12] Convention asks that foreign words be italicized. When using a foreign word as a foreign word—as I have with *lexis* in this footnote's parent sentence, an instance where my use of *lexis* points back to Aristotle's use of it—I follow convention and italicize the word. But because so many Greek and Latin words have been taken up by Composition and are now terms of art for the field—words such as lexis, epideictic, ethos, pathos, logos, kairos, and the like—when using a word in this disciplinary sense, I do not italicize it. This is an effort to signal Composition's appropriation of the term and the shift of meaning such terms necessarily undergo when moving across time, culture, and contexts. When quoting, I retain the formatting of the author cited.

a few words on delivery, Aristotle moves into a lengthy treatment of style, covering in chapters two through twelve clarity, metaphors, diction, rhythm, syntax, faults in style, concision and bulkiness in language—all topics expected within the category of style. But what is curious is how this teaching on style comes on the heels of Aristotle's remarks about delivery, and how, in chapter twelve, Aristotle again returns to delivery, noting that each genre of rhetoric has a particular delivery suited to it. He is jumping around, moving from delivery to style back to delivery, yet he closes this discussion with another heavy-handed signal giving the appearance of order: "This concludes the discussion of *lexis*, both in general about all of it and in particular about each genus. It remains to speak about arrangement" (3.12.6). With this transition Aristotle moves on, leaving *lexis*—a *lexis* that includes both style and delivery—behind.

George Kennedy, in his translation of the *Rhetoric*, notes, "*Lexis* … refers to the 'way of saying something' in contrast to *logos*, 'what is said'" (193). This is a divide between form and content. Kennedy clarifies these two meanings of *lexis*: "In some passages, Aristotle uses *lexis* in a broad sense of how thought is expressed in words, sentences, and a speech as a whole, but often he uses the term in the more restricted sense of 'word choice, diction'" (193). *Lexis* is ambiguous for Aristotle, referring at times to the more general sense of style within a piece of discourse and referring, at other times, to the specifics of that stylistics. Corbett also points to the ambiguity of *lexis*, adding additional layers of meaning to the term and noting that the Greek word has "the triple notion of 'thought' and 'word' … and 'speaking'" (*Classical Rhetoric* 414). The dual understanding of *lexis* Kennedy suggests is muddied by Corbett's tri-part definition. Hence the ambiguity of "way of saying something." The relative imprecision of *lexis* accounts, in part, for Aristotle's conflation of style and delivery within the same chapter of the *Rhetoric*, a book that strives to keep the parts of rhetorical practice distinct from each another. Aristotle is

able to bring style and delivery together because the range of rhetorical arts *lexis* governs is so broad.

I suggest there is something else at work here. Style and delivery get conflated in Aristotle, Tanner, Corbett, and Shaughnessy due to a tacit understanding of the bodily character of written prose. What of the many metaphors of the body used to describe writing? A writer has a voice. Prose moves across the page. All capital letters are read as shouting. Consider the following, each using metaphors of the body to describe the work of the sentence:

Jacques Barzun, from *Simple & Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers*

A completed sentence, all agree, is a piece of construction; but we should not think of it as a house made of building blocks. Rather, it resembles a skeleton, in which the joints, the balance, the fit of the parts and their inner solidity combine to make up a well-knit frame. (46)

Stanley Fish, from *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One*

Even the simplest first sentence is on its toes, beckoning us to the next sentence and the next and the next. (100)

Joseph Williams, from *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*

If you begin too many sentences with "There is" or "There are," your prose will become flat-footed, lacking movement or energy. (71)

Virginia Tufte, from *Artful Sentences: Style as Syntax*

Pronouns themselves are often repeated and varied to help establish a posture in relation to the readers, frequently creating an impression of informality, or of authority, and at times a speaking voice. (49)

The Tufte passage merges both elements of a classical delivery into the work of the sentence: pronouns gesture—"establish a posture"—as well as shape a writer's "speaking voice." A few more instances: Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford describe editing as "spilling innocent blood across the page"—the sentence alive, blood coursing through its syntactic veins (158). Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, in their popular textbook *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, on the tendencies of writers of disjointed prose: "What makes such writers hard to read, in other words, is that they never gesture back to what they have just said or forward to what they plan to say. 'Never look back' might be their motto" (106). Here, the writer gestures and glances backward or forward through syntax. The prose itself moves.

These metaphors suggest that the work of the sentence is not that removed from rhetorical delivery. There is a latent understanding that sentences act as bodies, that they perform on the page, that they move and gesture and speak. And so, when I set the fall of style alongside the rise of delivery, the relationship between the two moves to the fore. This project operates within the liminal space between style and delivery opened up by the ambiguity of *lexis*. I work here because, in troubling the relationship between style and delivery, I am able to interrogate the affordances and constraints of each, thinking through the writerly and readerly possibilities that emerge when delivery moves off the stage onto the page and when the sentence is recognized, finally, as a form of rhetorical delivery.

1.2   ON METHOD

In order to work at this intersection of delivery and style, I must, like all recent scholarship on delivery, set aside a delivery defined by bodily voice and gesture. I do so with hesitation, given

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that this project finds its genesis in an embodied, classical understanding of delivery. I hesitate, too, given rhetoric's rich history as an embodied practice (Hawhee; Johnstone; Fredal) and given the innovative work recuperating voice and sound as media for composition (Anderson; Ceraso) and using gesture to revitalize rhetorical figures of thought as inventive tools (Carillo; Fahnestock).

Yet, I set aside bodily voice and gesture for four reasons. First, as the Welch of my epigraph argues, "Delivery is weakened if it refers only to the gesture, physical movement, and expression that many commentators have dismissed it as doing" ("Reconfiguring" 21). In this project, I think through how delivery delivers discourse to audiences, recognizing that voice and gesture are one means toward that end, but certainly not the only means. Because delivery did not disappear with the advent of writing but rather how it operates evolved, I set aside voice and gesture in order to examine delivery within the medium of the sentence.

Second, I set aside bodily voice and gesture because of the many, and smart, critiques leveled against them when they become metaphors to describe the written word. In the late 1980s, Irvin Hashimoto argued voice—this is voice as Expressivism understands it, a voice as persona, as self, as tone—has "anti-intellectual consequences" as it often focuses on an individual's growth rather than research (77), and a dozen years later, Darcie Bowden pointed to the patriarchal and logocentric overtones of voice. More recently, in 2014, Amy Vidali has noted the able-bodied metaphors pervading everyday speech. Expressions like "I see what you mean" depend upon the metaphor of "*knowing is seeing*, which represents blindness as misunderstanding and disorder, while seeing is knowledge and coherence" (34). These metaphors are everywhere in Composition: consider Richard Lanham's "Paramedic Method" for "deaf and blind" prose (*Revising* x, 36), or Mike Rose's critique of the medical metaphors that

dominated early 20th-century writing instruction: writing teachers "*diagnose* various *disabilities*, *defects*, *deficiencies*, and *handicaps*, and then tried to *remedy* them" (350-51). Vidali argues such metaphors "[assume] that bodies have particular physical / cognitive / sensory experiences and related metaphorical expressions" (34). That is, the metaphors posit a shared experience of the world, make that experience normative, and then oust alternative ways of thinking, knowing, and being within the world. In setting aside bodily voice and gesture, I hope to move past the able-bodied metaphors they can encourage, metaphors that stifle other ways of understanding and practicing rhetoric.

Third, I set aside bodily voice and gesture to distance this project from its classical roots so as to not appropriate classical rhetoric uncritically. Lindal Buchanan highlights four problems with the classical model of delivery: it assumes male rhetors, it concerns itself with voice and gesture alone, it defines delivery solely by the body, and it often ignores the social context within which rhetorical practice always takes place (159). Buchanan's critique resonates with those I've addressed above concerning the metaphors voice and gesture, Buchanan showing forth the social and political aspects of rhetorical delivery that can be overlooked when voice and gesture are not critically framed. I feel the weight of these critiques when moving toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery, one that I hope will be available to all writers, move beyond voice and gesture, define delivery outside of the body alone, and operate with the rhetorical and social contexts of the written word.

Last, I set aside bodily voice and gesture because they reflect a particular orientation of audience to speaker, an orientation that necessarily changes when delivery moves from the stage to the page. Within an oral setting, the speaker delivers the speech. The speaker projects her voice, gestures, moves across the stage, dresses a certain way, etc. The audience observes that

delivery, and perhaps can be said to influence it—the speaker might raise her voice or make a gesture in response to the audience—but the audience does not have a part in actually performing delivery. The responsibility for delivery sits, largely, on the shoulders of the speaker. Not so with writing. When a reader reads the delivered sentence, it is the reader who animates the prose, who makes it come alive. Voice and gesture carry with them connotations of the speaker speaking and gesturing; they do not capture well the role of the reader engaging a text or the writer working on the page. That is, voice and gesture are speaker-centric, and a rhetoric of syntactic delivery, while it certainly does depend on the work of the writer, is just as much about, perhaps more so, the work of the reader. I set aside the terms, in part, to bring forward the role of the reader in this project.

As an effort to address these concerns with voice and gesture, in the chapters that follow I offer Performance, Display, and Location as critical terms to describe the work of the delivered sentence. These terms are not intended to replace voice and gesture, but rather to expand the reach of delivery beyond oral settings. Before I begin that discussion, I turn now to a piece of student writing to think through how it might be read in light of the connection between the sentence and delivery.

1.3   INTERCHAPTER: THE SENTENCE, DELIVERED

I asked students to write in response to a poem of their choosing. Then, as a revision of that essay, I asked them to bring an outside source to bear upon their reading. The following comes from a student responding to a blogger's post on Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

One analysis I took interest in was that of yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney's, who viewed the poem in a more spiritual context. Where she saw God I saw danger. It makes me wonder how much of my interpretations of fiction have been influenced by non-fiction.

I would have preferred the student engage a source more academic than a blogger on Yahoo, but that is not my concern here. Rather, I want to think through how these sentences might be read as delivered. If I were reading as Fish does, looking for sentences that take my breath away, I would be drawn to the second sentence, "Where she saw God I saw danger." Its terse seven words, sandwiched between 16- and 22-word sentences, call attention to themselves. The student does not use a comma; instead, the iambs of "where *she* saw *God*" force a pause mid-sentence and they contrast against the trochees of "*I* saw *dan*ger". Syntax places "she" and "I" in opposition, just as it sets "God" and "danger" against each other. The sentence divides itself in two, clearly setting the blogger's reading of Frost against the student's, situating each in relation to the other. But what of the other two sentences, the sentences that don't take my breath away, the sentences that are—to be frank—clunky?

The first sentence—"One analysis I took interest in was that of yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney's, who viewed the poem in a more spiritual context"—is broken in half by a comma. In the first half, the subject is complicated. "One analysis I took interest in" is an inversion of the conventional sentence word order, moving from object ("One analysis") to subject ("I") to verb ("took interest in"). The student rearranges the word order so as to transform a sentence into a noun phrase, a noun phrase that can become the subject of a new sentence. There is the phrasing of "that of," a phrase that could be deleted for the sake of brevity if the writer was to heed Strunk and White's canonical rule 17: "Omit needless words." But the question then rises: what words

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are needless? The sentence could have been written "Yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney viewed the poem in a more spiritual context," a leaner 12 words in comparison to the original's 22. But now the inverted subject and the "that of" are erased, as is the presence of the writerly "I." Also absent is the lengthy dependent clause in the original modifying "Delaney's," "who viewed the poem in a more spiritual context" now swallowed up by the predicate of the revised sentence.

The complex subject of the original, "that of," and the dependent clause modifying "Delaney's" are all efforts on the part of the student to sound like an academic. I read these moves—which could be revised away in service of omitting needless words—as anything but extraneous. They have a job to do. The student is trying to write as an academic, or, at least, how she imagines an academic writes. The first two moves—the complicated subject and "that of"—I read as moments of struggle. They give an air of formality to the writing, a learned and schooled stiffness. But the dependent clause modifying "Delaney's" is a success, a sound way to modify a sentence by adding additional information, a move academics make all the time (as I am in this sentence). It is an enactment of what Stanley Fish, in *How to Write a Sentence*, calls the "additive style" (61-88), what Virginia Tufte, in *Artful Sentences*, calls a "branching sentence" (171-87). It is a sentence that embodies Francis Christensen's claim that "the structure itself becomes an aid to discovery" ("A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence" 20). The base clause of the sentence prompts inquiry, on the part of the student, as to why Delaney's blog post interests her, and the student discovers, in the relative clause, that it is because of the tension between Delaney's and her own reading of Frost. And it is within this third move that the student begins her interpretive work, both on Delaney and Frost, by telling how she reads Delaney's interpretation of Frost. Were this first sentence revised to be shorter—"Yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney viewed the poem in a more spiritual context" as opposed to the original "One analysis I

took interest in was that of yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney's, who viewed the poem in a more spiritual context"—the student's intervention into Delaney's and Frost's work would be glossed over. I am not convinced that the student's needless words are actually needless. Yes, the sentence is longer than it could be, and yes the sentence is perhaps not as graceful as it might be, but within its strained syntax the student is trying out a way of writing, practicing moves that will someday be natural.

Consider again, now in relation to the first sentence, "Where she saw God I saw danger." I note that the student again inverts her word order. "I saw danger where she saw God" could arguably be more conventional. The subject comes first, followed its verb and object, the reader receiving a simple sentence that is then modified by an adverbial. But when read aloud in relation to the sentence preceding it, "I saw danger where she saw God" just doesn't sound right. Something is off. The student, wisely, flips the sentence on end. By flipping it, the student enacts what Kolln and Gray call the "known-new contract" (86-90). Kolln and Gray use contract to denote the implicit agreement between writers and readers, the expectation that the reader will be given something familiar first (in the subject position) and that information will then be expanded upon as the sentence continues (in the predicate). The first half of the sentence gives readers old information, referring to things already known, and the second half gives readers new information set amid, building upon, complicating, extending, etc., the old.[13] "Where she saw God I saw danger" is a moment of transition, giving readers known information—how Delaney reads Frost—then shifting to new information—how the student reads Frost. The remainder of the paper then elaborates the student's reading. This sentence, then, becomes the means of

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[13] Composition knows the known-new contract best from Williams' *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace* (48). I write again, and at length, about the known-new contract in the Interchapter "The Sentence, Inhabited."

locating the student within a conversation. The student organizes her world in relation to Frost, his work, the blogger, the blogger's reading of Frost, the student's own reading of Frost, as well as to readers—Frost's readers, the blogger's readers, and the student's.

The third sentence—"It makes me wonder how much of my interpretations of fiction have been influenced by non-fiction"—is different from the preceding two. "One analysis I took interest in was that of yahoo blogger Bridget Delaney's, who viewed the poem in a more spiritual context" and "Where she saw God I saw danger" both have definitive halves. In the first, the student uses a comma to break the sentence. By splitting the sentence as she does, the writer calls attention first to Delaney and then, in the second half, to Delaney's reading of Frost. This opening sentence nicely equates Delaney and a spiritual reading of Frost by means of a syntax that builds to the former, pauses, and then builds to the latter. A similar move is made in the second sentence, though the writer does not rely on a comma but on iambs to craft that pause. The pause here places "God" and "danger" against each other. Whereas in the first sentence, "Delaney's" and "spiritual context" are aligned by a syntax that places the two side-by-side, here, in the second sentence, "God" and "danger" are set against each other by that same syntactic move of dividing the sentence in two.

That work ceases in the third sentence, where the student begins a different project. After establishing the landmarks of her analysis—Delaney, a spiritual reading of Frost, God, and danger—the student begins moving through them. The student's "It" refers back to her reading of Frost in terms of danger. That reading then prompts her to "wonder how much of my interpretations of fiction have been influenced by non-fiction." From an initial interpretation of a single poem, the student interrogates her reading practice in general. She moves from the specific to the general, using her own experience as a reader reading a particular poem as a

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gateway into considering larger questions of readerly practice. There is a move here toward abstraction from the tangible, toward theory from praxis. Granted, her key terms are a bit slippery. Throughout her essay, the student uses "fiction" to refer both to poetry in general and to Frost's work in particular and "non-fiction" to refer to her own lived experience. But her entire paper relies on these words, which I read as her latching onto key terms and building a project around them. While those key terms should be pressed, what the student is doing here, again, is trying to deliver prose like an academic who identifies key terms and then uses them diligently. Even if it does not yet sound right, the student is speaking more and more like a scholar as she navigates the key terms that hold together her project.

Something else happens in this third sentence. "Me" plays two roles. First, "me" is the object of "makes": "It makes me." The "It"—this reading of Frost in light of danger—acts upon the student grammatically: it makes her. And what does it make her? It makes her do something, which is the second role of "me" in the sentence. "Me" becomes the subject (of sorts) of the sentence within a sentence here. "It makes" this thing happen: "me wonder how much of my interpretations of fiction have been influenced by non-fiction." On the one hand, this construction—It makes me do X—is commonplace, but here, within this student paper, it is remarkable. The student has positioned herself by way of syntax as both object and subject, as both someone acted upon and as someone who acts. Is that not what education, what writing, what reading, what learning, does to all students? Act upon, and in so doing, prompt action? This sentence, then, is an enactment of education itself, of the ways the individual is shaped by what is discovered and, in response, invents something new.

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I have attempted to read this student's sentences as delivered by attending to the sentence as an enactment of a Performance on the page, a Display of the writer, her syntax Locating her in relation to Frost and the blogger and her readers. I find myself struggling. I want to set aside voice and gesture, and yet, throughout this reading, I retreat to phrases suggestive of the classical embodied model of delivery. I write of how her writing "sounds," of the "moves" she makes. It seems I cannot escape voice and gesture, much as I try. The language of voice and gesture is ingrained in discussions of writing, suggestive again of the relationship between delivery and the sentence. I do not think, though, that this inability to get away from voice and gesture is necessarily problematic. Part of working toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery is just that: working *toward* it, recognizing that such delivery is not easily described, not easily written about. Syntactic delivery merges two canons of rhetorical practice that, while related, do not have a vocabulary as tidy as voice and gesture, as exhaustively catalogued as figures of speech and thought. But therein lies its richness, for syntactic delivery asks that readers and writers and teachers and students find other ways to describe the work of the sentence, find new language to account for what the sentence does on the page. This project works toward what that language might be.

2.0   READING AND WRITING PERFORMATIVITY

We need to go very much farther back, to consider all the ways and senses in which saying anything at all is doing this or that—because of course it is always doing a good many different things.

J. L. Austin
Philosophical Papers (238)

To solve a problem, the ordinary language philosopher will attempt to reach a clear view of the picture that gives rise to it. This is usually done by looking closely at the way the problem is formulated. This is the *work* of ordinary language philosophy. An ordinary language analysis consists in the careful examination of specific examples, and therefore has to include extensive quotation.

Toril Moi
" 'They practice their trades in different worlds':
Concepts in Poststructuralism and
Ordinary Language Philosophy" (803, emphasis Moi's)

In 2006, Graphics Press published Virginia Tufte's *Artful Sentence: Syntax as Style*. Tufte is not read by Composition; she is a Miltonist, a Linguist, a Transformational Grammarian who had a small and scattered publication record.[1] The book opens with an epigraph from Anthony

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[1] Tufte published two book reviews and co-authored a textbook on transformational grammar. She collaborated twice with Barbara Myerhoff (a colleague of Tufte's at University of Southern California), once on an edited collection on representations of the family (Myerhoff was an

Burgess—"And the words slide into the slots ordained by syntax, and glitter as with atmospheric dust with those impurities which we call meaning"—to which Tufte responds:

> Anthony Burgess is right: it is the words that shine and sparkle and glitter, sometimes radiant with an author's inspired choice. But it is syntax that gives words the power to relate to each other in a sequence, to create rhythms and emphasis, to carry meaning—of whatever kind—as well as glow individually in just the right place. (9)

With that, Tufte begins her project: presenting readers hundreds of sentences where the syntax gives words the power to relate to each other in sequence, where syntax creates rhythms and emphasis, where syntax carries meaning, where syntax allows the words—impurities and all—to glow in just the right place. Tufte divides *Artful Sentences* into fourteen chapters: "Short Sentences;" "Noun Phrases;" "Verb Phrases;" "Adjectives and Adverbs;" "Prepositions;" "Conjunctions and Coordination;" "Dependent Clauses;" "Sentence Openers and Inversions;" "Free Modifiers: Branching Sentences;" "The Appositive;" "Interrogative, Imperative, Exclamatory;" "Parallelism;" "Cohesion;" and "Syntactic Symbolism" (Tufte's term for when the form of a sentence mirrors its content). Each calls attention to how a sentence might transform the basic grammatical principle named by its title. There is a progression from chapter to chapter, beginning with what Tufte calls "content words" (the noun, the verb, the modifier) to "structure words" (the preposition, the conjunction) to how these words might be set in relation

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anthropologist) and once on an essay about teaching a class "to allow old people to tell their life stories" (Myerhoff and Tufte 250). Tufte published a single monograph, *The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England*. The book grew out of her 440-page dissertation "Literary Backgrounds and Motifs of the Epithalamium in English to 1650," written at the University of California, Los Angeles under the direction of Hugh Swedenberg, Jr. (Philip Levine sat on her committee.) From that project, Tufte also published *High Wedlock Then Be Honoured*, a collection of wedding poems "from nineteen countries and twenty-five centuries" (title page).

to one another (branching sentences, parallelism, cohesion), this act of setting words in relation to one another the central concern of Tufte's project—hence her epigraph from Burgess.[2]

To give a sense of her project, I quote at length from the first chapter of *Artful Sentences*, "Short Sentences." I note that in what follows I deal primarily with her first chapter (one curiously titled in comparison to the technical titles the other thirteen). I focus on Tufte reading short sentences because she notices what can easily be overlooked. This is perhaps no more evident than in dealing with short sentences, where the seemingly simple progression from subject to verb to object / predicate nominative / predicate adjective may appear to offer little fodder for rhetorical, stylistic, syntactic analysis. But it is here, in these sentences that don't seem to be doing much grammatically, that Tufte demonstrates her abilities as a reader. And it is here, too, that Tufte has much to teach regarding how one might read, write, teach, and study sentences.

Tufte begins the chapter with a list of four basic types of short sentences: equations with be, equations with linking verbs, intransitives, and transitives. Here is Tufte on the first type:

The simplest form of the *be*-pattern is the exact equating of two noun phrases:

Nat was Nat.

Bernard Malamud, *The Assistant*, 130

So *that was that*.

Eric Ambler, *Intrigue*, 300

"A Pangolin is a Pangolin."

Willie Ley, *Another Look at Atlantis*, 8

"Unfair's unfair."

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[2] The division of content words and structure words comes from Tufte's *Grammar as Style* (69-70).

Brooks Atkinson, *Brief Chronicles*, 176

(Tufte 11, emphasis Tufte's)

This is typical of Tufte's method. Each chapter in *Artful Sentences* opens with a claim about the grammar principle in question and then presents a few examples drawn from disparate texts, the examples prefaced with Tufte's brief commentary. Once Tufte establishes a basic form, she offers variations. The following comes immediately after the section quoted above:

Although such an assertion [that a be-phrase equates two noun phrases] may seem minimal, it can provide a telling emphasis. … Below, an equative clause reinforces an argument:

As I was saying, *fair's fair*.

Katha Pollitt, *Subject to Debate*, 38

Variations abound. Inserting a prepositional phrase as a modifier, on each side of the equation, enlarges meaning:

The *reality* of art is the *reality* of imagination.

Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects*, 151

In the next example, the author uses adjective modifiers in a pair of sentences to create a persuasive finale:

The individual *voice* is the communal *voice*. The regional *voice* is the universal *voice*.

Joyce Carol Oates, *The Faith of a Writer*, 1

Next, the rhythm of a repeated noun itself measures the intervals of time the author is describing in the remarkable sentence italicized below:

> And beyond any particular clock, a vast scaffold of time, stretching across the universe, lays down the law of time equally for all. *In this world, a second is a second is a second*.
>
> Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*, 34

> Lightman demonstrates his point by imaginatively extending a basic syntactic pattern, as appropriate in its context as the well-known words of Gertrude Stein:

> Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

> *Sacred Emily*, 187

> (Tufte 11-12, emphasis Tufte's)

Tufte continues like this for 270 pages, drawing readers to notice particular aspects of syntax via her commentary and italics. Note how Tufte expands the work of the simple, short sentence. Initially it equates two noun phrases. That move becomes a means to reinforce an argument, to enlarge meaning, to craft a finale, to mirror the subject matter of the sentence—all this from a simple sentence connected by to be. Tufte moves from the grammatical to the rhetorical.

As the chapter continues, Tufte's reading of the short sentence and its rhetorical affordances becomes increasingly complex, the short sentence crafting synecdoche and metaphor, making an urgent point, drawing the stress of a sentence. Once she has established the basic moves of a short sentence, Tufte quotes entire paragraphs, her readers now attuned to what a short sentence might be doing within that larger piece of discourse:

> Parallel patterns of the *be*-phrases are useful in the set of descriptive examples below, two recounting a dull, dreary routine and the third a scene of evacuation or absence:

Casualties *were very few*, and supply *was regular* … It *was dreary*. There *was danger*, but it *was remote*; there *was diversion*, but it *was rare*. For the most part it *was work* and work of the most distasteful character, work which *was mean and long*.

Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself*, 133

My classes *were dull*, my masters with a few exceptions *were dull*, the school-life in general, apart from the sports*, was dull*.

John Drinkwater, *Inheritance*, 235

The big sycamore by the creek *was gone*. The willow tangle *was gone*. The little tangle of untrodden bluegrass *was gone*. The clump of dogwood on the little rise across the creek—now that, too, *was gone*.

Robert Penn Warren, *Flood*, 4

In vivid contrast to the above is the convening of intransitives and transitives, with limited expansion, to portray a frenzy of violent action. The whole paragraph is guided by a parallelism of subject-opened, brief declarative forms, sometimes compounded:

He began to curse. He scrambled down the rock, found a too heavy stone, moved it about a yard and then let go. He threw himself over the stone and went cursing to the water. But there was nothing visible within reach that he could handle. He went quickly to the top again and stood looking at the headless dwarf in terror. He scrambled back to the too heavy stone and fought with it. He moved it, end over end. He built steps to the top of a wall and worked the great stone up. He drew from his body more

strength than he had got. He bled. He stood sweating among the papers at

last. He dismantled the dwarf and rebuilt him on the stone that after all

was not too heavy for education and intelligence and will.

William Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 80

(Tufte 20-21, emphasis Tufte's)

I quote at length from Tufte because the nature of her project demands it. And though I have no

evidence Tufte was reading them, I place Tufte among Ordinary Language Philosophers,

thinkers whose method, as my epigraphs claim, depends upon amassing examples of language

use. Tufte gathers hundreds of sentences because those sentences help her "consider all the ways

and senses" in which sentences can do things (Austin, *Philosophical* 238); those sentences

evidence "the *work* of ordinary language philosophy" (Moi 803, emphasis Moi's). Tufte's is an

argument by catalogue, such that a summary of *Artful Sentences* could not capture well Tufte's

method, her interaction with these sentences drawn from so many different sources and presented

decontextualized on the page. Tufte disorients her readers via the decontextualized sentence

while simultaneously offering guidance into those sentences via her commentary. If this is a

pedagogy—and I claim it is—it is both familiar and strange. It is familiar in that Tufte gathers

sentences much like any other book of sentence appreciation, but strange in that Tufte does not

present them to be marveled at. Rather, she uses her sentences to teach a performativity within

the written word. She models a particular way of thinking about what sentences do on the page.

Tufte's project is hard to know how to read. It is not quite a sentence museum, but not

quite a textbook either. It is not quite leisure reading, nor a grammar handbook, nor a linguistic

study on sentence forms, nor a literary anthology—and it has not been received well. The book

garnered a single review in the academic journals. Joseph Williams wrote it for *Modern Philology*, the final piece Williams published before passing away.[3]

Williams believed Tufte's project sought to provide "a systematic description of how skilled writers use grammatical forms to good effect" (181-82). He must discern this on his own, for Tufte does not provide anything in *Artful Sentences* that would speak to an aim for her project; there is no introduction, no prefatory notes, no commentary that would offer a theoretical framework or overview of what Tufte hopes to accomplish with *Artful Sentences*. Perhaps this dearth of theoretical framing feeds into Williams's first complaint: "The book has no thesis" (182). Williams says the lack of a thesis would not necessarily be a "fatal flaw" had *Artful Sentences* endeavored to provide a catalogue "that links particular constructions to particular reader responses" (182). That project, Williams asserts, "would no more need a thesis than does the *OED*" (182). But the problem comes, in Williams's reading of Tufte, in that the "book contributes little, if anything, to our understanding of the relationships between specific points of style and their effects and less to our thinking about the study of style in general, either in theory or in practice" (182).

This is the Joseph Williams who also wrote the seminal *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*, a book concerned precisely with the affective capabilities of style. The book casts a long shadow over Williams's assessment of Tufte's scholarship. In *Style*, Williams complains that impressionistic descriptions of style—such as "clear" and "turgid"—"do not describe sentences on the page; [they] describe how we feel about them. Neither *awkward* nor *turgid* are on the page. Turgid and awkward refer to a bad feeling behind the eyes" (17, emphasis Williams's).

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[3] Aside from Williams's review, my own reference of Tufte's work in a book review, and Benjamin Torbert's mention of how he uses *Artful Sentences* in teaching undergraduate grammar, *Artful Sentences* has not been cited—as far as I know—in any Composition-, Linguistics-, or Literature-related journals.

Williams seeks "To account for style in a way that lets us go beyond saying how we feel;" he wants "a way to explain how we get those impressions" (17). These desires inform the two-fold agenda of *Style*: first, to find a method for writing about style that does more than mere impressionistic description—he wants precision—and second, to use that method to connect stylistic moves to rhetorical effects.

This orientation toward style accounts for the verdict Williams passes on Tufte's project: "it nicely illustrates how a critic of style should not write about it" (182). Williams lists seven grievances, accompanying each with examples from Tufte's book. First, "the book abounds with obvious and empty generalizations"; second, "many of the specific observations offer nothing other than the self-evident"; third, the observations are "vaguely appreciative in a manner that provides no insight … Appreciation is not analysis"; fourth, the claims that are eventually made "are so often hedged about with qualifiers that they become virtually meaningless"; fifth, Tufte fails to provide enough contrasting examples; sixth, "some of her general claims are just unreliable"; and seventh, Tufte's own writing is poor: "I think it reasonable to expect that a book called *Artful Sentences* should exemplify them. But too many sentences here should never have seen the light of day" (182-84).

Williams's critique is vitriolic, and it crumbles under the least bit of resistance. Concerning the first and second complaints, for example, Tufte is modeling a way of reading, a way of paying close attention to the sentence that is generally not practiced today. She must, by necessity of her project, first show readers the obvious so that they may in turn find it on their own later and second, show readers the obvious so that she can move within each chapter to increasingly complex iterations of the grammatical principle in question. Concerning Williams's complaint regarding Tufte's qualified claims: Tufte must hedge her claims, because in doing so

she avoids a simplistic view of style and rhetorical practice wherein doing X always accomplishes Y. Concerning Williams's perceived lack of sufficient examples: the book's bibliography spans 24 pages and documents some 500-odd authors; the book quotes over 1,000 sentences; sample size is not a problem.

I could continue rebutting Williams, but my main concern here is not as much Williams' particular complaints as it is the final sentence of his review: "The only readers who might find this book useful would be those looking for an indirect object (or other point of grammar) written by a competent writer or for a clinic in how not to write about style" (184). Both claims are wrong. Tufte offers more than a compendium of grammar, more than a reference book of stylistic tricks and rhetorical moves, and she offers it to a wider range of readers than just those looking for a point of reference or clarification regarding grammar or convention. Williams is correct in that Tufte offers a clinic—but it is a clinic that puts into practice a particular way of reading, writing, and thinking about the sentence grounded in an understanding of the sentence as fundamentally performative. It is not a clinic in how to write about style, but a clinic in how to read sentences.

I do not intend for Williams to become a straw man, nor do I want to pick a fight with him. I begin with Williams, and I note the problematic areas of his review, because Williams can speak for the frustrations encountered when reading Tufte, frustrations grounded in the difficulty of engaging a text without a stated theoretical framework, without a stated argument, without the signposts that guide much academic scholarship.

Earlier I mentioned that Tufte does not provide an explicit theoretical framework for *Artful Sentences*. I qualify that claim—yes, the framework is not articulated in *Artful Sentences*, but *Artful Sentences* is not without method: Tufte outlined it decades earlier in her 1971

Grammar as Style and its accompanying workbook *Exercises in Creativity*.[4] Tufte left the theoretical apparatus of *Grammar as Style* out of *Artful Sentences*. (I address this omission later.) Other than that, *Grammar as Style* is quite similar to *Artful Sentences*, collecting and presenting readers hundreds of sentences with Tufte's commentary. And like *Artful Sentences*, *Grammar as Style* received a single review—a negative one—Bernard Baum concluding Tufte's project is little more than "an opulent thesaurus of stylistic exploits by modern writers" (87).[5]

 Artful Sentences does not simply grow out of *Grammar as Style* and the *Exercises*; it is a revision of a project began during the Golden Age of Style, a revision taken up during Composition's supposed Stylistic Turn. Tufte's work coincides with these significant moments in Composition, even though Tufte is outside of Composition, not someone Composition claims as one of its own, not someone Composition reads, not someone who reads Composition, even. In what follows, I value Tufte's work. I think through what performance means for the work of the sentence by looking first to J. L. Austin and then to Stanley Fish before turning to Tufte, situating her work amid theirs. Tufte's project (both its 1971 and 2006 iterations) skirts around the canon of delivery, appropriating it without acknowledging it. I suggest Tufte's way of

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[4] *Grammar as Style* and *Exercises in Creativity* credit Garrett Stewart as co-author. Stewart took his BA from the University of Southern California in 1967 (where Tufte taught) and "contributed substantially" to the project (Tufte *Grammar* vi). He is listed on the title pages of both *Grammar as Style* and the *Exercises*. In writing about these texts, I will refer to Tufte as the author, not to lessen Stewart's contribution, but because Tufte herself writes in the first-person singular throughout each book, her "I"—as I read it—suggestive of her ownership of the project.

 Stewart has recently turned to ordinary language philosophy, but his work is beyond the scope of this present chapter.

[5] And, again like *Artful Sentences*, *Grammar as Style* is rarely cited, aside from a passing mention by Frank Heny, a reprint of its opening chapter "The Relation of Grammar to Style" in Butler's 2010 edited collection *Style in Rhetoric and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*, and Butler's citation of Tufte in his 2008 *Out of Style: Reanimating Stylistic Study in Composition and Rhetoric*.

reading the sentence shifts attention away from what sentences say toward what they do, toward how they perform on the page. My goal here is not only to redeem Tufte's misread and maligned project, but also to show that Tufte's way of reading and writing and teaching and studying the sentence manifests understanding of the delivered, performed sentence.

2.1 READING AUSTIN READING SENTENCES

Tufte presents sentences as short, dramatic performances, and it is useful, I think, to turn to J. L. Austin's classic *How To Do Things with Words* to read her project.[6] Although there is no evidence Tufte read Austin, they do share a common interest in Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar. Tufte co-authored a textbook on it (Aurbach et al.), and Austin included Chomsky on the reading list for his Saturday Morning discussion group at Oxford (Longworth n. pag.). Austin begins a tradition thinking about language (and teaching) that leads to Fish's and Tufte's work and that will echo with other figures in other chapters. Informed by Austin, I encounter Fish and Tufte, who, throughout their respective careers, collect sentences.

How To Do Things with Words is a collection of lectures Austin gave at Harvard in 1955. In the first lecture, Austin proposes a distinction between two types of speech. One is the constative, which describes or reports and which is either true or false. These are the statements Austin claims language philosophers are habitually concerned with, to their own fault. The second is the performative. Performative utterances have two defining characteristics. First, they "do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false,' " and second, "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not

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[6] In this discussion, I rely on *How To Do Things with Words*, though Austin covers many of these same ideas in *Philosophical Papers* (220-39).

normally be described as, or as 'just,' saying something" (5, emphasis Austin's). Austin offers a few illustrations: from a wedding, "I do;" from a christening, "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*;" from a will, "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother;" from a wager, "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow" (5). With each statement, an action is performed—a couple is wed, a ship is named, a watch is handed down, a bet is placed—and it is the utterance of those words that performs the action.

Because performative utterances perform an action, they cannot be judged true or false. It would be ludicrous to write a will only to have someone read it and declare, "That's false." One could still object to the will on other grounds—its legality, for instance—but those grounds would not be on the basis of the veracity of the will. The objection would have to stem from some other basis, and that basis, according to Austin, is how well the performative utterance conforms to convention. Austin clarifies:

> Thus, for naming the ship, it is essential that I should be the person appointed to name her, for (Christian) marrying, it is essential that I should not be already married with a wife living, sane and undivorced, and so on; for a bet to have been made, it is generally necessary for the offer of the bet to have been accepted by the taker (who must have done something, such as to say "Done"), and it is hardly a gift if I *say* "I give it to you" but never hand it over. (9, emphasis Austin's)

Note Austin's use of "essential" and "generally necessary;" following each is a requirement, a convention that must be heeded in order for the performance to occur. It is in this sense that performative utterances are neither true nor false but rather appropriate to their circumstances. Austin calls an utterance that fails to meet its conventional demands "infelicitous," and in a move

characteristic of *How To Do Things with Words* and its continual taxonomies (Austin offered the first in his division of speech into two types), Austin lists six types of infelicity:

> (A.1)   There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
>
> (A. 2)   the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
>
> (B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
>
> (B.2) completely.
>
> (Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
>
> (Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (14-15)

Austin calls this his "doctrine of *the things that can be and go wrong*," his "*doctrine of Infelicities*" (14, emphasis Austin's). Austin-the-taxonomist is at work here: he uses Roman letters for the first four conditions and Greek for the last two to distinguish two varieties of infelicity. If one of the first four is violated (the Roman letters), the act is not performed at all, whereas if one of the last two is violated (the Greek letters), the act is still performed, albeit insincerely.

If I am sitting in the bleachers and I call a runner out at third, my utterance will not perform any action. While I have followed convention in calling the runner out (A.1), I have not

been given the authority to make such a call; I am not an umpire. Because I am not the person "appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked" (A.2), my utterance is infelicitous, and the performance does not take place. Nothing is accomplished, nor performed, by my uttering—or, rather, calling—"He's out!" But if I were the umpire, and I had been bribed into making the call, and therefore did not "in fact have those thoughts or feelings" that would make the call sincere, I have violated Γ.1 and Γ.2. The performative utterance occurs and has force—the runner is out, the inning is over, the game is finished—but the call is infelicitous because it is an "abuse of the procedure" (16).

Austin wants to distinguish between the performative and the constative, but as he moves through the lectures, he finds that the simple test of whether a statement can be true or false, or felicitous or infelicitous, is not robust enough to demarcate between the two. So Austin looks to grammar. He notes that all the performative utterances he has offered are in the first person singular, present indicative active: I do, I bequeath, I christen, I bet. But Austin quickly finds exceptions. In the second person: "You are hereby authorized to pay." In the third person, and in the passive: "Passengers are warned to cross the track by the bridge only" (57). Having found exceptions to the first person singular, present indicative active on the grounds of person and voice, Austin then finds exceptions on the grounds of mood and tense. Mood is not a criterion for the performative, "for I may order you to turn right by saying, not, 'I order you to turn right,' but simply 'Turn right'" (58). Performative utterances can occur in the imperative as well as the indicative. As for tense, the sentence "I give (or 'call') you off-side" has the same force as "You were off-side," as with "I find you guilty" and "You did it" (58). Mood, tense, person, and voice insufficient, Austin suggests vocabulary could be the marker of the performative: "In the place of 'dangerous corner' we may have 'corner,' and in the place of 'dangerous bull' we may write

'bull'" (59). The single word carries in it the performative of warning: You are hereby warned there is a dangerous bull behind this fence. But, here too, Austin finds an exception: the sign reading "bull" might be informative, reporting that there is a bull behind the fence—and therefore a constative—rather than a warning.

Austin soon concludes that constative utterances can perform actions too, and even performative utterances have some element of statement in them. Consider, for example, that "I pronounce you husband and wife" is both an action and an announcement of the union. In place of his performative-constative binary, Austin proposes a model of speech wherein each utterance has three aspects: the locutionary, "which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and referent," that is, the words themselves as uttered; the illocutionary, "such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force," that is, the actions undertaken by an utterance, what it attempts to do; and the perlocutionary, "what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading," that is, what an utterance actually accomplishes (109, emphasis Austin's). Austin finds his trifold model of speech preferable to the performative-constative binary as it allows him to describe, with more nuance, what an utterance does.

The way Austin proposes an idea and then comes to discard it is characteristic of how he moves through his lectures. Within each lecture, Austin follows a pattern, dismantling his carefully built argument. He proposes an idea early in the lecture, interrogates it, refines it, and concludes the lecture, offering numerous examples and taxonomies along the way. The next lecture begins with a summation of the previous lecture(s), but then will find a problem from the content already covered that needs remedied. The conclusions of the previous lecture are called

into question, challenged, and eventually discarded. Austin signals that this will be his method early in the lectures. A footnote, on the fourth page of the first lecture: "Everything said in these sections is provisional, and subject to revision in the light of later sections" (4). Yet, against that caveat, Austin often declares his subject matter "obvious": "The phenomenon to be discussed is very widespread and obvious, and it cannot fail to have been already noticed" (1). Prefacing his list of six conditions for felicity: "I fear, but at the same time of course hope, that these necessary conditions to be satisfied will strike you as obvious" (14). Later: "The answer to this is obvious" (23). This sense that all Austin's observations and claims are obvious, self-evident, is accented by his taxonomies, the taxonomies giving the appearance of confidence, of control, of verifiable truth.

And so a tension emerges in the text, a tension between Austin's seeming confidence in the system he is creating and his continual revision of these systems. Amid a sea of obvious statements, Austin unravels his lectures. When Austin searches for a grammatical criterion to distinguish between the performative and the constative, he admits, in a parenthetical, "(I must explain again that we are floundering here. To feel the firm ground of prejudice slipping away is exhilarating, but brings its revenges)" (61). After offering a few examples of the illocutionary, again in a parenthetical: "(I am not suggesting that this is a clearly defined class by any means)" (99). These parentheticals give the sense Austin is speaking under his breath, though their frequency suggests this continual second-guessing is vital to Austin's method. After offering some tests to distinguish the perlocutionary and the illocutionary: "The general conclusion must be, however, that these formulas are at best very slippery tests" (131). As Austin concludes his lectures, preparing to outline five classes of illocutionary force: "Well, here we go. I shall only

give you a run around, or rather a flounder around" (151). And, following that list of illocutionary forces: "I am not putting any of this forward as in the very least definitive" (152).

Austin calls his lectures *How To Do Things with Words*, and I suggest this method of discarding previous conclusions might be one of the Things Austin teaches his students How To Do. Through the show of confidence and its subsequent undoing, Austin performs for his students the actions of a thinker, a philosopher, a writer, modeling what he would like his students to do with their own words. His syntax manifests this method:

> For clearly *any*, or almost any, perlocutionary act is liable to be brought off, in
> sufficiently special circumstances, by the issuing, with or without calculation, of
> any utterance whatsoever, and in particular by a straightforward constative
> utterance (if there is such an animal). (110, emphasis Austin's)

Austin begins with a claim of certainty—"For clearly"—and that certainty is strengthened by "*any*" and then emphasized by its italics. But he immediately hedges: "or almost any." Austin moves from subject to verb—"perlocutionary act is liable to be brought off"—his use of "is liable to" adding the question of whether it will or will not be "brought off." Austin then qualifies that already qualified claim: "in sufficiently special circumstances." Austin tries to tell what can bring off this perlocutionary act in these sufficiently special circumstances ("by the issuing") but he before he can complete that phrase, he again interrupts himself with a qualification: "with or without calculation." He finally finishes the phrase: "of any utterance whatsoever," the "any" and "whatsoever" echoing the confidence and assurance of the sentence's opening, a confidence and assurance that has just been called into question. Austin then adds yet another qualification to the sentence: "and in particular by a straightforward constative utterance." The irony here is that phrase is the most "straightforward" grammatically

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of the entire sentence, a constative utterance if ever there was one. But Austin, as his project has been working to ferret out the difference between performative and constative utterances, immediately recoils from such a firm statement with another parenthetical: "(if there is such an animal)." The sentence's opening claim is now in doubt, the sentence itself enacting the same method as Austin's lectures.

Austin's method—his syntax full of qualifications and his lecturing based upon revisions of previous lectures—can be traced to his view of truth and falsity, the very issue that prompted the lectures of *How To Do Things with Words*. In the *Philosophical Papers*, Austin speaks on truth:

> But actually—though it would take too long to go on about this—the more you think about truth and falsity the more you find that very few statements that we ever utter are just true or just false. Usually there is the question are they fair or are they not fair, are they adequate or not adequate, are they exaggerated or not exaggerated? Are they too rough, or are they perfectly precise, accurate, and so on? "True" and "false" are just general labels for a whole dimension of different appraisals which have something or other to do with the relation between what we say and the facts. If, then, we loosen up our ideas of truth and falsity we shall see that statements, when assessed in relation to the facts, are not so very different from all pieces of advice, warnings, verdicts, and so on. (237-38)

In loosening up ideas about truth and falsity, Austin challenges readers to revise their understanding of the constative and the performative, to think in terms other than true and false, to see the performativity of all language. Consequently, he must take apart his text, for in its self-consumption, Austin can model the way of thinking he wants to teach his students. Austin is

not content to merely build a system, an interpretative framework: he wants to know its limits, its failings. And knowing its failings, Austin then crafts a better system, a system he necessarily must dismantle once he builds it.

Because Austin's conclusions become fodder for the following lecture, thereby calling into question all his own constative statements, Austin draws attention to the performance of his text. Just as he argues, in his first lecture, that language does more than merely constate facts, so too, Austin's lectures are an argument that a lecture can do more than merely constate facts. This is evident how he titles his lectures—not *Things Done with Words*, which would emphasize the content of the lectures, but rather *How To Do Things with Words*, calling attention to the performativity not only of words, but also of Austin as teacher, writer, thinker, scholar, and student of language. The book is a lesson in, and an argument for, a way of thinking about language not bound to meaning alone. It is a book on method, a how-to book.

2.2   READING FISH READING SENTENCES

Much has been made of Austin's work, most of it in the 1970s—the Golden Age of Style, the era of *Grammar as Style*—concerned with the divide between ordinary and literary language. Richard Ohmann uses speech-act theory to uphold the disciplinary lines between literature and writing, between Literature and Composition. He argues that literary language is defined by a suspension of illocutionary force, such that Donne's "Go and catch a falling star" cannot and could never "convey a command" ("Speech, Literature, and the Space Between" 52; see also its precursor, "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature"). Fish engages Ohmann, using the same speech-act theory to dismantle disciplinary divides (see "How To Do Things with Austin

and Searle" and "How Ordinary is Ordinary Language?").[7] In a similar effort to muddy disciplinary bounds, Mary Louise Pratt turns to speech-act theory to bring together linguistics and literature.   Speech-act theory, for Pratt, emphasizes the social, such that the study of literature becomes the study of the context in which utterances are made and written, and the study of linguistics becomes the study of how context shapes the meaning and interpretation of literature (viii).

These uses of Austin do not accord with the spirit of his lectures. While Austin does categorize uses of language, demarcating bounds between disciplines is not his agenda. There is one piece from the 1970s that reads Austin along the lines of what I offer above, that is, with an eye toward the lessons about reading practice Austin teaches in *How To Do Things with Words*, lessons about the performativity of words and how words do things in various contexts. That piece is Fish's "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." [8]

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[7] The ordinary and the literary is not the only matter Ohmann and Fish disagree upon; see also Fish's "What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It?" where Fish challenges Ohmann's deviation model of stylistics.

[8] Outside the 1970s, Austin has remained a point of reference, most notably for Jacques Derrida. Derrida reads Austin in the way Austin asks to be read—as a search for an alternative way of thinking about what language can, and might, do—and it is this search that attracts Derrida to Austin.   In "Signature Event Context," Derrida works to dismantle a logocentric view of language, one wherein words represent a stable meaning behind the text. Derrida turns to Austin, as it would appear that Austin, by proposing another function of language beside merely reporting or representing, "has shattered the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept" (13).   But Derrida is not satisfied with Austin's model— attractive as it is—as an alternative to logocentrism, for Austin relies too heavily (in Derrida's view) upon context as a determiner of a speech-act's success, and context (again, in Derrida's view) is too closely aligned with intention. The problem with intention is that it presupposes an intentional meaning, "even if that meaning has no referent in the form of a thing or of a prior or exterior state of things" (14).   Context, as it leads to intention, as it leads to an intentional meaning, is the very model Derrida pushes against, the very model Austin's work upholds.

The issues raised by Derrida are beyond the scope of my project here.   See Derrida's "Signature Event Context;" John Searle's defense of Austin, "Reiterating the Differences"; and Derrida's response to Searle, "Limited Inc a b c …" See also Reed Way Dasenbrock's "Taking

In "Literature in the Reader," Fish takes up the central concern of Austin's project (in my reading of him, at least): trying to find another way to talk about, and understand, language use. The curious thing, though, about "Literature in the Reader" is that Fish does not once mention Austin (nor Searle, nor speech-act theory, nor the performative, nor the constative). Austin's influence, nevertheless, is strong.[9]

In the essay, Fish proposes a way of reading sentences, proposing that readers substitute the question normally asked of literature—"What does this sentence mean?"—for "another, more operational question—what does this sentence do?" (25). The substitution has immediate consequences. The sentence "is no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an *event*, something that *happens* to, and with the participation of, the reader" (25, emphasis Fish's). This shift from the sentence-as-object to the sentence-as-event necessitates a shift in where meaning resides, for "it is this event, this happening—all of it and not anything that could be said about it or any information one might take away from it—that is, I would argue, the *meaning* of the sentence"

It Personally: Reading Derrida's Responses"; Raoul Moati's *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*; Toril Moi's " 'They practice their trades in different worlds': Concepts in Poststructuralism and Ordinary Language Philosophy"; as well as Fish's "With the Compliments of the Author: Reflections on Austin and Derrida."

For another use of Austin, see Joseph Harris's excellent 2006 *Rewriting: How To Do Things with Texts*, which uses the notion of words doing things as a means to teach revision. Harris is one of the few in Composition working with Austin.

[9] "Literature in the Reader" is reprinted in Fish's *Is There A Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, a book that enacts a method not unlike Austin's *How To Do Things with Words*. *Is There a Text* collects 16 of Fish's essays, ordered chronologically. Its preface explains the overall trajectory of Fish's thought, and a short note before each essay has Fish explaining its strengths and shortcomings and how the essay at hand extends or complicates his previous work. Like Austin, by the end of *Is There a Text*, Fish comes to abandon (or, at the least, refine) a handful of the conclusions reached in the earlier chapters. Both are self-consuming artifacts.

(25, emphasis Fish's).[10] Fish and Austin both seek to shift reader's attention from what language means to what it does. Fish wants to reorient readers in relation to the text, to recalibrate what it is readers read for when engaging the text. Fish calls this a "provocative thesis" (25), and he elaborates on how one might read in such a manner: "The concept is simply the rigorous and disinterested asking of the question, what does this word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, chapter, novel, play, poem, *do*?" (27, emphasis Fish's). In asking "what does this sentence do?" Fish not only shifts attention toward the work of the sentence itself, but so too he calls attention to the effects of the sentence upon the reader: "And the execution involves an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words" (27). The response of the reader bears upon the interpretation of the text just as much as the text itself.

I pause here to consider what Fish means by the "doing" of a sentence, and I suggest it is a doing grounded in performance. But Fish is not concerned with performance in the same way Austin is. For Austin, doing comes to be equivalent with performing an action, and as such Austin devotes much of his attention to the performative utterance and, later, the illocutionary speech act, as each concerns the actions undertaken by an utterance, whether that be ordering, vowing, promising, denying, thanking, sentencing, levying, etc. Fish, however, given his concern with "the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words," is more attuned to the effects brought about by speech acts. Whereas Austin is interested in how an uttered phrase performs an action (its illocutionary force), Fish is interested in how the same utterance might be a threat, or a promise, or a surprise, or any number of things (its perlocutionary force). (Neither

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[10] In "The Marquis Went out at Five O'clock: On Making Sentences Do Something," Christopher Beha turns Fish's question "What does this sentence do?" into a writing problem, asking "What do I need this sentence to do?" (n. pag.). Beha does not cite Fish, but the method of writing he proposes—one grounded in attention to "what role the sentence plays in its paragraph, what role the paragraph plays in its scene, the scene in its story"—is predicated upon the same idea of sentences doing something on the page.

seems to care that much about the locutionary force of the sentence, that is, what it actually says.) What a sentence does, within Fish's framework, concerns the effects of the sentence—the "Affective Stylistics" of Fish's title.

Fish's method depends on the "*temporal* flow of the reading experience," one wherein "it is assumed that the reader responds in terms of that flow and not to the whole utterance" (27, emphasis Fish's). For Fish, meaning is made not once an entire sentence is read and understood, but word by word, as each word acts upon the previous to shape the reader's understanding—and response to—what is being said. Misreading, then, is a fundamental part of reading; the reader is always projecting, imagining, how a sentence might end, what meaning it might be in the process of making, and the tension between that projected meaning and the meaning the reader finally arrives at is just as important as—if not more important than—the eventual meaning the reader settles upon. After all, it is the experience of the sentence, Fish tells us, that is the meaning of the sentence, and that experience is a direct outcome of how a sentence performs.

To illustrate Fish's concern with what a sentence does, I turn to his reading of the following sentence by Walter Pater (a favorite of Fish's): "That clear perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours" (30). I choose Pater's sentence because it is one that very well could be included in Tufte's chapter on short sentences. And Fish, like Tufte, sees much possibility in the sentence. Fish notes that many critics would find Pater's sentence "distressingly straightforward and non-deviant, a simple declarative of the form X is Y" (30). The benefit of Fish's way of reading sentences, though, is that it makes sentences that do not appear to be doing much stylistically or grammatically or rhetorically—sentences like the one quoted from Pater—available for analysis. Fish's method is to ask what each word, in sequence, is doing in the sentence, and though he notes it would be easy to dismiss Pater's opening "That"

as "simply there," Fish claims, "But of course it is not simply there; it is *actively* there, doing something, and what that something is can be discovered by asking the question 'what does it do?'" (30, emphasis Fish's). Answering his own question:

> "That" is a demonstrative, a word that points *out*, and as one takes it *in*, a sense of its referent (yet unidentified) is established. Whatever "that" is, it is outside, at a distance from the observer-reader; it is "pointable to" (pointing is what the word "that" does), something of substance and solidity. In terms of the reader's response, "that" generates an expectation that impels him forward, the expectation of finding out *what* "that" is. (31, emphasis Fish's)

Fish's amplification of "that" reveals a rhetoricity about the word, a rhetoricity that can easily be missed had the reader not asked what the word was doing in the sentence—doing in the sense of its perlocutionary effects upon the reader. If "that" were to be read in terms of its illocutionary force, as Austin might understand it, it could be understood, perhaps, as a promise, a promise that there exists, outside the reader, some objective item one could point to. "That" orients the reader in relation to the world of the sentence, as Fish notes by using language of location, of placement—"out," "in," "outside," "at a distance," "pointable to." The "substance and solidity" suggested by "that" speaks again to this promise, a promise that shapes the remainder of Fish's reading:

> The adjective "clear" works in two ways; it promises the reader that when "that" appears, he will be able to see it easily, and, conversely, that it can be easily seen. "Perpetual" stabilizes the visibility of "that" even *before* it is seen and "outline" gives it potential form, while at the same time raising a question. That question—

outline of what?—is obligingly answered by the phrase "of face and limb," which, in effect, fills the outline in. (31, emphasis Fish's)

All this happening before the verb of the sentence appears. Fish continues:

By the time the reader reaches the declarative verb "is"—which sets the seal on the objective reality of what has preceded it—he is fully and securely oriented in a world of perfectly discerned objects and perfectly discerning observers, of whom he is one. But then the sentence turns on the reader, and takes away the world it has itself created. With "but" the easy progress through the sentence is impeded (it is a split second before one realizes that "but" has the force of "only"); the declarative force of "is" is weakened and the status of the firmly drawn outline the reader has been pressured to accept is suddenly uncertain; "image" resolves that uncertainty, but in the direction of insubstantiality; and now the blurred form disappears altogether when the phrase "of ours" collapses the distinction between the reader and that which is (or was) "without" (Pater's own word). Now you see it (that), now you don't. Pater giveth and Pater taketh away. (31)[11]

What makes Fish's reading of Pater work is the tension between the reader's expectations of how the sentence should resolve itself and how the sentence actually does resolve itself, and that tension is heightened by Fish's insistence that meaning is created word by word as the reader wades through a sentence, Fish's analysis of Pater showcasing that semantic progression. For instance, Fish reads "clear" as making a promise to the reader, but the sentence rips it away as

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[11] The reading I offered earlier of Austin's sentence and the way it takes itself apart is clearly influenced by Fish's question of "What does this sentence do?", my reading moving word-by-word through Austin's prose. Many of the sentences Fish analyzes in "Literature in the Reader" are sentences like Austin's and Pater's, sentences that unravel, sentences that make a claim and then undo themselves. Fish has a preference for such sentences, and I suggest it is because the unraveling of the sentence has strong affective outcomes on the reader.

Pater calls that world into doubt. Each word, as it becomes part of the temporality of the sentence's doing, either fulfills or subverts the expectations set by the words preceding it. The relationship between the reader's expectations and the work of the sentence at hand is only possible within a framework that understands grammar manipulating basic syntactic structures. (There is a strong undercurrent of transformational grammar here, one to which I will attend when I address Tufte's work.) Hence Fish's emphasis on reader response. His primary concern is how a writer uses the sentence to create affective responses. And so, when Fish argues for a way of reading predicated upon asking "what does this sentence do?", he advocates a method based not upon the extraction of meaning or the decoding of some truth statement, but rather upon the actions, the doings, the affective outcomes of a sentence, working within the tension between a reader's expectations of what a sentence will do and what the sentence actually does.

At the end of "Literature in the Reader," Fish turns to the classroom, claiming his method is a "language-sensitizing device" (67). Using it, students will "become incapable of writing uncontrolled prose, since so much of their time is spent discovering how much the prose of other writers controls them, and in how many ways" (67). The assumption here is that students will internalize this method, internalize these forms, ever asking "What does this sentence do?" both in their reading and in their writing. And the suggestion here is that "uncontrolled prose" is the product of an unawareness of what sentences do on the page. Using this method of reading sentences, Fish's students discover the affective powers of prose, and, aware of how language acts upon them, are then able to employ sentences to the same purposes. How one writes is a direct product of how one reads.

While I appreciate this pedagogy—especially the connection between reading and writing practices—it has problems. Fish assumes a universal, stable reader. Fish speaks of *a* reader in

the singular, and writes about this reader as "the reader" throughout his essay. Though Fish acknowledges that due to the "uniqueness of the individual, generalization about response is impossible" (44), his method depends for its very livelihood on such generalizations. Fish justifies his generalizations on the grounds that a shared understanding of how language works allows him to speak of the response of "the reader" (44-45). We share a common language, so Fish argues, and that common language brings about common responses to particular linguistic events. Fish necessarily, then, depends on sentences enacting rhetorical performances that reliably produce X effect, thereby yearning for the same rhetoric Williams hoped Tufte's project would provide, a rhetoric that accounts for reliable affective responses to rhetorical figures of speech.

But sentences are not that predictable, or reliable, and Fish's method does not leave room for multiple, or simultaneous, readings and re-readings of a text. Nor does his method account for how previous readings or outside influences shape the interpretation of a text. When Fish reads, the sentence says what it says. While meaning is contextual within the temporal flow of the sentence and the reader's developing responses to that sentence, the sentence is still decontextualized from the larger work, Fish never reading sentences in relation to those preceding or following. Late in the essay, Fish does note, in a parenthetical, that "(reading has to be done every time)" (66). Yet, throughout "Literature in the Reader," Fish's own readings are put forth as authoritative. There is a finality about them that silences any dissenting read of the same text.

This authority is most evident in Fish's *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One*, a mass-market book enacting the method offered in "Literature in the Reader." (Just as Tufte's two books are published in the Golden Age of Style and the Stylistic Turn, so too are "Literature

in the Reader" and *How to Write*.) In *How to Write*, Fish offers a reading of Updike's sentence describing Ted Williams's final at-bat in Fenway Park. Williams hit a homerun, and Updike wrote, "It was in the books while it was still in the sky." Two short sentences joined by "while," it is another that Tufte could have included in her short sentences chapter. Fish, answering the question "What does this sentence do?":

> The fulcrum of the sentence is "while"; on either side of it are two apparently very different kinds of observations. "It was in the books" is metaphorical. Updike imagines, correctly, that this moment will be memorialized in stories and at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, and he confers that mythical status on the moment before it is completed, before the ball actually goes out of the park. Indeed, in his sentence the ball never does get out of the park. It is "still in the sky," a phrase that has multiple meanings; the ball is still in the sky in the sense that it has not yet landed; it is still in the sky in the sense that its motion is arrested; and it is still in the sky in the sense that it is, and will remain forever, in the sky of the books, in the record of the game's highest, most soaring achievements. On the surface "in the book" and "in the sky" are in distinct registers, one referring to the monumentality the home run will acquire in history, the other describing the ball's actual physical arc; but the registers are finally, and indeed immediately (this sentence goes fast), the same: the physical act and its transformation into myth occur simultaneously; or rather, that is what Updike makes us feel as we glide through this deceptively simple sentence composed entirely of monosyllables. (9-10)

Fulfilling the promise of its title, *How to Write a Sentence* offers a handful of imitation exercises accompanying Fish's readings. Based off this analysis of Updike's sentence, Fish offers his own imitations: "It was in my stomach before it was off the shelf," "She was enrolled at Harvard before she was conceived," "He had won the match before the first serve," "They were celebrating while the other team was still at bat" (10). Fish does not "make any great claims" for his imitations, but he does sit pleased knowing he has taken Updike's syntax and used it to create a similar effect (10).

Fish says he could "do it forever"—that is, keep writing versions of Updike's sentence (10). And that is the problem: no one would want to keep doing it forever, no one could keep doing it forever, and no reader would want to read anything that kept on playing this game forever. And of course, no writer would keep on doing it forever, not if the writer actually cared about her subject and her readers and her sentences. Fish's pedagogy is a mixed blessing: readers ask "What does this sentence do?" to learn sentence forms, and readers internalize the forms through imitation, but in their application, the sentences can easily become habitual. Fish hopes that writing sentences like Updike's will become habit, but he fails to recognize that it can become habit in a negative sense too. Rote. Mechanical. Lifeless.

Like Austin, Fish models a way of reading sentences. But unlike Austin, Fish's performance expects applause. Whereas Austin brings readers alongside, such that when he revises his ideas from the previous lecture, the sense is not so much admiration but a communal journey toward a new idea—Austin is driving the car, but we're right there with him, along for the ride—Fish expects his readers to be in awe, dumbstruck at his readings of Pater, of Updike. Though Fish encourages his readers to ask "What does this sentence do?", his mastery in answering the question turns it into a stage for his own readings. Fish performs for his readers,

showboating a way of reading that ideally readers would be able to emulate but that is quite difficult to do. In the opening of *How To Write a Sentence*, Fish confesses to being a "sentence collector … always on the lookout for sentences that take your breath away" (3). When he finds such a sentence, the first response "is a rueful recognition that you couldn't do it yourself even though you also have two hands and feet" (3). The same is true of Fish's readings: a rueful recognition that I couldn't produce the same reading of Updike, even though I too am literate. Fish's performance is one of amplification. He amplifies sentences, brings them to life, such that asking "What does this sentence do?" is perhaps not the best question to ask, but instead, "What am I doing to this sentence?" or even "How do I read this sentence?" Those questions get at the role of the reader in reading the performative sentence.[12]

2.3   READING TUFTE READING SENTENCES

I turn now to Tufte. I read Fish as a leap forward from Austin, and Tufte as another leap forward from Fish. Tufte's *Artful Sentences* is as much about reading the sentence as it is about writing the sentence, as much about teaching the sentence as it is about studying the sentence. *Artful Sentences* makes a single reference to *Grammar as Style*, Tufte noting (on the acknowledgments page) that the former "grows out of" the latter (5). This indebtedness is evident in the nearly identical ordering and titles of the book's chapters, in the internal structure of the chapters themselves, and in the number of sentences recycled from *Grammar as Style* into *Artful Sentences.*

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[12] I've written elsewhere on Fish and Updike. See "Of Scorebooks and Commonplace Books."

But there are significant differences between the two, such that I read *Artful Sentences* not so much as a sequel of *Grammar as Style*, but as a fundamental revision of the project. The 1971 *Grammar as Style* was published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston and was accompanied by a workbook, *Exercises in Creativity*. The project, as evident by its publisher, is clearly pedagogical. Also, *Grammar as Style* opens with a preface and an essay explicating Tufte's method, both of which are noticeably absent from *Artful Sentences*. *Artful Sentences* has a different audience, a different aim, than the project Tufte started 35 years prior.

Tufte began work on *Grammar as Style* prompted by her dissatisfaction with how style was being written about. In the opening to *Grammar as Style*, Tufte laments that most discussion of style "is often subjective, impressionistic, unhelpful, sometimes misleading" (2). Readers use personal reactions to prose to asses style, and "we need only see how vague, how various, even how contradictory these intuitive, untutored reactions to language can be to appreciate the need for a more certain vocabulary in discussing style, to wish that something at least resembling the clear categories of syntax might be available to stylistic analysis" (2). She echoes Louis Milic, (writing five years earlier in 1966) who argues there is "still no method beyond the method of impressionistic description and a vague use of rhetoric" in stylistic analysis ("Metaphysics" 124). Because he believes literary scholars will not embrace "the rigorous means derived from linguistics and the quantitative sciences" for handling style, Milic argues for a return to classical rhetoric to give teachers and writers the vocabulary to talk about style (126). Tufte shares in Milic's lament about the lack of a good framework for analyzing style, quoting him even, but rather than stray from linguistics, she dives right in. She is, after all, a transformational grammarian, and she uses the resources of transformational grammar to build her project. She is hesitant, though, to completely discard an impressionistic reading of style

since it "attests to the richness of language," but she does concede "The beginning writer … like the critic, needs a more accurate and consistent method, a more concrete vocabulary, for examining the work of others and for remaking his own" (4). These are the same concerns, I note, that prompt Williams's *Style* (17), the same concerns that lead Elizabeth Rankin to lament in 1985 that there still is no "sound, complete, and adequate theory of style" (240). Each searches for a new vocabulary and framework to write about style.

Searching for this new way to write about style, Tufte is careful to signal that *Grammar as Style* is anything but a sentence-appreciation book. The title is a polemic. She writes:

> The goal of this book is to explain its title. The task is quite ambitious enough, for *Grammar as Style* is not just a topic, or two topics. It is a thesis. It does not merely advertise that the book it names will discuss the paired subjects of grammar and style, but it presumes that grammar and style can be thought of in some way as a single subject. (1)

Tufte sets this argument against two schools of thought concerning the relationship between form and content. One—the ornamental school—understands form and content as apart from each other, form being mere decoration to the content of an idea. This is the classical view of style, reaching back to Aristotle. The other—the organic school—understands form and content as intimately connected, as one in the same. But Tufte wants to theorize grammar as style, and to do so, "a position must be secured between the opposing forces of the *ornamental* and the *organic* schools" (4, emphasis Tufte's). Neither school satisfies Tufte, for the ornamental approach negates the possibility that grammar might be style (4-5). So too, the organic approach falters in that "if style is meaning, grammar can claim only small and unconvincing credit for the full impact of any piece of prose" (5).

In working through the organic and ornamental schools, Tufte cites Richard Ohmann, who makes a similar argument concerning the faults of the organic school ("Prolegomena"). Milic is part of this conversation as well, outlining three approaches to style before eventually settling on rhetorical dualism ("Theories").[13] But Tufte's project is distinct from Ohmann's and Milic's. She does not merely want to settle on a theory. Rather, she wants to see language at work. As the Toril Moi of my epigraph claims, ordinary language philosophers are not as interested in concepts as they are in examples: Tufte wants to read sentences.

At the time of her writing, the organic view "[had] almost won the day," and Tufte pushes against that unified view of form and content because it limits the options of both reader and writer (5). The ornamental approach fails to give enough attention to the work of stylistics, as style becomes an afterthought, and the organic approach fails to give agency to the writer, in that if form and content are linked, the writer has little liberty to mess with either. Tufte does not dispute that form and content can be one, but rather than take an organic relationship as given Tufte sees it as a stylistic achievement, something that occurs only rarely in the best-crafted prose. Hence the progression from the opening chapter "Kernel Sentences" to the final chapter "Syntactic Symbolism: Grammar as Analogue," a chapter full of sentences like the following:

> The isolated adverb "again," oddly set off by commas and then repeated, creates
> in the next sample another syntactic pivot, about which the sentence swings in a
> fine grammatical reproduction of the described voices swinging back on silence:
>> Our voices, curving slowly around the woods, again, again swung back on
>> silence.

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[13] For other ways to theorize the form and content relationship, see Richard Lanham's "Style/Substance Matrix." See also Paul Butler for a critic of Milic's "Theories" (*Out of Style* 138-40).

—*Truman Capote*, The Glass Harp, *p. 51.*

(Tufte *Grammar as Style* 241)[14]

Tufte's reading of Capote assumes that such a marriage of form and content does not happen in every sentence, that it is an achievement, that such a sentence is a moment of masterful craft. This reading is made possible by the sequencing of her book's chapters: the progression from the simple sentence to the noun phrase to the verb phrase to the adverb to the preposition aids readers in recognizing what each does within this sentence. It is a reading made possible by transformational grammar, by the belief that the writer transforms kernel sentences into larger and more complex sentences, arriving at syntactic symbolism. The sequence of her chapters and their progression toward increasingly complex grammatical constructions is an effort to teach students to recognize how language use builds upon itself—so too does reading practice, Tufte's students becoming more adept readers as each chapter builds upon the grammar of the previous, making possible the readings of the latter chapters.

As a collection of sentences, *Grammar as Style* is equally as impressive as *Artful Sentences*. Tufte gleaned her sentences primarily from writers of her day; the majority of the sentences come from texts published within five years of *Grammar as Style* (iv). And the writers she includes are wide-ranging. In the span of two pages, for instance, Tufte moves from George Orwell to William Empson to *The Way Things Work, An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Technology* to Thomas Hardy to *The Sierra Club Wilderness Handbook* back to Thomas Hardy and then to Vladimir Nabokov, all in service of exemplifying the various places a noun phrase can appear in a sentence (42-43). This is typical Tufte; the variety of authors she pulls from is key to her

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[14] The formatting of *Grammar as Style*'s presentation of sentences—the italics of Capote's name, the em dash prefacing it, the italics of the page number—are different than that of *Artful Sentences*. I retain the original formatting for each book.

method. It is an effort "not to depend on old assumptions about style but to take a fresh look, through syntactic glasses, at the actual practices of today's writers" (*Grammar* iii).

Tufte's reliance upon such a variegated group of writers could be a response to a critique of the work of her colleague at the University of Southern California, Francis Christensen. Christensen—who did much to advance syntactic and linguistic study of the sentence for Composition, and who wrote a popular middle- and high-school curriculum, the *Christensen Rhetoric Program*—spent his career attempting to define a "mature" style in writing. Christensen was a literal bean counter, sitting in his study, reading the works of famous authors, and depositing coffee beans into jars whenever he came across certain grammatical constructions, the jars with labels such as "participial phrase in initial position, adverb clause in medial position, absolute phrase in final position" (Stewart vi).[15] Aside from doubts concerning the merits of the transformational grammar Christensen's work depends on, and aside from doubts concerning whether sustained attention to the sentence alone can improve student writing, the strongest critique of Christensen's work comes from questions over whose prose Christensen read for his bean counting. Christensen relied, primarily, on descriptive and narrative fiction writing—not the type of writing that is typically taught in first-year writing courses, whose duty (critics of this mind argue) is to teach expository, academic prose (see Connors "Erasure" 464-65; Johnson

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[15] Christensen passed away in 1970, just as *Grammar as Style* went to press. Tufte notes this, and her indebtedness to him, in the preface (5). Christensen's influence on *Grammar as Style* is strong; for instance, Tufte's chapter Free Modifiers, with its delineations into Right-, Mid-, and Left-Branching sentences, takes its terminology straight from Christensen. For recent work with branching sentences, see Steven Pinker's *The Sense of Style* (108-15).

Following Christensen's passing, his widow Bonnie Jean revised the *Rhetoric Program* in 1979, and later gave the rights of the curriculum to Donald Stewart, who has since added two workbooks to it and renamed it the *Stewart English Program*. Stewart has become the custodian for Christensen's work, not only keeping the curriculum in circulation as a middle- and high-school grammar, but also reprinting *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric*, a collection of Christensen's essays.

"Some"; Tibbets). Defining a mature style based on the prose of Hemingway does not translate to teaching freshman to write research papers.

This critique is a smart one: it notes the problematic divergence between Christensen's sample group and the prose taught in the composition classroom. And Tufte—whether she is responding to this critique directly or not—obviates it through her selection of authors. Tufte's definition of "today's authors" is so far-reaching (Nabokov and the Sierra Club cited side by side) that it necessitates an equally far-ranging definition of "actual practices," one that spans multiple genres. As such, Tufte brings together "novelists, poets, playwrights, biographers, reporters, columnists, critics, historians, statesmen, scientists, professors" (*Grammar* iv). I note that Tufte leaves out an "and" at the end of that list, its absence suggestive that the list is not complete, Tufte pulling from a seemingly unlimited range of writers. Granted, one could still object that in an introductory writing course, students are not being taught to write as novelists, poets, playwrights, etc., but Tufte, in amassing such a range of writing, does so because "There is much to be learned, by every aspiring writer, from every good writer. … We are encouraged, therefore, to borrow syntactic examples from any place good writing is going on" (*Exercises* 6). For Tufte, the genre itself is not as important as is grammar, the style, performed by the sentence, not as important as the aspiring writer, the act of good writing, the deed of it. As such, though *Grammar as Style* and its attendant workbook *Exercises in Creativity* may seem geared toward the composition classroom, Tufte's orienting of the piece in relation to the writers of such a broad swath of genres gives her mobility, her project not confined to the first-year classroom but applicable to writers of any genre, within any rhetorical situation. This is one reason, I suspect, that the theoretical apparatus is absent in *Artful Sentences*; Tufte recognizes her project can speak to readers outside the classroom.

The sheer breadth of Tufte's quoted texts prompts the following caveat:

> Although I have examined a fair number of samples—many more than are quoted—it may well be that in some instances other samples would have supported different conclusions. I hesitate even to use the word *conclusions*; *observations* is more accurate. The book is exploratory rather than definitive, and its *method* is more important than its statements. (*Grammar* iii, emphasis Tufte's)

Here, Tufte signals how *Grammar as Style* is to be read. Lest those actual practices of today's writers be construed as hard-and-fast rules, lest her work be interpreted as prescriptive or positivist, Tufte warns against such legalism. And, I would suggest, the size of Tufte's sentence collection precludes it. It is difficult, impossible even, to make any firm declarations on convention and usage and rhetorical effect when working from such a disparate and large set of texts. Tufte knows this—it is a defining strength of her project—and she notes that other sentences likely would have produced different analyses, different observations (rather than conclusions). So too, the same sentence could be put to other uses within the book. I think, for example, of the previously quoted sentences Tufte pulls from Alan Lightman—"And beyond any particular clock, a vast scaffold of time, stretching across the universe, lays down the law of time equally for all. *In this world, a second is a second is a second*" (*Artful* 12, emphasis Tufte's)— Tufte uses Lightman for his be-clause, an example of the work of a short sentence. But so too, Lightman could have appeared in Tufte's Syntactic Symbolism chapter, the rhythm of "a second is a second is a second" mirroring that of a clock's tick tock.

Because the sentences she quotes could serve such varied purposes, Tufte does not offer any conclusions. She offers examples, lots of them. She celebrates instances of linguistic and rhetorical practice that, in the end, can't be resolved into tidy conclusions about how language

works and what rhetoric does. She resists rhetorics like those of Williams's and Fish's, theories of the sentence that want the sentence to be scripted, for students to always write great sentences, for students to be incapable of writing uncontrolled prose. Though Williams and Baum, in their respective reviews of Tufte's work, see her project as no more than an "opulent thesaurus" (Baum 87), readers looking for definitive direction on how to use the appositive, for example, or how to set up a mid-branching sentence, ought to look elsewhere. So too, readers looking for a guide along the lines of X stylistic move produces Y affective response will be disappointed (as was Williams).

What readers will find in Tufte is a method enacted, a method, as I said earlier, grounded in transformational grammar. Tufte believes the short sentence to be the foundation of language and that it is transformed into countless forms. Consider the following, wherein Tufte sounds very much like the Chomsky of *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*:

> Whether he is aware of it or not, any reader of this book already has a built-in understanding of grammatical patterns. All of us are able to comprehend literally millions of spoken or written sentences we have never heard or seen before— simple sentences and complicated ones, fact and fiction, prose and poetry. We are able to understand each new sentence only because all English sentences are built on a limited number of standard patterns. (*Grammar as Style* iv)

Tufte is speaking here, in a roundabout way, of the deep structures of language, the deep structures that form the foundation of transformational grammar, the deep structures that shape humans' innate capacity for language. In this view of grammar, underlying every sentence is a deep structure. The deep structure is how words relate to one another at the most fundamental level. Deep structures differ from surface structures, which are the structures we read, write,

hear, and speak, and one arrives at the surface structure, according to Chomsky, "by repeated application of certain formal operations called 'grammatical transformation' to objects of a more elemental sort" (16-17). The two are distinct from each other, even if the deep structure appears to have undergone little transformation to become a surface structure.[16]

There is a complex relationship between Chomsky, Tufte, transformational grammar, kernel sentences, and deep and surface structures. Chomsky took the kernel sentence from his teacher Zellig Harris but soon discarded it, Chomsky believing it not to have a "distinctive role in the generation or interpretation of sentences" (17-18). Tufte casts aside Chomsky's deep and surface structures—"important as they are," she says—instead focusing on "the manifest structures of English sentences, the structures that actually appear in modern prose" (*Grammar* iv). But Tufte retains the kernel sentence, as "It is the germ from which other patterns grow and branch, and to which others can be grafted, whole or part" (13), even using the term to title a chapter.

When she takes up *Grammar as Style* some three decades later, Tufte casts aside all explicit references to transformational grammar. Though the book is still sequenced from short sentences to syntactic symbolism, and though each chapter is still sequenced internally from

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[16] Deep and surface structures could account for Fish's method of reading the sentence. Fish depends on the tension between what a reader expects a sentence to do and what the sentence actually does. Such a tension is made possible from a reader recognizing, intuitively, deep structures and then being surprised when the writer manipulates them in certain ways. Fish, however, would bristle at any association with transformational grammar, on at least two grounds. First, as he argues in "What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It? Part II," every act of description is *a priori* an interpretation. Transformational grammar has an air of objectivity about it, an objectivity Fish resists. In his opening remarks to the essay, Fish says his argument linking description and interpretation "not only challenge[s] the claims of stylistics but [also] challenge[s] the very project of linguistics itself" (246). And second, Fish's interest with the sentence is predicated upon its ability to evoke an affective response from the reader; transformational grammar does not do enough to recognize the affective, rhetorical actions of sentences. The two work from different sets of concerns.

simple sentences to increasingly complex grammatical constructions—the book is still built around a transformational grammarian's understanding of language—Tufte takes efforts to hide that allegiance through small, but significant, revisions. Her chapter "The Passive Transformation" is folded into *Artful Sentence'*s chapter on verbs. Her chapter "Kernel Sentences" is retitled "Short Sentences." "Kernel" and "transformation" are absent from the new table of contents. The preface situating Tufte in relation to transformational grammar and the ornamental and organic schools is absent too, as is the polemical first chapter "The Relation of Grammar to Style" where Tufte offered the framework within which to read *Grammar as Style*. As I read Tufte, these revisions are an effort to recast the project, to locate the sentence in space and time, in the lived human experience. "Short sentence" is much more ordinary, much more vernacular, than the critical terminology of transformational grammar. So too, these revisions are an effort to move her project out of the classroom into the public conversations about writing. This much is evident by the fact that *Artful Sentences* has no accompanying workbook, no exercises, no assignment sheets.

The question, then, is why Tufte sets aside the theoretical apparatus offered by transformational grammar. I suggest it is for some sense of disillusionment at the grand claims, the millennial promises, made in the name of transformational grammar, the notion that with this new knowledge the problem of teaching writing would be solved. Though not a transformational grammarian, Fish made those sorts of claims in "Literature and the Reader," that his students would be "incapable of writing uncontrolled prose" (67). Richard Ohmann, on the importance of grammar within a course:

> One way or another the student should be made aware of the abundance of syntactic patterns available to him. If this happens, he will find it easy to extricate

himself from those impasses that occur when he has begun a sentence or a paragraph infelicitously; and he may for the first time get a sense of genuine stylistic choice. ("In Lieu of a New Rhetoric" 21)

Tufte herself makes claims in this same spirit. In *Exercises in Creativity*, Tufte outlines the coursework of the student reading *Grammar as Style*. And that work is imitation. (She is not unlike the Fish of *How to Write a Sentence* in this regard.) Tufte sequences her imitation assignments, moving, in the "Kernel Sentences" chapter, for instance, from imitation of simple proverbs constructed around be-clauses (such as "knowledge is power") to rhetorical uses of these proverbs, as seen in the ninth exercise: "Try an experiment. Write a short passage, three or four sentences, and punctuate the close of it with a kernel proverb, one of your own or from the list of illustrations" (*Exercises* 12). This progression is typical of the *Exercises*. Tufte gives a grammatical form, the student imitates it, then Tufte invites the student to use it in a longer passage. Another example, the tenth exercise: "Develop a paragraph in which you use a very short sentence as a focus, pivot, or summary. Place the sentence at the beginning, middle, or end of the paragraph" (13).

This teaching leads Tufte to make a claim not unlike that of Fish, not unlike that of Ohmann. "With this new access to the countless effective ways of putting ideas down on paper"—the access a product of her corpus of sentences—"writers may well become eager to make use of appositives, say, or of nominative absolutes, of devices learned for subordinating ideas, of right-branching sentences maybe, or of the previously undreamed of benefits of parallelism" (*Grammar* 6). From this, it would seem Tufte's pedagogy is one predicated upon introducing students to the wide range of linguistic and rhetorical options they have available, inviting them to experiment with those options using her exercises grounded in imitation. The

students "may well become eager" to do so. She continues: "Doing this, writers are likely to think through their ideas, elaborate and sharpen them, until they deserve such professional treatment. When this becomes habitual, the actual teaching of style is over" (6).

The teaching of style is over. That is the promise of *Grammar as Style*. Tufte believes, in 1971, that close attention to describing what a sentence does and imitation of those sentences will lead the writer to think through ideas, refine them, elaborate them, sharpen them, this method of reading and writing becoming so ingrained that the teaching of style is over. Tufte admits "there is no magic or talent" in her way of reading: "Attentive reading of good prose should bring you up against some [sentences] just as interesting everyday" (*Exercises* 6). Once students learn to read as Tufte does—once this becomes habit, once the magic is shown to actually be just a well-schooled method—students can teach themselves, finding sentences doing interesting things in any text they read.

But three decades later, these promises vacate Tufte's project, Tufte offering readers just her collection of sentences, no apparatus to read it with. It could be that in 1971 she was part of those who held a "widespread, though naïve, belief that transformational grammar had panacean powers" (Luthy 352) and by 2006 came to see inadequacies in transformational grammar. Melvin Luthy, in his 1977 "Why Transformational Grammar Fails in the Classroom," suggests most transformational grammarians sought two things: "a model of language that would help them teach language skills and a description of language that would help them teach the structure of English sentences" (352). If Tufte sought those things—and I assume she did given the pedagogical structure of *Grammar as Style* and its attendant *Exercises*—the two-fold goals of a transformational grammarian can speak to Tufte's relationship to transformational grammar in 2006. She sets aside the transformational grammarian's method for teaching—*Artful Sentences*

has none of the textbook apparatus that *Grammar as Style* and the *Exercises* do—while retaining the transformational grammarians' understanding of the structure of English, as the chapters of *Artful Sentences* (both their sequencing and their internal structure) are heavily—though tacitly––influenced by transformational grammar.

Luthy pinpoints the demise of transformational grammar on its lack of pedagogical use in the classroom; it is a tool for understanding how language works, not for teaching it, "just as the study of botany helps us understand and appreciate flowers but does not make us good flower-arrangers" (355). Tufte learned this. 35 years the wiser, Tufte makes no grand promises with *Artful Sentences*, no claims that her readers will find a way to solve the problem of how to teach style. She has realized that such promises (in 1971 and more so in 2006) are a tough sell. She asks readers to make sense of her project on their own and—like Williams—many are unable, *Artful Sentences* left unread.

2.4   A PERFORMATIVE READING PRACTICE

I am left with the question of pedagogical value, of what worth the performative sentence—in its various instantiations from Austin, Fish, and Tufte—is to the classroom. Austin's version of performance shifts readerly attention from what words say to what they do. He comes to the conclusion that all language is performative, even when it appears to be merely stating a fact. The act of stating itself is a performance. Austin makes no pedagogical turn, but the import to the classroom is clear: in tending to performance, Austin addresses the rhetoricity of language, acknowledging that all linguistic acts are performative acts working toward doing things with words. And so, he models a way of thinking, a way of engaging a topic, method his primary

focus, as the title of *How to Do Things with Words* suggests. In "Literature and the Reader," Fish's builds upon this act of reading. Fish turns this question of performative language into one of literary and rhetorical analysis. His project might have been titled "How Things Have Been Done with Words." Whereas Austin's work was grounded in everyday language use, Fish brings performance to bear upon the literary. Fish helps readers recognize this performativity, and he offers a method for analyzing it, a method that emphasizes the role of the reader. And, late in his career, Fish turns this method of analysis into one of production in *How To Write a Sentence*, leaning hard on imitation to ingrain sentence forms so that their use becomes instinctive, habitual, second nature.

And then there is Tufte. I read elements of both Austin's and Fish's performativity in her work. She attends to the things words can do through performance. She attends also to the production of discourse via imitation in *Grammar as Style*. But in *Artful Sentences*, she casts aside imitation as well as transformational grammar, offering her readers a pedagogy grounded in something quite different. There is an evolution from the Tufte of 1971 to the Tufte of 2006. Transformational grammar and imitation give way not to mere sentence collecting, not to mere sentence admiration, but instead to a richness of performative sentences that teaches readers through their performance on the page. Tufte is teaching a method of reading. Her project is one where reading—in and of itself—teaches writers to write. That is why she discards the theoretical apparatus. That is why she discards the jargon of transformational grammar. That is why she discards imitation exercises. She does not want these to distract from the reading itself, and she trusts that her demonstration of reading—the display of a careful reader at work—can be instructive. It is a teaching grounded in showing forth a method.

This teaching via demonstration is evident in Tufte's commentary on her collected sentences. She believes, "Prose is linear. It is read and is said to move. It must by nature, therefore, generate a symbolics of spatial and temporal movement widened by its context beyond the limits of the actual sentence read from left to right in so many seconds. In whatever context, the movement may resemble accumulation or attrition, progress or other process, even stasis, or any one of these interrupted, turned, reversed" (*Artful* 271). Tufte's project seeks to provide a language to describe the movement of such prose. She continues: "In space or time or both, it [the sentence] can go in any direction as continuous or repetitive, accelerated or retarded, smooth, halting, or halted. The variety is enormous" (271). I note how performative her reading is: Tufte has sentences continuing, repeating, accelerating, retarding, halting, progressing, processing, interrupted, turned, reversed. She reads sentences as doing something.

Consider, for a moment, Tufte's commentary on short sentences, from *Artful Sentences'*s opening chapter. I will not offer the sentences themselves, just Tufte's readings so as to draw attention to her display of a reading practice:

> Since the kind of idea that is compressed into minimal shape (or that naturally assumes it) tends to be rudimentary, short sentences of this sort often serve well as introductory sentences in a paragraph. As the writer moves into a new topic, in fiction or nonfiction, the *be*-sentence defines and introduces … (23)
>
> A simple flat statement can also appear in the middle of a paragraph. Here, in an essay, it serves as a kind of pivotal assertion … (24)
>
> An equative sentence can also stand by itself as a paragraph to summarize … (25)
>
> Here action closes down to finish in a static *be*-sentence. (25)

> The same sort of sentence is used twice in the next paragraph, for doubled emphasis, an insistent finality. (25)
>
> The intransitive can also provide a quick restatement at the end of a paragraph, leaving us suspended. (27)
>
> Or, an abrupt conclusion. (28)
>
> Or, it can itself constitute a paragraph of transition. (28)

With each commentary, Tufte considers the sentence via performance, searching for the language to describe what it does within a piece of discourse. The short sentence is a means to define and introduce, to make a pivotal assertion, to summarize, to close down action, to emphasize doubly, to restate, to conclude, to transition.

Tufte's commentary could be read as answers to Fish's question "What does this sentence do?", but I also see a carefulness in Tufte's readings, her unwillingness—and inability, perhaps fostered by the sheer breadth of examples she cites—to draw any conclusions (*Grammar* iii). That care is evident in the following, coming after 11 sentences of linking verbs; again, I care not about the sentences themselves, rather, her commentary:

> In these linking examples, the major emphasis tends to fall on the predicate compliment or, sometimes, whatever word or structure is at the end of the sentence (unless the word is a pronoun or has a pronoun as headword), giving added weight to what tends, anyway, to be the most important information, the real news of the sentence. Opening the sentence, the subject is likely to be a character or thing we already know or an idea that has been under discussion, sometimes a pronoun that refers backward. Often it is a person or a thing or an

idea carried over to receive some new predication: the chief interest is likely to be found in the second half of the sentence. (*Artful* 16)

This paragraph resonates with the sentence from Austin I read earlier ("For clearly *any*, or almost any, perlocutionary act is liable to be brought off …"). Both are full of hedges, of corrections, of nuances to the claim made. Tufte uses "tends" twice, "likely" twice, "or" seven times, "often" once. She begins her first two sentences with an adverbial phrase that limits their claims ("In these linking examples" and "Opening the sentence"). Such qualifications drew Williams's ire in his review of *Artful Sentences* (183), Tufte so carefully couching her claims that those claims seem to lose any authority they once had.

Williams's review of Tufte stems from a fundamental misreading of her project. Williams comes at Tufte expecting constative utterances. He wants her to teach facts, to draw conclusions, to make firm claims about writing, to declare statements. Her project is nothing of the sort. It is performative. *Artful Sentences* has no thesis, makes no claims, draws no conclusions, has no declarations. It is a celebration of action, offering insights into the performances of sentences, performances that are one-off instances, performances that can't be repeated or exactly reproduced because of the uniqueness of the circumstances governing the writing of each individual sentence—hence all of Tufte's qualifications. Language use is provisional, and Tufte demonstrates this provisionality through her reading practice.

Artful Sentences is a demonstration, a showing forth of a reading practice, a display of a careful reader at work, and through it, Tufte teaches students not how to use an absolute phrase or how to write a left-branching sentence, but instead how one might read sentences. Tufte's performance of reading performed sentences brings together style and delivery in its attention to how sentences move on the page via grammar and style. She attends to this syntactic delivery

primarily from the perspective of the reader, showing forth her own reading practice. In the latter pages of this chapter on performance, display has emerged as an important term for thinking about Tufte's demonstration of a pedagogy and reading practice; in Chapter Three, I continue this discussion of display and how it bears upon of the teaching of writing.

2.5   INTERCHAPTER: THE SENTENCE, PERFORMED

In her notes to the 1981 edition of Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style*, translator Barbara Wright tells how Queneau's book came to be. Queneau heard Bach's *The Art of Fugue* performed at the Salle Pleyel in the 1930s, and "What particularly struck Queneau about this piece was that, although based on a rather slight theme, its variations 'proliferated almost to infinity.' It would be interesting, he thought, to create a similar work of literature" (Wright "Notes" 4). Queneau began writing a story of a scuffle on a bus, varying it stylistically with each retelling. When he had 12 versions of the story in 1942, he sent it to a publisher. The editor, confused as to what the pieces were and what they attempted to do, rejected them. But Queneau kept writing, amassing 99 exercises by 1946 and finding a publisher, the first edition of *Exercises in Style* published in 1947 (Wright 4).[17]

Each exercise is a paragraph or two long. Queneau takes some from classical rhetoric (Homeoptotes, Onomatopoeia, Parechesis). Others he makes up: Rainbow (where Queneau litters the piece with the colors of the rainbow), You Know (Queneau inserts the phrase ad nauseam), and Gustatory (abounding in food metaphors). Queneau adopts different genres

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[17] Queneau stopped at 99 pieces because he thought 99 "to be sufficient; neither too many nor too few; the Greek ideal, you might say" (Wright "Notes" 4). Queneau eventually wrote 124 exercises, and each edition of the *Exercises* contains some compilation of 99 pieces. *Exercises in Style* has been translated into 32 languages.

(Official Letter, Notation, Opera English) and different discourse communities (Medical, Mathematical), even devolving, at times, into nonsense (Permutations by Groups of 5, 6, 7, and 8 Letters). The piece is a stylistic tour de force.

I asked my students to read Queneau. Some objected, thinking Queneau a show-off and not writing anything of substance. Both are smart readings. The book does read as a masterful display of writerly ability, at times a bit full of itself. Regarding their objection that Queneau is not writing anything of substance—indeed, the story of the bus ride quickly becomes monotonous—that too hits on a key element of Queneau's project. Queneau (in my reading of him) tells a mundane story 99 times because he wants readers—just as Austin does, and Fish, and Tufte too—to break away from reading sentences for their meaning and to instead consider what they do. By telling (and retelling, and retelling again) a story that, ultimately, is boring, Queneau points readers toward the performativity of style, grammar, and syntax, the story not distracting from what Queneau's sentences do in each exercise.

Because the passive voice is so often vilified, I asked my students to read Queneau's Passive exercise as Fish might, asking "What does this sentence do?" ("Literature in the Reader" 25). Here is the Queneau they worked with:

> It was midday. The bus was being got into by passengers. They were being squashed together. A hat was being worn on the head of a young gentleman, which hat was encircled by a plait and not by a ribbon. A long neck was one of the characteristics of the young gentleman. The man standing next to him was being grumbled at by the latter because of the jostling which was being inflicted on him by him. As soon as a vacant seat was espied by the young gentleman it was made the object of his precipitate movements and it became sat down upon.

The young gentleman was later seen by me in front of the gare Saint-Lazare. He was clothed in an overcoat and was having a remark made to him by a friend who happened to be there to the effect that it was necessary to have an extra button put on it. (72-73)

With this assignment, I was not seeking a grammar lesson on the passive, nor a condemnation of the passive, nor even an endorsement of the passive. I wanted students to think about what the passive *does*, what actions it performs, what effects it has on the reader, what role it plays in the sentence, the paragraph, the scene, the story, the piece as a whole. I realize that Queneau's paragraph may not be the best text to address these issues, as it is rare a reader or a writer would encounter or create a text written entirely in the passive, or even nine passive sentences back-to-back-to-back. Still, by the sheer repetition of the passive, I hoped Queneau's piece could highlight what this grammatical construction does, or could do, both within and for his writing as well as within and for the students' own writing.

Consider the following, from an exchange student:

They [passive sentences] make readers feel there is a force that push everything into their positions. I feel a kind of unpleasent and involuntery when I read these sentences. The sentence: "The bus was being got into by passengers," for example, shows that the bus doesn't want to take anyone in but people get into by force.

The student builds his reading of Queneau's performative sentences around "a force that push everything into their positions." There is a helplessness about the passive voice, this student contends, a helplessness brought about by this force that pushes things into positions. The student reads the bus as not wanting any passengers; the "people get into by force." Although

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the student does not address how syntax creates this feeling of helplessness, it is clear how it happens: by moving the object to the subject position of the sentence, its acted-upon-ness is emphasized. The student seems aware of this ability of the passive to alter emphasis: "Sentences in Passive change the motivation of the story. … Sentences really allow a writer to change definitions of stories and direct readers' emotions." I read the student's use of "motivation of the story" and "change definitions" as statements concerning the emphasis of the sentence, an emphasis changed when the passive reorients subject and object. The student is primarily concerned with the affective outcomes of this performance, ascribing to the sentence the ability to "direct readers' emotions."

The link between the passive and an affective response was common. Here's another reading of Queneau, one by a student not nearly as disturbed by the passive:

> Although the passage (Passive) sounds particularly normal, I noticed in the beginning he kept on using the word being. This word allows for a more laid back type of tone when reading this passage. These sentences make it feel like what's going on isn't that serious, It's just happening, "It's all good and chill." This passage makes everything seem non-chalant as tho it does not matter. "He was clothed in an overcoat and was having a remark made to him by a friend who happened to be there to the effect that it was necessary to have an extra button put on it."

Whereas the first student took the passive to be a matter of force producing an unpleasant, involuntary, helpless feeling, this student reads the passive as "laid back," as "all good and chill." He does so by homing in on the use of "being." "The bus was being … They were being … A hat was being …The man standing next to him was being …" This student has recognized that

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the passive is not a world of nouns doing things but of nouns having things done to them, the nouns just "being" while they are acted upon. The nonchalant tenor of the passive, the feeling it projects that "it does not matter," stems, in part from the length of passive sentences. Note the length of the sentence the student quotes at the end of his piece: 37 words to say what could be said in 15: He wore an overcoat, and his friend said to put an extra button on it. There is no urgency about Queneau's use of the passive, his long, meandering sentences contributing to the "all good and chill," "laid back," just-being-there quality of the piece.

A third reading of Queneau, from another exchange student:[18]

> Passive exercise emphasizes the object, not the person. The objects become the characters of the story and the characters become objects. The sentences in the passive voice slow down the action, giving us the pictures of the effects of action, not the action itself. In the sentence "a vacant seat was espied by the young gentleman" the emphasis is shifted from the man onto the seat—firstly vacant and then suddenly taken. We know the effect (taken seat) but we cannot read the action. We cannot see through the text the process of taking the seat by the man.
>
> Passive voice is also seen as emotionless. There is no action, and we focus on emotionless object rather than people (or we treat people as objects), so for me this exercise hides the emotional part of the story.

This reading of Queneau brings together the concerns of the first two. The student addresses how the passive sentences "slow down the action," perhaps recognizing the same qualities about the passive that prompt the second student to read it as "chill." But this third reading of Queneau

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[18] I note that two of the three students I quote here are exchange students, and they wrote some of the most provocative readings of Queneau in the class. I suggest it is because working in a foreign language brings with it a heightened sensitivity to what that language does.

goes further. She notes that the passive is "giving us the pictures of the effects of the action, not the action itself." The student sees that the passive shifts focus from what happens in a sentence to the outcomes of that action. As such, "We know the effect (taken seat) but we cannot read the action. We cannot see through the text the process of taking the seat by the man."

This reading of Queneau in terms of the passive erasing the action of the sentence departs from how the passive is used in scientific writing: to call attention to the action performed. The beaker was filled, the hydrogen was added, 12 specimens were dilated, etc. But for this student, the passive, because it gives readers a picture of the action but does not depict the action itself—in that it does not have a subject doing something—erases the processes taking place. This erasure of the action elaborates on the concerns of the first student that the passive can "change the motivation of the story … and direct readers' emotions." But rather than read the passive as directing the reader's emotions, she reads it in terms of the emotion in the writing itself. Because the passive has no action, she argues, readers "focus on emotionless object rather than people." This is evident in her quotation of Queneau—"a vacant seat was espied by the young gentleman"—a sentence that has readers looking at a seat rather than the man preparing to sit in it. The student reasons that because the seat has no emotion yet is the focus of the sentence, the passive suppresses emotion by directing readers' attention to seats rather than people. The passive has another outcome: "(or we treat people as objects)." The student presents the objectification of people as a parenthetical. Yet this is an idea too important to be a parenthetical aside. It is what prompts, I think, the first student's adverse response to the passive as making him feel "a kind of unplesent and involuntery," the fear of the passive having "a force that push everything into their positions." People are objectified, helpless, removed of agency, objects to be acted upon rather than to act by their own accord.

There is much that could be done here. The first student, for example, could be asked to articulate further his understanding of this ordering force of the passive and whether the active voice also forces things into position; the second student could explain his curious claim that the passive "sounds particularly normal"; the third student could be pressed on her assertion that the passive erases action. But these are questions of analysis, and these readings could be turned into means of production. The students could rewrite Queneau's passage in the active voice and discuss the effects of that rewrite. They could turn to a paragraph—or single sentence, or string of sentences—of their own, rewrite into the passive, and discuss the effects of that rewrite. The questions here would be why a writer would want to write in the passive, what it allows the writer to do, what it keeps the writer from doing—what actions these sentences perform—the students using performance to read their own work and to think through its revision.

3.0   RHETORICS OF DISPLAY AND RHETORICS OF EDUCATION

> He's going to use everything he's got, what he's heard or read, what he's only half-learned. And he's going to hammer it, twist it, wring it until what isn't familiar becomes familiar, does what he wants it to do.
>
> William E. Coles, Jr.
> *The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing* (178)

The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing is William E. Coles, Jr.'s narrative account of teaching

Humanities 1, a required first-year composition course at (then) Case Institute of Technology.

The Plural I began as a 297-page, typed report titled "English is a Foreign Language: A report on

an experimental Freshman English course taught Fall semester, 1965-66, at Case Institute of

Technology." The report sought to determine the feasibility of instituting a writing curriculum

based off the one Coles taught at Amherst, a curriculum learned under the direction of Theodore

Baird (a).[1] Coles knows his report will not "be read in its entirety by everyone" but he believes,

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[1] Coles taught at Amherst from 1960-65 and at Case from 1965-70. He then taught at Drexel University from 1970-74 before coming to the University of Pittsburgh, where he retired in 1998. While teaching at Case, Coles completed his dissertation "Novelist of Style: A Critical Reading of the Novels of Thomas Love Peacock" for advisor Franz Montgomery at the University of Minnesota in 1967. Coles published nothing from his dissertation, and Peacock does not appear in any of Coles's subsequent scholarship or teaching materials. Montgomery published little, though in the 1930s he did co-edit a textbook *Essays in Science and Engineering: Selected*

nonetheless, that "everyone connected with that mysterious thing we refer to as the process of education at Case ought to have a copy of it" (b).

The report, the book, and the course they dramatize are oriented around a sequence of 30 writing assignments. There is no textbook; the course generates its own materials via its assignment sequence, and class discussion focuses on student papers written for that day's assignment. Each chapter of *The Plural I* covers one class period, presenting an assignment, two or three student essays in response to it, and Coles's narrative of the ensuing classroom discussion. Coles dramatizes the classroom discussion; it is not a transcription (*The Plural I* 4). He says he made nothing up in his representation of the class: "I have rendered, not invented; selected rather than imagined" ("English is a Foreign Language" II). *The Plural I* is an unusual book in Composition's professional literature: pedagogical theory that relies on narrative while taking the form of a quasi-epistolary novel built around nearly 100 pieces of student writing. It is, as Coles says in his report, "an account of how we moved from class to class … a record of where we started and where we came out" (a).

A note before I progress: In a later essay, Coles explains that the teacher of *The Plural I* is a persona (*The Plural I—and After* 273). There are plural Coleses here: the teacher Coles as a character within the narrative, and the writer Coles crafting the story and presenting a pedagogy.

Early on in the book, the teacher is distressed. He pulls no punches describing his students' writing: it sounds like the Jolly Green Giant, their writing a put-up job, phony, a cop-out, bulletproof. Of the first stack of essays from the course, he says, "Each of them was as suggestive of training, capability, and intelligence; as flawlessly organized; as free from conventional errors—and as depersonalized, as empty, as ultimately meaningless as this:"—and

Readings for Students of Composition. The textbook, predicated on imitation exercises, is representative of the pedagogy Coles resists, his own classroom built around student writing.

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now he brings in his first piece of student writing, titled "In Defense of the Ambitious Amateur"—"The question of the amateur's place in a society of professionals is one that has been greatly changed by the scientific and cultural revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (*The Plural I* 19). This stale writing does not surprise Coles; he expected as much.

After reading the essays in response to Assignment 3—another stack of cop-outs—Coles proposes a game: "Let's play Themewriting" (36). Coles asks for three words. The students volunteer "man," "black," and "TNT." Their laughter reveals they know the game Coles is asking them to play. Coles writes the three words on the board and asks a student to compose a Theme. One student offers: "The day that Man invented TNT was the blackest day in the history of humanity" (36). They do it again; from "chicken," "arm," and "drugstore," a student composes, "Any drug store can arm itself against failure by selling chicken" (36-37). From those openings, the Theme would write itself, as it has been in the students' papers thus far in the course. Coles paraphrases their ensuing discussion:

> How does one proceed? Well, the opener, of course, set everything up. With the chicken sentence you'd go on to say that chicken was: one, delicious; two, nutritious; three, easy to prepare—devoting, say, a paragraph to each. With the sentence on TNT you'd talk first about peaceful uses of the explosive, in mining, railroading, etc., and then you'd turn to killing, particularly the killing of something called wimminenchildren, then to destruction by remote control, and finally to man's inability to you know what with something like this as a windup: "In spite of the many benefits which the invention . . . great achievements . . . control of the environment . . . master of the universe. . . . BUT, when weighed against . . . hideous brutality . . . only conclude . . . not master of himself." (37).

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The ellipses here are Coles's. They signify that there are certain signposts the Themewriter must reach, shared values like benefits, achievements, control, and mastery. How the Themewriter arrives at each is inconsequential—hence the ellipses—and, for that matter, the students already know how to get to each destination; Coles does not need to teach those moves. With the TNT example, the Themewriter begins with the benefits of dynamite before turning to its costs, weighing pros and cons. The Themewriter then invokes some value shared with their audience––"something called wimminenchildren," the "something called" suggestive not only of the problematic abstraction of "wimminenchildren" but also the flippant use of it. The Themewriter is playing a game here, not engaging in serious writing. The final "windup" repeats the broad movements of benefits weighed against costs, with a well placed "BUT" leading to the conclusion, a conclusion both inevitable—the writer can "only conclude"—and moralistic, cautionary.

Coles—the writer—uses this scene to establish what he understands as the starting point for any writing class. The students know the routines. It is the teacher's job to call their bluff, to get in the way, to make them think about their delivery. But just as the students are going through the motions, the teacher in this scene can be read as doing the same. Coles admits, "The first day of class I began exactly as I have been starting my classes for the past ten years" ("English is a Foreign Language" 1). When Coles calls their work Themewriting, when he proposes the Themewriting game, when he decries put-up jobs and phoniness in writing, he too is following a script. It is a script that asks him, the teacher, to disrupt their tried-and-true Themes, and the script and Coles's performance of it make students uneasy. In response to the Themewriting game, one student protests, "But it gets you by … you have to know how to do it" (37). Coles concedes that students do have to know Themewriting, but he presses on, undeterred.

This is the drama of the book: finding a replacement for Themewriting, trying to write in a style that Coles might value.

In what follows, I suggest Themewriting is a display of a student's ability to wield a particular discourse within a given context. Though Coles never uses the term (neither within *The Plural I* nor his other work), his students enact what classical rhetoric calls the epideictic: the rhetoric of display, of demonstration, of showing forth, of making known, of (in some translations) shining.[2] Coles provides a provocation to consider how the rhetoric of display operates within a classroom, and how this rhetoric of display is a matter of delivery. With the Themewriting game, Coles calls attention to delivery, to the moves students make in service of a particular way of talking, a particular way of engaging material. So too, the Themewriting game is an epideictic display predicated upon demonstrating agility with a learned discourse. *The Plural I*, then, revolves around both display and delivery: Coles displays his course (its syllabus, assignments, essays, and discussions); the students display their writing, their writing itself a display of the moves valued within a particular discourse; and the book as a whole displays a pedagogy situated within (and against) the Amherst tradition—all these displays delivered through writing.

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[2] These are common definitions of the epideictic. See, for example, Jost (17); Prelli (2); Rosenfield (135); Walker (*Rhetoric* 9).

3.1   THE RHETORIC OF PRAISE AND BLAME

In *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Jeffrey Walker corrects Composition and Rhetoric's fundamental understanding of classical rhetorical theory and practice.[3] Most histories of rhetoric uphold a divide between *epideiktikon* and *pragmatikon*. The pragmatic, Walker notes, "was traditionally understood to include two main types of civic discourse: speeches of accusation and defense in courts of law; and speeches proposing, supporting, or opposing laws or resolutions in political assemblies (or speeches of advice presented in council or to a magistrate or ruler)" (7). The pragmatic is the rhetoric of the courtroom (judicial, also called forensic) and the rhetoric of the senate (legislative, also called deliberative). Against that is the epideictic, which "was more amorphous and inclusive, though it was generally identified with discourse delivered outside judicial and legislative forums, such as speeches performed at festivals and ceremonial or symposiastic occasions, and it was typically conceived of as the discourse of praise and blame" (7). Epideictic rhetoric is generally associated with poetry rather than argument, a catchall of literature, of drama, of anything from "from funeral speeches to after-dinner speeches" (Sullivan "Epideictic Rhetoric of Science" 231).

This divide between the pragmatic and the epideictic is problematic, Walker argues, because the epideictic comes to be associated with the literary; the literary comes to be seen as distinct from the rhetorical; the rhetorical comes to be associated with the pragmatic; and the pragmatic comes to be the privileged form of public discourse, as it has practical outcomes: going to war, raising or lowering taxes, convicting or acquitting defendants, etc. Consequently,

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[3] The argument concerning the epideictic Walker advances in *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* has its roots in his earlier piece, "Aristotle's Lyric: Re-Imagining the Rhetoric of Epideictic Song."

the epideictic is set aside as having little consequence in comparison to the weighty matters handled by pragmatic uses of language. The epideictic is seen as " 'secondary,' derivative, and inferior" (Walker *Rhetoric* vii). Walker finds this division between the epideictic and the pragmatic unsatisfactory not only because it denigrates the work of the epideictic and incorrectly represents the relationship between rhetoric and poetics, but more so because it fails to articulate, or leave space for, the primacy of the epideictic. And so he works to upend it. Correcting the record on the Greeks, his project offers a revisionary history of classical rhetorical and poetic theory and practice.

Walker reclaims the epideictic by reworking its definition, grounding his project in the practices of classical rhetoricians and poets. Pushing against definitions of the judicial, deliberative, and epideictic based on subject matter (the legal, the political, the artistic), location (the courtroom, the senate, the theatre), time (the past, the future, the present), and/or form (argument versus poetry), Walker claims the audience's disposition is what determines whether discourse is pragmatic or epideictic.[4]

Relying on Aristotle, Walker asserts that pragmatic discourse is spoken to an audience of judges, "people who have been formally empowered to make rulings within a particular institutional setting" (8). Because the rhetoric of the court or the senate depends so heavily upon making judgments—whether a "decision of guilt and the assessment of a punishment (or an acquittal), the enactment (or rejection) of a law, or the enactment (or rejection) of a proposal"— the pragmatic is defined by "the production of … institutional transactions of the public business" (8). Against that is the epideictic, which Walker concedes could be defined by "its lack of a

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[4] The division of judicial, deliberative, and epideictic based on time comes from Aristotle. George Kennedy objects to this schema, calling it "somewhat strained" (*Rhetoric* 1.3.4, fn. 81). Walter Beale also believes it to be forced ("Rhetorical Performative Discourse" 221-22).

pragmatic business function" (8). The epideictic does not decide on matters of war, it does not convict or acquit, it does not reject or enact proposals: "there is no vote and no verdict … The audience simply applauds, disperses, and goes home (or, in the case of a published text, the audience stops reading, puts down the scroll, and goes on to the next thing)" (8-9).

But this assessment of the epideictic, Walker contends, is not generous enough. The audience of epideictic rhetoric does do something—and something important, at that. Again looking to Aristotle, Walker notes that "the role of an epideictic audience is not to be a *kritês* [that is, a judge] but a *theôros*, that is, one who is to make 'observations' (*theôriai*) about what is praise-worthy, preferable, desirable or worthy of belief in the speaker's *logos*" (9). Walker clarifies: "The role of the *theôros, in short, is not to make rulings but to form opinions about and in response to the discourse presented*" (9, emphasis Walker's). The task set before the audience changes from pragmatic to epideictic discourse. With the epideictic, the audience does not sit in judgment over the subject matter as they do in the courts or in the senate; instead, the audience is to observe, to form opinions but not necessarily take action.

This difference in how an audience ought to respond to *pragmatikon* as opposed to *epideiktikon* gives the epideictic the unique ability to shape the shared values of a community. Walker argues the epideictic "lead[s] its audience of *theôroi* to contemplation (*theôria*) and insight and ultimately to the formation of opinions and desires on matters of philosophical, social, ethical, and cultural concerns" (9). He continues:

> In this view, "epideictic" appears as that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives; it shapes the ideologies and imageries with which, and by which, the individual members of a community identify themselves; and, perhaps most significantly, it shapes the

fundamental grounds, the "deep" commitments and presuppositions, that will

underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic

forums. (9)

The epideictic shows forth before an audience, leading the audience to contemplation, that

contemplation shaping the shared values of the immediate audience and the larger community.

Those shared values, in turn, become the shared values from which a rhetor argues within the

pragmatic settings of the courtroom or the senate.[5] And so, even though the epideictic has no

vote, no ostensible outcome in the same way that a trial does, its outcome is this: the reification

of existing beliefs, or, at times, the challenging and refinement of those beliefs, those very beliefs

becoming the beliefs from which people argue in the course of pragmatic rhetoric.[6]

Walter Jost elaborates on the epideictic's relationship to a community's identity: "It can

function philosophically, transforming criteria and reconvening a community, clarifying what the

community may not have known it knew, or convening a new community by virtue of what

readers learn about how they might come to order themselves, however provisionally" (151).

Note the introspective, reflective, contemplative character Jost ascribes to the epideictic. The

epideictic clarifies for a community what it did not know about itself. Note too the pedagogical

overtone: "what readers learn." The epideictic teaches how that community might grow into

something different, reformed, renewed. Through the rhetorical acts of praise and blame—not

its ends, but its means—epideictic rhetoric performs an educational function: it offers a space

both to teach the audience what it means to praise and blame in accordance with the shared

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[5] As Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca claim, argument begins with agreement, with "adherence to the propositions from which [the speaker] will start" (65). See also Sheard (766).

[6] For other scholars expanding the bounds of the epideictic beyond praise and blame, see Michael Carter; Walter Beale ("Rhetorical Performative Discourse"); Walter Jost; Lawrence Rosenfield; Cynthia Sheard; and Dale Sullivan.

values of a community, but so too it offers a space to resist those shared values, to reshape them in accordance with the changing needs of the community. Teaching what it means to be part of a community while also working to refine that community situates the epideictic as pedagogical: the epideictic indoctrinates an individual—whether child or adult—into a community's customs, traditions, and beliefs by way of the repetition and enactment of those shared values.[7]

Because of this relationship to the shared values of a community, Walker claims the epideictic is foundational to all rhetorical practice. The epideictic "shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a culture lives" (*Rhetoric* 9). Those codes then inform pragmatic rhetorics, as they are the foundation upon which arguments are built. The epideictic "shapes the fundamental grounds, the 'deep' commitments and presuppositions, that will underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic forums" (9). When the poet praises courage, the community reinforces its valuing of courage, such that the lawyer will speak of his defendant's courage in making a case for his character. The epideictic, in teaching what the community values, creates and refines and reinforces the values upon which the community in turn bases its deliberative and judicial acts.[8]

Yet, this cultivation of the shared values of a community contributes to the degradation of epideictic rhetoric. Walker notes that the epideictic can possess "a deeply conservative, even oppressive social force" (12). Because the epideictic traditionally is associated with poetry—

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[7] See Dale L. Sullivan's "A Closer Look at Education as Epideictic Rhetoric" and "The Epideictic Character of Rhetorical Criticism," both of which connect the epideictic and the classroom.

[8] Dale Sullivan has argued that the epideictic is problematic because in cultivating the shared values of a community, epideictic rhetoric assumes and perpetuates a homogenous community, thereby calling into question the relevance of epideictic rhetoric in a post-modern world ("The Epideictic Character"). Though not addressing epideictic rhetoric outright, see also Joseph Harris's "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing" and Mary Louise Pratt's "Linguistic Utopias," both of which challenge the idea of a homogenous community.

with crafted, metered, beautiful language—it has a hypnotic quality about it. This hypnotic quality enables the epideictic to lull its audience into compliance with the values it advocates. Walker elaborates: "One is hypnotized by the beautiful words repeating themselves forever, and constrained in thought by composition principles that lend themselves more to the copious stacking-up of equivalent phrases than to reasoned inquiry" (12). Walker notes too the "ancestral/archival authority" of the epideictic, this authority drawing upon a community's reservoir of shared values, the ancestral and the archival becoming resources for future rhetorical invention and education (12). By invoking the ancestral and the archival, the epideictic teaches what it means to be part of a community, and herein is the problem: often, the epideictic leans toward the repetition of those values and away from critical, reasoned inquiry into them.

This relationship between the epideictic and the shared values of a community creates two possible dangers for the epideictic rhetor. The first is a boring speech. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca note this tendency, cautioning against discourse whose conclusion is known in advance. As examples, they point to sermons and epideictic discourse; with each, the audience anticipates the argument, its progression, and its conclusion, such that "no freedom is left to the speaker," the speech becoming "trite and banal" (469). The other risk is the inverse of the boring speech: self-aggrandizing display. Because content is already agreed upon, the epideictic orator can focus more on form. The emphasis upon form feeds into the association between the epideictic the literary, the epideictic orator performing a masterful display of her poetic sensibilities. Jost elaborates: "[T]his same opportunity for self-display runs the risk of deliquescing into crass showmanship, false posing, hollow oracularity, empty verbiage" (148). This is "mere" display, the view of the epideictic that denigrates it from the status given to the pragmatic. Whereas the rhetorics of the courts and of the senate have a certain gravitas about

them, whereas the rhetorics of the courts and of the senate deal with issues of consequence, whereas the rhetorics of the courts and of the senate make decisions with tangible outcomes, the epideictic is flashy, showy, little more than a display of the speaker's skills. Because its conclusions are known in advance, the epideictic rhetor must do something to hold an audience, and that something is an extravagance of display: "This remains a standing temptation to any epideictic rhetor, and marks an extreme distance from the epideictic's original concern with the health of the civic polity" (Jost 148).

I note how similar the poles are that mark the extreme distance Jost identifies: the redemption and disparagement of the epideictic both hinge upon its relationship to the shared values of a community. At one end is the mindless repetition of the shared values of a community: epideictic rhetoric as crass showmanship. At the other is the cultivation of the shared values of a community: epideictic rhetoric as community enrichment. Thus, the basis for the degradation of epideictic rhetoric—its relationship to, and cultivation of, the shared values of a community—becomes a means of redemption. In the histories of rhetoric Walker seeks to rewrite, the epideictic is of little consequence because it merely affirms beliefs already held by the audience; it does not accomplish much in comparison to the pragmatic and its decisions concerning war and peace, guilt and innocence. Yet, the epideictic can be reclaimed by acknowledging that yes, the epideictic does concern itself with these shared values, and yes, there are dangers inherent in the mindless (though stylish) repetition of those values—but so too the rhetorical function of the epideictic resides in its potential to reify, reshape, or refine those values.

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As a rhetoric of display, the epideictic has within its purview delivery, for delivery, as it sets something before an audience, is all things epideictic rhetoric is commonly defined as: a display, a showing forth, a demonstration, a making known, a shining. But delivery is inherently persuasive, and to equate epideictic rhetoric with delivery risks ascribing value to the epideictic solely because it has pragmatic qualities, thereby affirming the pragmatic as the measure of rhetorical worth and undoing Walker's sound argument. I recognize this tension, but I want to pursue the relationship between persuasive delivery and demonstrative epideictic rhetoric because of its pedagogical implications. The epideictic asks—requires, even—that audiences engage discourse not within a paradigm of logic-driven argumentation aimed toward persuasion, but within a framework of praise and blame critiquing a demonstration of rhetorical ability. This shift in audience priorities broadens the range of what an Argument might accomplish, persuasion no longer the golden standard (or sole purpose) of rhetorical practice.

This effort to broaden the capacities of what rhetoric might accomplish is, I think, one reason these scholars turn to the epideictic. Pragmatic rhetorics rest solely upon argumentation, but the epideictic does much more. Dale Sullivan lists five functions of, and unique to, epideictic rhetoric: education, legitimation, demonstration, celebration, and criticism ("The Epideictic Rhetoric of Science"). Through these, Sullivan argues, the "epideictic builds cultures by establishing and maintaining beliefs, values, and ways of seeing that serve as a form of life for everyday activities" (232). This link between rhetorical practice and everyday activities is vital. I cannot help but think of the epideictic as the rhetoric of Tufte and her reading practice grounded in Ordinary Language Philosophy. The epideictic is the rhetoric of the everyday, the rhetoric that then informs everyday rhetorical practice, as circular as that is.

This epideictic influence is perhaps most evident in the classroom. The discussion, the close reading, the essay assignment—these establish and maintain certain values and beliefs. They establish the everyday activities of the classroom, the classroom producing the discourses it strives to teach. But this practice of epideictic rhetoric in the classroom is not always easy, as Coles's teaching shows. His students work within a confined system. They hold fast to the Theme, a discourse learned and valued within their previous schooling. Coles brings new assignments, the unfamiliar, and his students struggle to reconcile it with the everyday practices they know, the everyday practices years of epideictic rhetoric has taught them to value. They write as the epigraph to this chapter describes, using everything they've got, whatever they've heard or read, whatever they've half-learned, and they are hammering it, twisting it, wringing it until what isn't familiar becomes familiar and does what they want it to do. That is, they approach Coles's pedagogy with unease and try to shoehorn it into the discourses they are familiar with, the discourses they know and can practice well. It is a moment where two value systems clash, each attempting—through an epideictic display of its values: the students display their writing; Coles displays his criticism—to bring the other around.

3.2   COLES AND AMHERST

The Plural I sits on the fringes of Composition, seldom read and cited. In its day, it was quickly dismissed. Bruce Horner notes how Coles's work (along with David Bartholomae's) has been "unusually liable to mixed, sometimes contradictory interpretations" (*Terms* 193). Coles is linked to "hard rhetoric" and " 'manly' plain-spokenness" (Dillon 64, qtd. in Horner 193; see also Catano and Coles's response to him), but also to the Expressivists who value the student-

centered, therapeutic classroom where students find and free the self (Berlin makes this connection; see Horner 193-94).[9] Horner suggests such competing readings come from Coles's "resistance … to ready commodification" (193), that is, that Coles resists the dominant traditions and pedagogies shaping Composition and consequently is hard to read, hard to place. I add that the conflicting readings come also from the strong presence of the teacher-character Coles presents in the classroom (a character quite blunt) set against Coles's emphasis on voice: he does, after all, open the first day of class discussion with "What sort of voice speaks in this paper?" (*The Plural I* 21). Coles presents plural Coleses in *The Plural I* such that the project is read in many, and conflicting, ways.

In his 1987 *College English* article "The Plural Text/The Plural Self: Roland Barthes and William Coles," Joseph Harris offers one of the most nuanced reading of Coles, arguing that while Coles is concerned with voice, "this concern is predicated on the belief that our language is never fully our own, that a writer's text is always a patch work of other texts" (162). Pushing against Berlin's reading of Coles as an Expressivist, Harris argues, "Berlin's problem in reading Coles is, I think, that he sees him starting with the self of the writer and then moving to the question of what language best expresses that self. The movement is actually the opposite. Writers start with a language common to us all and try to claim some part of it as their own" (162). Harris does not use the term epideictic in his reading of Coles, but there are epideictic

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[9] Another common way to read Coles is to trace him back to Amherst. See, for instance, Boe (6); Garay (101); Keith (Review of *Composing* 68); Higgins (106); Horner (*Terms* 179-87); Russell (441); Varnum (222); L. Walker (254-55).

overtones in Harris's argument that writers begin with a common language and reshape it to meet their needs.[10]

That reshaping is evident in Coles's own relationship to Baird's pedagogy. Baird oversaw freshman writing at Amherst College from 1938-1966, directing the required two-semester course English 1-2. His writing curriculum eschewed textbooks in favor of student writing as the central text of a course. Students wrote a new essay for each and every class period, the essays in response to a sequence of assignments addressing themselves to some nominal topic in order to get at the real subject of the course: writing. A writing course, in Baird's view, must be a course in writing, not on literature or politics or the hobbyhorse (whatever it may be) of the teacher.[11]

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[10] In a review dated July 8, 2012 on *Good Reads*, Joseph Harris posted the following regarding *The Plural I*: "Reread for the Dead Poets project. This was the focus of the first academic essay I ever published, so it was interesting to revisit. I remember being powerfully moved by reading it. I'm less so, now. It seems a little clunky and aggressive." Though less impressed with *The Plural I* than he had been, Harris still gives it four out of five stars.

[11] Aside from a handful of internal memos and Amherst publications, Baird did not write about English 1-2. For more on the course, see John Boe's "From the Editor: Puritan English," James Broderick's "A Study of the Freshman Composition Course at Amherst: Action, Order, and Language," Walter Gibson's "Theodore Baird," Margery Sabin's "Evolution and Revolution: Changes in the Literary Humanities," and Bruce Horner's "Resisting Traditions in Composing Composition," "Traditions and Professionalization: Reconceiving Work in Composition" and *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*. Robin Varnum's *Fencing with Words: A History of Writing Instruction at Amherst College during the Era of Theodore Baird, 1938-1966* is the most exhaustive. For Coles's own account of teaching at Amherst, see "Teaching Writing, Teaching Literature: The Plague on Both Houses."
Rueben Brower taught at Amherst under Baird before taking English 1-2 to Harvard, where the course in composition evolved into a course in reading, Humanities 6. The two share many affinities; for descriptions of Humanities 6, see Brower's "Reading in Slow Motion" and Richard Poirier's "Hum 6, or Reading before Theory."

Though Coles is part of what Ann Berthoff calls the "Amherst Mafia" (72), his relationship to Baird is complicated.[12] In interviews with Robin Varnum, Coles and other members of the Amherst Mafia "displayed what I [Varnum] took to be a desire to disabuse me of any notion I might have had that they were acolytes of Baird" (224). But Baird's shadow looms over Coles's teaching and scholarship, Coles confessing that Baird "helped me to find myself as a teacher" (*Composing II* 1) even though Coles admitted to Varnum that "Baird had made it impossible for others to imitate him" (Varnum 224). Baird's influence appears on a stylistic level with Coles's frequent use of capital letters to call attention to common ideas he wishes to subvert, something Baird does in his own writing. It appears in Coles's vocabulary, taking (among other phrases) Themewriting from Baird, as well as the admonition that students stop Throat Clearing (that is, writing empty introductions). It appears in Coles's scholarship arguing that writing courses should be courses on writing.[13] It appears at the level of course design, Coles relying heavily on a writing pedagogy predicated upon sequenced writing assignments, a hallmark of Baird's English 1-2. It appears in Coles's dedications of *Composing* and *Teaching Composing* to Baird, and in Coles's use of Baird as an epigraph to "The Teaching of Writing as

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[12] In addition to Coles, the Amherst Mafia includes Jonathan Bishop, Rueben Brower, John Butler, Armour Craig, Benjamin DeMott, Walker Gibson, Richard Poirier, William Pritchard, Roger Sale, and William Taylor (Varnum 222).

[13] See, for instance, "The Teaching of Writing as Writing," *Composing*, *Composing II*, "Freshman Composition: The Circle of Unbelief," *The Plural I*, and *The Plural I—and After*. The argument that a writing course ought to be a course in writing has currency still; see, for instance, David Sumner's "Don't Forget to Argue: Problems, Possibilities, and Ecocomposition," which pushes against composition courses that hope to convert students to an instructor's own political views at the expense of teaching writing.

Writing" and "English is a Foreign Language." [14] And it appears, most strongly, in Coles's assignment sequences.

In "The Teaching of Writing as Writing," Coles lays out a course design. What Coles proposes draws heavily on Baird's English 1-2 in that there is no textbook, no instruction on how to write a Theme, no attention given to basic skills; it is a "departure from the traditional college course" and "Its subject is writing" (111). The daily work of the course: students write in response to a set of sequenced writing assignments, producing an essay for each class meeting. Student writing is reproduced on anonymous mimeographs, and that writing is the primary text of the class. Each class period is a discussion of (usually) two or three pieces of student writing. Regarding the assignment sequence:

> Every year I make a new sequence of assignments dealing with a new and different problem, so that for all concerned, this is always a new course, a fresh progression in thought and expression, a gradual building up of a common vocabulary, a more precise definition of terms. *The assignment usually puts the student in a position to isolate a bit of his experience, and then asks him something about what he has done in this act of separating one thing from*

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[14] That Baird appears in an epigraph is significant, for Coles rarely cites or quotes anyone. When he does, the citation usually has an Amherst connection. For instance, Coles engages a passage from John Genung to open "Freshman Composition: The Circle of Unbelief." At the end of "An Unpetty Pace," Coles makes a sly allusion to Robert Frost: "That, I take it, is what it means to *have promises to keep*" (382, emphasis mine). Another allusion to Frost, coming at the end of "Teaching the Teaching of Composition: Evolving a Style": "*that makes all the difference* in his or her effectiveness" (270, emphasis mine). In a rare instance of Coles quoting someone outside of Amherst, in "Freshman Composition: The Circle of Unbelief," Coles pulls 19 sentences from 19 textbook introductions to cobble together a preface to an imaginary textbook, *Ventures in Composition*, doing so to highlight the shortcomings in how writing and the teaching of writing are approached by his contemporaries. Other than the occasional Amherst-connected quotation or allusion, and other than the rare quotation in mockery, the predominant text Coles cites is student writing, making it the centerpiece of both his classroom and his scholarship.

another, of arranging what he knows in some sort of pattern. Subsequent

assignments question this pattern, ask the student to reexamine it from this

perspective and that. As the year advances, he makes increasingly complicated

statements about his own activities as a composer, problem solver, knower, writer.

Whatever continuity he constructs from one paper to another, from one class

discussion to the next, is his continuity and his alone. (112-13, emphasis added)

In the sole footnote to "The Teaching of Writing as Writing," Coles acknowledges that he draws

this material from the Amherst course (113). Of the five sentences quoted above, the italicized

three are Coles'; the remaining two Coles lifts from Baird's English 1-2 course description.[15]

This paragraph evidences—at a material level—Coles working within Baird's pedagogy. Coles

inserts himself into that pedagogy, articulating within Baird's sentences his understanding of the

uses for, and potentials of, a sequenced writing course. Coles continues:

[T]hough I have never repeated an assignment, every assignment I have ever

worked with, every question I have ever asked, involves the same issues: where

and how with this problem do you locate yourself? To what extent and in what

ways is that self definable in language? What is this self on the basis of the

languages shaping it? What has it got to do with you?

I wish to make clear that the self I am speaking of here, and the one with

which I am concerned in the classroom, is a literary self, a persona, the self

construable from the way words fall on a page. (113)

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[15] For Baird's English 1-2 course description, see Varnum (249-52). Coles reprinted variations
of Baird's course description, and his own growing out of it, many times. See, for instance,
Composing and *Composing II*, "English 285: Evolving a Style," *The Plural I*, *The Plural I—and
After*, *Seeing through Writing*, "Teaching the Teaching of Composition," "The Teaching of
Writing as Writing."

The questions Coles articulates here are similar to those that govern English 1-2, but Coles has appropriated its concerns into his own language. The "self construable from the way the words fall on the page" becomes integral to Coles's teaching; Coles elsewhere clarifies that such a self is a "not a mock or false self, but a stylistic self," this passage one that Coles frequently reuses in his publications.[16] This stylistic self and the effort to discern the connection between the self and the language producing it defines Coles's teaching, such that when Caesarea Abartis wrote up her experience attending one of Coles's NEH summer seminars in Pittsburgh 1978, she mentions the stylistic self as a centerpiece of the seminar, quoting it from a handout Coles distributed there (156-57).[17]

The course Coles describes in "The Teaching of Writing as Writing" met with resistance. John Hendrickson complained in *College English* that Coles teaches "in defiance of both scholarship and logic" because Coles "bases his case on 'naked assertion' " rather than empirical evidence (403), that Coles's lack of attention to grammar and convention is untenable and irresponsible, and that the sheer volume of papers to be read and marked when students write one for every class meeting of the term (1,750 by Hendrickson's calculations) render the course too labor intensive for "ordinary teachers" (403-04). Coles wrote a reply. To Hendrickson's complaint about the work load of Coles's proposed course, Coles asks how a teacher who "does

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[16] See *Composing* (2); *Composing II* (17); *The Plural I* (12); *The Plural I—and After* (12); *Seeing through Writing* (8); *Teaching Composing* (10).

[17] Coles taught his NEH summer seminars in Pittsburgh from 1977-80. For more on the seminars, see Abartis's write-up, as well as Timothy Donovan's "Writing Teachers and Why Write?", wherein Donovan appropriates an assignment he credits to Coles's summer seminar. See also Coles's "New Presbyters as Old Priests: A Forewarning," published out of one of those seminars. In 1981, Coles would teach another summer seminar, though not one sponsored by the NEH; see the ad appearing in *College Composition and Communication* ("Seminar in Sequencing").

not read that many papers" could still "call himself a teacher of writing" (405). To Hendrickson's complaint that Coles offers no proof his proposed course would help students improve their writing, Coles responds, "The documentary evidence for my assertions there— some three hundred pages of student papers, assignments, and samples of classroom dialogue— is the substance of a book I am now revising for publication" (404).

That book is *The Plural I*, and though Coles claims in defense, "I am speaking to a wider audience than Mr. Hendrickson seems to imagine" (406), it too met with resistance. It took ten years after the exchange with Hendrickson for *The Plural I* to be published in 1978. In 1988, it was reissued as *The Plural I—and After* with two essays appended. In one of them, Coles explains that *The Plural I* was rejected by five publishers and underwent three rewrites before Holt, Rinehart and Winston eventually published it (*The Plural I—and After* 273). Jo Keroes, reviewing *The Plural I—and After*, said the book "is rather like a rich cake that has fallen in the middle" (n. pag.). Laurence Walker calls *The Plural I—and After* "merchandising cynicism" because only seven pages of the re-issue are new material (254).[18] Those seven pages of new material are an apology for the book and its teacher-narrator. Coles clarifies that the narrator is a character, a construct, a device to move the narrative along—he calls it a "persona" (perhaps echoing Walker Gibson's *Persona*, also of Amherst)—not at all intended to be read as an accurate depiction of him in the classroom (*The Plural I—and After* 273). Coles responds directly to William Irmscher, who had written, "I get a clear notion what the instructor is like and how the students react. All of this is so vivid that I know I don't want to be like Coles. I don't want to use his approach, and I don't want to treat students as he does" (87). In his apology,

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[18] For reviews of *The Plural I*, see Keith; and Higgins. For reviews of *The Plural I—and After*, see Keroes; Flachmann; and L. Walker.

Coles quotes Irmscher, using Irmscher to vocalize resistance to the teacher of *The Plural I*. This is a shame, because Coles misreads and misrepresents Irmscher. Granted, Irmscher does not endorse Coles's teacherly persona nor even read it as a persona, but Irmscher praises Coles, putting up *The Plural I* as "one of the most readable reports on pedagogy I know" and as an model for future scholarship (87). In his defensiveness, Coles overlooks this praise.[19]

3.3   THE COURSE AT CASE

From the gloss of English 1-2 I've offered, the course at Case will sound familiar. The assignment sequence in *The Plural I* seeks to bring students to an awareness of how language constitutes the self and to how one might use language in light of that awareness. The assignments ask students to reflect on themselves as composers and users of language, as definers of key terms, as people who do something with language, whether they know it or not. Through the sequence, Coles brings a heightened awareness and sensitivity to the way the words fall on the page. He attunes students to language.

The subject in the course is writing, but Coles selects a nominal subject he deems fitting for his engineering students: professionalism and amateurism.[20] In the report "English is a

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[19] Concerning Coles as a model for future scholarship, see Horner, who notes that Coles writes in "non-conventional forms" that "discourage teachers from treating [his] works as commodities" (*Terms* 189).

[20] Coles's class is male engineering students, which affords Coles the generic "he" without problem. In his other scholarship, Coles wrestled with his pronouns. In 1978, Coles wrote a response to one of his own articles, "Teaching the Teaching of Composition: Evolving a Style," furious that *College Composition and Communication* had shortened his sentences, omitted phrases, edited away his puns, and changed his generic masculine pronouns to be gender inclusive. Coles goes out of his way in the response to use phrases that call attention to their gendered pronouns, such as "fisherperson of persons" (209), and makes many crude sexual jokes

Foreign Language," Coles explains this distinction between the nominal subject and the true subject of a course. Coles has taught a wide range of topics in freshman composition: "I have asked what it means to wear a mask. What correctness is. How you solve a math problem. What a lie is. What it means to be logical. How the present can contain the past, or the past the future. How you operate a machine. Whether there is such a thing as nonlinguistic experience" (V).[21] Coles never has an answer to his questions, and he asks them because they "do not have answers in the conventional sense of the word" and—more so—because "it is only the dead who cannot be brought to see them as alive as subjects through which there is a possibility of self-definition" (V). That self-definition happens through the use of language. "What is an Amateur? A Professional? I ask. It depends, I am answered. On what does it depend? I ask again. And at that point, with that phrase, the various things it can mean, the host of syntaxes that can contain it, and the relationship of all of these things I can talk about to the mysterious

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along the way. His response prompted one from Julia Stanley and Susan Wolfe, not at all amused by Coles and his handling of the situation.

In his subsequent writing, Coles paid close attention to gendered pronouns. In his 1978 "New Presbyters as Old Priests: A Forewarning," Coles includes the footnote: "To avoid the awkwardness of style, I am using the masculine pronoun to refer to the individual regardless of sex" (5). His 1981 *Composing II* has a footnote on masculine pronouns, Coles choosing there to oscillate between a generic masculine and a generic feminine (5). In a 1991 piece in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Coles changes all masculine pronouns to feminine in his passages quoted from Wayne Booth and John Jay Chapman ("Writing"). (I note, a rare occasion when Coles quotes someone, and someone outside Amherst at that). When asked about Coles's editing of those pronouns from masculine to feminine—what prompted it, if an editor might have had a hand in it—then-editor of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* Eugene Garver responded in an email exchange, "i have no idea. wish i could help" (Garver).

See also James Catano's "The Rhetoric of Masculinity: Origins, Institutions, and the Myth of the Self-Made Man." Catano considers how the myth of the self-made man—an identity forged through isolation and manliness—appears in the writing pedagogies of Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, and Coles. Coles wrote a response, saying Catano conveniently ignored *Seeing through Writing*, a text Coles claims does not subscribe to the myth, noting that over half the characters in *Seeing through Writing* are women ("A Comment").

[21] See also "The Teaching of Writing as Writing" (113).

self I can talk only around – – at that point begins my real subject" (V). These questions are hard, and Coles knows this, and the questions push students to find language to talk about them, talk through them, language with which they can address themselves to these linguistic and existential problems. It is through "the host of syntaxes that can contain" the students' answers that Coles is able to access his real subject: the relationship between writing and language and the self, the self construable from the way words fall on the page. And so Coles assigns papers on Amateurism and Professionalism, on Logic, on Lies, on Math, all nominal subjects offering a means to talk about language.[22]

Mary Sue Garay claims all Coles's assignments have two parts: the stimulus and the response, and the "change from stimulus to response is marked by a switch from statement to question format" (103-04). The stimulus and response is evident in the first assignment of the course, Coles providing a quotation from Stanley Woodward as a stimulus prompting the student's response:

> *Here is a statement*:
>
> A professional, whether paid or unpaid, is the man that counts. An amateur is a clumsy bastard.
>
> Stanley Woodward, *Paper Tiger*
>
> *Where do you stand on this issue?*
>
> *Begin your paper by explaining what you understand to be meant by the terms "professional" and "amateur." Do you respect one more than you do the other?*
>
> (16, emphasis Coles's)

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[22] For Coles's own description of how he sets up an assignment sequence, see "The Sense of Nonsense as a Design for Sequential Writing Assignments."

As Garay reads him, Coles asks three types of questions, "1. those on the passage, 2. those on the passage as applied to the student, 3. those on the student's writing," and she also notes that "The first two types of questions occur in all assignments and the last in approximately one-half of them" (104).[23] With this first assignment, Coles does not yet ask the student to analyze their own writing—he is, after all, working within a sequence. That work of self-analysis comes soon enough, the first instance in Assignment 4, its final direction asking students to turn to their own writing as the stimulus for their response:

> *Describe a situation in which you acted as what you would call an amateur.*
>
> *Where were you? Who else was there? What was said and done?*
>
> *On the basis of what you have written, define amateur.* (43, emphasis Coles's)

Assignments 1-6 are "concerned in various ways with the problem of definition"; with Assignments 7-12, Coles seeks "to provide a way of complicating the students' understanding of the role of a definer depending on whether he was the subject of an action, the object of an action, or both" (69). He does so in Assignments 13-16 by asking the students about times they have given or received advice.

Assignments 17-20 bring in outside writers (Charles Darwin, J. D. Salinger, Nicola Sacco). Aside from Assignment 18, which is a mid-term response essay, these assignments ask the student to discern a voice and its audience from an excerpted passage. The next set of assignments, 21-24, deal with nonsense, "a way of inviting the students to see the *importance* of

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[23] See also Joseph Harris's "The Plural Text/The Plural Self: Roland Barthes and William Coles," which offers an analysis (not unlike Garay's) of Coles's sequences. See also Ross Winterowd's "I. A. Richards, Literary Theory, and Romantic Composition," which argues "Richards' and Coles' concepts of sequencing are virtually identical—and, in my view, liberating, the opposite of behavioral objectives, assignments arranged according to some abstract scale of difficulty, or a composition program designed on the basis of modes or genres" (75).

their becoming aware of [the resources available to them as language users], the importance of knowing as much about as many ways of putting symbols together as one can learn" (181, emphasis Coles's). With the final set of assignments, 25-29, Coles turns to the sciences. Assignment 25 asks students to explain a scientific principle to a nonscientist and to make an argument as to why the nonscientist should know the principle (212); Assignment 27 asks the student why he must take a humanities course at an institute of technology (230). From Assignment 30, the final one of the course:

> *Look back over the Assignments given you this term, the papers you have written addressing yourself to them, and the papers mimeographed for discussion in class. Recall any conversations you may have had about the course, either in class or out of it.*
>
> *Where did you start this term? Where do you seem to come out?* (258, emphasis Coles's)

Throughout the 30 assignments, Coles returns again and again to variations of the same questions. There is the problem of description: "*Describe a situation in which you gave someone else what you consider to be very good advice*" (77, emphasis Coles's). There is the problem of definition: "*On the basis of what you have written in your last five papers, define advice*" (113, emphasis Coles's). There is the problem of metacognition: "*Write a paper in which you try to explain what it is you think you have been doing in your humanities course this semester*" (156, emphasis Coles's). But over and above these questions, the governing question of the course is how the self is constituted by language—that is, how a stylistic self is construable from the way words fall on the page—and how language locates this self. This is the

question of location, and it is evident in Assignments 18 and 30, the student needing to discern where he began and where he finished the term.

3.4   READING COLES READING SENTENCES

Horner reads Coles's "pedagogies, teaching materials, and statements of philosophy not as 'constative' statements but as practices, as 'performative' " (*Terms* 199), and here I want do the same, looking now to Coles's own epideictic display of a teacher at work within the classroom. Coles's entire pedagogy rests upon deliberate, sustained, careful attention to the work of the sentence, but it is a unique reading Coles practices: though he works intently at the sentence-level of student writing, he offers no grammar lessons, he uses no grammar terms, he does not speak to the conventions of the writing he teaches. Rather, he attends to the sentence as a display of a particular discourse. Coles is a collector of sentences—not unlike Tufte, not unlike Fish, not unlike Williams—though Coles collects sentences by collecting an entire semester's worth of writing. Coles presents his sentences much more contextualized than his fellow sentence collectors do, *The Plural I* offering assignment sheets, entire student essays, and dramatized classroom discussion.

Assignment 1 asks for a definition of professional and amateur, and Coles offers the following assessment of the students' first work of the term:

> Triumphs of self-obliteration the papers were, put-up jobs every one of them, and as much of a bore to read as they must have been to write. I found myself being talked to as though I were a rube ("Now it may, perhaps, be thought by my reader …"), unoffendable ("It has probably never been a matter of concern to the

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reader") or a confederate, someone in on the joke of why none of it mattered ("of course, we, in a college classroom, can hardly hope to settle the question of …"). No observation was too trivial to escape oratorical pronouncement ("It is unfair to call the amateur a 'clumsy bastard!'"); no moral stance too obvious to assume ("After all, professionals are not necessarily good people"). (*The Plural I* 18)

Coles calls such writing Themewriting written by Themewriters on a Themetopic, noting that at the beginning of a writing course, "students have a tendency to sound the way they think they ought to sound, the way they think English teachers want them to sound, the way they think they have been taught to sound" (17). Coles anticipates Themewriting at the start of the term, but to call the papers "Triumphs of self-obliteration" is not a generous enough reading. They are practicing epideictic rhetoric. Coles seems to have a tacit awareness of this, as the above quotation suggests: the students have assessed a rhetorical situation and in response repeat (and reify) what they presume to be the shared values of this community, this classroom, and this teacher. Yes, the papers are put-up jobs, but so too they are tapping into the archival and ancestral resources of the epideictic, into a reservoir of commonplace arguments, of commonplace phrases and clichés, of commonplace ways of thinking and addressing a topic.

Trite and banal discourse, a lack of critical inquiry, a tendency toward crass showmanship—these shortcomings of some epideictic rhetoric are Coles's concern when he writes, "There wasn't one student who convinced me that he had a modicum of interest in anything he was saying" (18). This is a rhetoric of empty show, the discourse of a student who, "in the midst of the threatening unfamiliarity of his freshman year … will shape whatever he can of his academic environment into patterns that he is familiar with" (Coles "Freshman Composition" 138). That is what the Theme does: shape discourse into familiar patterns.

Walker notes the hypnotic qualities of (classical) epideictic rhetoric, how its metered, crafted, beautiful language lulls the audience into compliance with the values upholds (*Rhetoric* 12). Though it is not crafted, metered, beautiful language the way poetic, classical epideictic rhetoric was, the Theme has its own hypnotic qualities coming from its familiarity, its comfort, its convenience, how easily it puts prefabricated ideas into prefabricated forms.

And so, the students write essays in service of, and practicing, the epideictic, their essays upholding particular shared values concerning writing. Those shared values are evident in the first class discussion of the term. I quoted from this paper briefly earlier; here is its full first paragraph, this the first paper Coles and his students address:

> The question of the amateur's place in a society of professionals is one that has greatly been changed by the scientific and cultural revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The amateur, who was formerly criticized as a bungling idiot, today has gained the status of a person who is capable of advancing by improvement of his own primitive institution, without the glorified educational and financial backgrounds which have made the professional man a symbol of intellectual and vocational superiority. Although the amateur may sometimes lack the spit and polish which distinguish the professional, it is somewhat irrational for him to be referred to as a "clumsy bastard." The amateur is definitely entitled to more respect than he is obviously receiving from such people as Stanley Woodward, who apparently does not realize the contributions which amateurs have made to society. (19-20)

The paper continues like this for five more paragraphs. After reading the full essay, Coles asks the class what they think of it. One student remarks that the writer "proves his point pretty well

here," to which Coles responds, "Yep … No Question. It's well-organized. It's Clear, Logical, and Coherent. It's neat" (21). Already, in Coles's capital letters, his suspicion of these shared values is evident. Coles asks the students who they think is speaking in the paper. They don't understand his question. So he asks a student to read the final two sentences of the essay—

> By assuming that most professionals were at one time or another actually amateurs in their fields, it would be possible to reason by transitivity that at one time even the professional was a "clumsy bastard"! The efforts of the amateurs with respect to both contribution to society and to future professionals are not to be disparaged, due to the fact that the clumsy amateur, through his own efforts, could easily become the man that counts. (20)

—and Coles asks, "Look, how old do you think the writer of those two sentences is pretending to be?" The student is confused: "How old?" Coles tries another approach: "Well how big then? Do you think he's really the size of the Jolly Green Giant?" (21). One of the students smiles, and Coles continues: "What would you say to Jim here, if he slid up to you in the snack bar and said: 'You know, Sam, the question of the amateur's place in a society of professionals is one that has been greatly changed by the scientific and cultural revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'?" (21). The students snicker. I read their laughter as an acknowledgment that no one talks how this paper sounds, an acknowledgment that they are playing a game, and an uncomfortable realization that Coles is calling them on it.

This conversation captures the clash of conflicting values. The students prize Clarity, Logic, Coherence; they want a writer to Prove his Point. Coles values something else, something he doesn't and won't articulate explicitly. When pressed by Coles, one of the students, Jim, cannot recall what point the paper is trying to make. Coles says the paper's lack of memorability

is a problem not limited to that single paper: "I had the same trouble with the whole damned set. … I couldn't tell one from another—particularly after about the fifteenth time I was handed talk like 'most professional athletes began their careers as amateur athletes.' As though I was being given the Hope Diamond" (22). Coles pushes against their writing, and the students resist. One asks, "But isn't a writer entitled to his own opinion?" to which Coles thinks, "Smart and seasoned. They also knew the game" (22), game referring to the set of premade arguments in defense of the Theme, arguments the students deploy effortlessly. This is epideictic rhetoric in its worst form, trite and banal discourse that precludes any critical inquiry, a crass showmanship of the student's ability to write Clear, Logical, Coherent prose.

The students "continued to play it safe with what for years had not only gotten them by, but on" (26), unwilling (or unable) to set aside the writing that has served them well in school, the writing they believe to be the appropriate one for this setting, the writing that—by the very act of writing it—affirms the values it displays. At this point Coles asks the students to play the Themewriting game. This game has two purposes. The first I discussed at the opening of this chapter: Coles uses the game to make explicit the trite and banal discourse the students perform in their writing. The second purpose of the game goes back to Coles's course description for Humanities 1, to a passage I quoted earlier: the course is "a fresh progression in thought and expression, a gradual building up of a common vocabulary, a more precise definition of terms" (*The Plural I* 12; see also "The Teaching of Writing as Writing" 113). Coles uses the Themewriting game to build up that common vocabulary, Coles working with his students to find more precise terms to discuss writing, terms that move away from the abstractions of Clarity, Coherence, and Logic, terms that are a fresh progression in thought and expression. And so, when writing his commentary on student papers a mere two assignments later, Coles is able to

draw upon the Themewriting game and the critical terms it introduced: "Most of the papers addressed to Assignment 5 I could take care of with one variation or another of a standard comment: 'Man. Black. TNT. Remember the game? What do you lose when you win it?' " (51).

The students catch on to this language and the way of reading it represents, and new terms are added to their critical vocabulary each class period. For Assignment 5, Coles asks the students to "*describe a situation in which you acted as what you would call a professional*" (*The Plural I* 51, emphasis Coles's). One student writes a paper telling of a time he played pool with his friends. The game moves along slowly until the writer takes charge: "Abruptly, I declared that I would clear the table and I did" (52). The friends are amazed, and they challenge the writer to do it a second time. "I accepted the challenge and was successful" (52). Coles singles these out as the only two sentences in the paper that have potential: "The rest is Themetalk ('an immediate interest in participating,' 'they watched in amazement,' and so on)" (52). Because the paper relies on so much telling—"We're told not shown that the writer was neither 'boastful [nor] pretentious,' and that he was 'looked up to' "—Coles says the reader must "accept the writer's solemn word" (52). And therein is the problem. The writer's solemn word hinges upon the self of the writer as construed by the way the words fall on the page: the value of the paper lies in how the writer presents himself through language, and this writer uses a lot of Themetalk.

One student doubts the story ever happened, and it is precisely because of this issue of the writer's presentation of himself through language. The student says, "I play a lot of pool. When you clear the table you run the rack. Anybody who played pool the way this guy says he does would know that. I don't believe he wiped out those guys this way" (52). The classroom discussion turns to this question of running the rack versus clearing the table, of how a

professional and amateur speak, of how the way each uses language reflects their relationship to their specialty. Coles is pleased: "It was the first direct connection anyone had made between professionalism and the use of language, between professionalism and behavior" (53). In this discussion Coles sees the students' burgeoning awareness that language use—how they put together their sentences—shapes the self. The students are learning that Themetalk comes from how the writer employs a stock of common phrases and prefabricated ideas, piecing them together without actually saying anything.

"Run the rack" becomes one of the critical terms used in the classroom, a shorthand representing the discussion of how one's use of language creates a stylistic self. Two assignments later, "Steve" becomes another critical term. Steve initially appears in a paper written for Assignment 7 as a character giving advice to the writer. The class agrees that Steve is flat and unbelievable, a product of Themewriting. In his written comments to the batch of essays for Assignment 8, Coles resorts to Steve:

> I'd read a Theme no further than was obvious that that was all the paper was going to amount to; at that point I'd draw a slash line, write "read to here" in the margin, and, at the end of the paper, following the appropriate title (Steve as Miss Lonelyhearts, Steve Saves Lab Partner from Electrocution, Steve for Coach of the Year), I addressed each writer directly. (78)

Discussing Assignment 8, Coles laments yet another character with "no center, [who] fails to suggest anything recognizably human," a character who "isn't a character at all" as she is composed solely of clichés (80). A student articulates what Coles is trying to say: "What you get is a Suzie for Steve" (80). In this comment, the student draws upon previous discussions of Steve, recognizes that the problem Coles is describing with the paper at hand is the same

problem as was in previous papers mimeographed for class, and recalls the vocabulary used to name that problem. The student pieces all that together and applies it to the discussion at hand, adding Steve's counterpart, Suzie, to the course lexicon. In this work of vocabulary building, the epideictic is evident in at least three ways: Coles's reading against the Theme is reified by the vocabulary the class adopts; the community-building function of the epideictic is manifested as the class comes together around a shared use of language and vocabulary; and the potential of the epideictic to upend and refine previously held beliefs is realized as the class, through the acts of praise and blame, presses against their prior values concerning writing.[24]

But in Assignment 10, this way of reading and its relatively quick appropriation creates problems for Coles. He opens class with a paper he believes has great potential, "one of the best papers we'd had to work with so far that term, and one I particularly looked forward to doing with the class" (100). The assignment concerns giving good advice to yourself that you then took, and the students' immediate response to the paper was not what Coles had expected, or wanted. The first student to speak remarks, "Well, here's another goody-goody. Steve gives up fraternities" (102). The student employs the class's critical vocabulary—goody-goody and Steve—but Coles is not pleased. A third of the way through the term, his students have appropriated his language, his criticism, his snark, but they've employed it at the wrong time. It

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[24] In "The Teaching of Writing as Writing," Coles speaks to this work of vocabulary building: "I mark the student papers not with standard correction symbols but with metaphors evolved from our class discussions. After four or five examples, no student is in any doubt as to what is meant by such terms as 'bulletproof,' 'cocoa-marsh,' 'sky writing,' or 'mayonnaise'" (112). Hendrickson, in his response to Coles, doubts the usefulness of such metaphors, arguing that struggling students would be "incapable of spelling 'mayonnaise' let alone understanding the metaphorical intent of the word as a corrective device" (403). Coles's response: "If as a class we come up with the metaphor of 'mayonnaise' as the correlative to a half-hour's conversation about what the student has written, we have a great deal with which to make the term mean something, and we can use it from that point on in the course, together with other metaphors which we evolve as a community, with more than common understanding" ("Reply" 404-05).

has become a knee-jerk reaction to a text, to any text. In this moment, it is clear that the students do not, in fact, understand Coles's way of reading. They've got the language down, but they aren't yet sure what it means or how to use it. Coles explains:

> I've experienced that sort of derailment enough in the classroom not to be surprised when it happens, but when it does my initial reaction still is one of fury with the seemingly uncanny knack of the students to turn insensitive only when I am least prepared for it—and only, it seems, when we as a class have the most to lose. (102)

Coles trusts his students' ability to employ the criticism he teaches them. He believes they will read as he does, that they will see the merit in the paper he presents and as such forestall any snide comments. Yet, the class has a "seemingly uncanny knack … to turn insensitive." The students can deploy the Jolly Green Giant, or Steve and Suzie, or Cop-out, or Phoney at ease, but they lack the critical acumen to use these critical terms well.

With Assignment 18, Coles asks the students, "What have you been doing in this course so far?" (156). The assignment is a letter to a friend back home who will be attending Case the following fall. "*Be as clear as you can in explaining to him just what it is you think you've been up to*" (156, emphasis Coles's). A number of the students "buried their nervousness in patronization, smugly suggesting to Art and Harry and Jim, who were all still wallowing around back there in the protozoic slime of high school English, that they'd just have to wait and boy oh boy the pain, man, the *pain*!" (157, emphasis Coles's). Given their tone, Coles remarks, "Not many of the student's letters would have needed a return address" (157). There is a moment in a paper, though, that draws Coles's attention, "such a nice expression of frustration that it was too bad the writer hadn't gone on to develop the implications of it":

All you're required to do is turn in a piece of writing on a particular subject every time the class meets—three times a week—which often seems like three times too many. You'll find yourself up until three in the morning staring at a blank piece of paper; you'll find yourself jotting down ideas in the cafeteria; you'll put it all off till tomorrow; you'll let physics go to get it done today; you'll dust it off in calculus just before class; you'll waste paper; you'll break pencils; you'll swear; you'll quit—but when you walk into class, you'll put that paper in the pile with all the others. (159)

Coles asks the class "what could be inferred from the sentences about the writer's relationship to the course" (159). The first student responds that the writer doesn't like the course, and Coles counters by asking why the writer devotes so much time to the class if he hates it. It's not fear of failing; everyone cares about grades, the class decides. One student remarks that someone who only cared about a grade wouldn't put this amount of work into the course, "always sweating it" (159). Coles agrees, and offers that a student who didn't care about the course not only wouldn't work this way, but wouldn't "talk this way, at any rate. Getting it all into one sentence so that the suggestion seems to be that it's some sort of process he's immersed in, a process that seems to have produced a state of mind" (160). Coles sees the writer's relationship to the course manifest through the syntax of that long sentence stitched together by semicolons. The writer crams his experience of the course into a syntax that can barely contain it, just as the student can barely handle the course. (The sentence could be included in Tufte's chapter on syntactic symbolism.)

Late in the term, the students change in their quick deployment of the class's critical terms. Coles gives the following for assignment 27:

You are a student at an institute of technology. Although no major is offered by the humanities division of the institute, you are required to take certain humanities courses. Why is this, do you suppose? Is such a requirement desirable so far as you are concerned?

Before you make up your mind just how you are going to address this Assignment, consider carefully whether you are sure that you want to talk about A Balanced Education, or being The Well-Rounded Man in just these terms. (Have you ever wondered what happened to The Well-Rounded Man? What's he doing these days?) What sort of rhetoric is this, by the way: a balanced education? How far do you think it will take you with the problem of this Assignment?

Is there another way of talking? (230, emphasis Coles')

Coles believes this to be a good assignment but one much more difficult than he had originally thought. His class "had little difficulty of seeing that the problem of the Assignment involved avoiding the rhetoric of cant, but, to develop 'another way of talking,' turned out, as it always does, to be another thing again" (231). That is, of course, the intellectual problem of the entire course. With only a few assignments remaining, students are realizing the difficulty of finding that other way of talking, of avoiding the sort of canned Themetalk that produces The Well-Rounded Man.

Coles begins class with a paper full of clichés, unsure whether the writer is using the clichés knowingly. Coles reads the paper aloud, and the first student to speak, Bill, "wasn't quite sullen, but he was annoyed and he wanted me [Coles] to know it" (232). Bill's frustration lies in his inability to do anything with the assignment. Bill says the writer wrote "The usual," and when pressed by Coles, Bill elaborates: "I mean it's the same damn thing I said. What the hell

else could you say? This is a hooker assignment. It's like the paper where we had to explain the course, or the one on the scientific principle. You knew right away what you'd be stupid to do, but you ended up doing it anyway" (232). Bill's response displays his awareness that these assignments all deal with similar issues regardless of their nominal subject. He characterizes these assignments as baiting him, getting him hook, line, and sinker when he resorts—begrudgingly—to Themewriting. Bill has come to an awareness of the problems with Themewriting, and he is aware, too, of the difficulties inherent in trying to avoid such discourse. And when he can't avoid the rhetoric of cant, he gets mad.

The discussion of the second paper has a similar tenor. The students are slow to criticize it. The conversation is marked by hedges—"I'm not really sure that's what he's doing" says one student; "Maybe he's trying to …" begins another; "You can't really tell which he means. Maybe *that's* his point …" posits a third (236, emphasis Coles's). Absent in this discussion is the quick dismissal of student writing as a Cop-out, or Phoney, or the writer as the Jolly Green Giant. The students realize the difficulty of Coles's assignments, and there is a sense of community, of camaraderie in the classroom as they all struggle to constitute some self from the way words fall on the page. Their comments display carefulness absent in the bravado they had earlier in the course. Their confidence in the Theme is shaken, but so too is their confidence in their ability to deploy Coles's critical terms. They are floundering.

The final assignment asks students to review all their work, the mimeographed assignments, and any discussions they've had regarding the class in order to answer the following: *Where did you start this term? Where do you seem to come out?*" (258, emphasis Coles's). Coles selects six essays to compare with essays from the first day of the term to show

how far the students and their writing have come. The students, though, derail his lesson plan,

presenting a mock assignment of their own:

ASSIGNMENT 69

"What good *are* Christmas carols, anyway? Besides, I'm going to the Bahamas

for the vacation."

Have you ever heard somebody say anything like that? Maybe you know

somebody who heard somebody say it. Then again, maybe you don't.

Have you ever said anything like that?

Have you ever said "Bah"?

Have you ever said "Humbug"?

Who was your audience? Did they stay for the next show?

Who were you? (260, emphasis Coles's)

The students frame their assignment within the same stimulus-response structure as Coles, using

language from outside the classroom as a provocation for a writing problem. They ask questions

of audience, and they ask the question governing much of Coles's teaching—"Who were you?"–

–that, is, when you said Bah and Humbug, how did that stylistic performance constitute the self?

The assignment sheet continues, offering a Christmas carol to the tune of "Jingle Bells":

Dusting off a Theme, keeping words just right,

Down the page I go, writing through the night.

Write the intro. first; turn the body too,

Exeunt with a flourish and it's off to bed I'm through. Oh—

…

"Bulletproof, bulletproof," that's my teacher's cry;

He's not seen the likes of this—not since junior high.

This is slop, throwing rocks, a weak and bloody dodge;

Without an ear you'll hear no voice, you need some good advice. (260-61)

The mock assignment showcases the student's ability to speak (and parody) Coles, and their carol employs (and parodies) a selection of the course's critical terms: Theme, bulletproof, slop, dodge, voice (other parts of the song reference Steve and Suzie, weaving a rug, and adding magic to a draft).

The assignment and carol mark a bittersweet moment in the course. Although there are considerable gains made by the students with regard to the values Coles's epideictic rhetoric upholds—evident when, on the final day of class, Coles showcases first- and last-day student writing—the students seem to have learned, above all else, that they cannot write. The students begin the course holding fast to the Theme, Themewriters all of them. That first day, Coles displays an alternative mode of criticism, one that values complexity over tidiness, one that values a stylistic self rather than Suzie and Steve, one that addresses difficulty rather than dodging a problem, one that knows it matters whether a writer says "run the rack" or "clear the table." As the course progresses, the students take on Coles's way of reading. They appropriate, and add to, his critical terms. And yet, the students cannot set aside Themewriting. When Coles introduces a new nominal topic, the students revert back to Themewriting (Assignments 7 and 25), and the Theme is present, in some degree, in almost every set of papers mimeographed for class discussion. By the end of the course, the students become aware of, and are frustrated by, their inability to move past the Theme. The mock assignment speaks to this inability, the students displaying their knowledge of the questions Coles asks, questions that call attention to the Themewriting of everyday life, questions that ask the students to set aside trite and banal

discourse and find another way of speaking. The students know what ails their writing but they cannot do anything about it. Hence, the Christmas carol, where they employ the terms of the course while admitting they will continue to write Themes, not only because they are necessary, but so too because the students do not know how to escape them.

3.5   A STYLISTIC RESPONSE

Coles taught during the Golden Age of Style, and his course is, as I read it, one concerned with reading sentences. But Coles reads sentences differently than his 1970s contemporaries Tufte and Fish. Tufte and Fish do not look outside the sentence for its value. The performativity of the sentence, its delivery, reside entirely within the syntax of the prose, such that Tufte and Fish need only present an author's name when curating sentences. Tufte and Fish find value in elegant; Coles finds value in how a sentence locates its writer within a discourse. He moves sentences into a critical context. He presents his class with large pieces of text but often focuses the discussion on a single sentence or a single phrase (like "run the rack"). Sentences become signs of character, the syntax representative of the student's relationship to the world, to the course, to the subject at hand, to himself. In Assignment 18, one student writes, "… I got a letter from Gwen a couple of weeks ago in which she said 'cause I love you loads' and it annoyed me. And then I got annoyed that I got annoyed" (161). Here the student demonstrates what Coles has been teaching: an awareness that language constitutes the self, that syntax enables a person to exist within the discursive world such that the student is annoyed when his girlfriend writes him in clichés. The sentence, then, becomes the avenue into these discussions

of the relationship between the self and writerly practice. This is the true subject of the course, professionalism and amateurism aside.

But have the students learned this lesson? On the final day of class, though interrupted by the Christmas carol, Coles shares six pieces of writing. He reads them aloud and shares his thoughts on what he sees working in each. The final piece is written by the writer of the first essay discussed in the term, the one that began with the Themetalk of "The question of the amateur's place in a society of professionals is one that has greatly been changed by the scientific and cultural revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (19). That student admits that, at the end of the term, he is lost:

> "Where do you seem to come out?" I am still mixed up by the assignments. For some reason, I have had a kind of faith that whenever we came to the end of this course everything would fall together, and it would be possible to turn and see the road by which I had come. We were told Monday that this is the end; so, I'm turning. At first all seems dark, but then I think I can recognize a little light. My main hope is that this light is the beginning of dawn and not just moonlight. (268)

This comes in the middle of a paper full of hedging, full of second-guessing, full of moments like the following: "I think I am coming close to saying something in this paper. I don't know whether 'close' is as far as I can get or whether I could go all the way and describe 'close to knowing'; but 'close to knowing' is where I want to come out, where I think I am coming out, in this course" (269).

Coles values this kind of writing. "That paper," he writes, "no one had any trouble understanding why I reproduced in its entirety or why I used it to conclude the class" (270). He sees the paper "suggest[ing] how the end of the course is but its real beginning" (270). Coles

effuses praise: he values how "the writer refuses to disown completely his first-day-of-class naiveté, the way he speaks of making a 'partner' of his confusion, his seeing that 'readiness with' a certain kind of language is the same thing as a 'loss of words' " (270). Coles is particularly drawn to a passage where the student analyzes his own syntax:

> What has the course been all about—writing, learning, seeing, thinking, understanding? I looked at these words after writing them and wondered why I had written them in the –ing form. I could just as easily have said "how to write, learn," etc.; but I didn't. I guess this would have made it sound as though I had definitely learned something; for instance, you can "learn" how to ride a bicycle. I haven't learned anything in this manner. I guess I would have to say that I have learned enough to automatically put these examples (writing, learning, etc.) in the –ing form rather than some other way. I have only begun to learn things. (268-69).

In this moment, as Coles reads him, the student understands "his consciousness of the activity of writing as an action ('the –ing form') undivorceable from the actions of seeing, thinking, and learning" (270). The student has an understanding of how syntax represents actions in the world, and how the choice of using an infinitive or a gerund is not merely a choice of grammar but one of consequence where sentence craft betrays a stylistic self existing both on the page and within Coles's curriculum. This has been the topic of the course, and this student gets it.

This student is not alone. The other five papers Coles showcases on the final day of class all say the same, all express the same awareness of their uncertainty about writing. From the same paper, its final paragraph:

This is the path that we have taken to learn about writing. We were told at the beginning of the year that this set of assignments represented a "fresh progression in thought and expression." I am sure that this is so, but I am equally sure that students who have taken this course in previous years have come out at approximately the same place I am now. They might not have had to struggle with help, advice, amateurs, and professionals; but whatever their "progression in thought and expression," I am sure that through it they saw the complexity of writing, and that in writing they had a key that could open—at least part way— any door that it was set to. (269-70)

Coles sees this paper as a triumph of the course, but for me it raises significant questions as to whether Coles's teaching has accomplished what it set out to do. That all six papers of the final day express this same sentiment of confusion, and that all six do so in a similar style of hedging and second-guessing, and that this student comes to the realization that he is perhaps not alone in feeling this way after a semester with Coles, suggests that what the students have learned is not to disavow the Theme, but to replace one Theme with another. They've cast aside Themewriting and the Jolly Green Giant for what I might call Coleswriting. And this student knows it, recognizing that all Coles's previous students have likely reached the same place he has.

Though Coles claims his is a course on writing—and indeed, they do talk a lot about writing during the semester, and the students produce a lot of it as well—it is perhaps more apt to describe the course as one in criticism. The papers are only discussed within the framework of praise and blame; there is never opportunity for revision, never the opportunity to return to an idea and continue working on it. Though the occasional assignment glances back to previous work for its starting point, thereby revising ideas previously addressed, Coles never includes

revision as part of the assignment sequence; that is, they revisit ideas, but they don't revisit their own sentences. The students have ample opportunities to practice criticism, to hone their ability to recognize and declaim the Theme—even to the point where they see it in love letters from a girlfriend—but they lack the opportunity to refine a single piece of writing. There is no space within the course design to linger over a draft. Each assignment is an exercise in analysis, and at no point is the question asked, "How could this writer, in light of our discussion today, revise his paper to address these concerns?" This is perhaps the greatest fault of the course; it offers no theory or practice of revision.

The Amherst pedagogy does not include revision because of its faith in the sequence: through daily assignments revisiting the same writerly problems repeatedly, the student essentially "revises" each time he writes a new essay; each continues a trajectory set by the previous. But this does not play out as intended in Coles's classroom. Coles's students approach the same problems day after day and they fall into the same traps day after day, such that by the end of the term, they admit (both in the carol and in the final six essays) that they are lost, that they will continue to resort to the Theme even though they know it is problematic and even though they know, as the student Bill says, "right away what you'd be stupid to do, but you [end] up doing it anyway" (232). Rather than writing toward something, they start each assignment from square one, blamed for the same repeated problems in their writing ad nauseam.

The epideictic is the rhetoric of praise and blame, and Coles's course, through its cultivation of a shared critical vocabulary to describe the work of student writing, is a course in praise and blame. It is a course in criticism, one of communal judgment, the class reading and writing together, displaying and demonstrating together, their writing showing forth the values of their community. The class discussions themselves focus not on organization or on thesis or on

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argumentation, but rather on sentences, on style, on the stylistic self construable from the way the words fall on the page. Coles valorizes a certain public identity, one that is not phony, one that is not the Jolly Green Giant, and through a communal enactment of praise and blame, his students learn what such writing might look like.

Coles sets up his classroom this way because he knows—as I read him—that student writing is not persuasive and—because it is epideictic rhetoric—cannot be. At no point in *The Plural I* does he attempt to read it as pragmatic. Coles does not engage student writing as an argument; he is not looking for persuasion; he does not expect the writing to affect any sort of practical, tangible change. Rather, Coles reads as an observer—as a *theôros*—neither inclined nor disposed nor wanting to read as a *kritês*, reading as witness to the students' performance of their ability to display the values Coles's classroom works to uphold. Coles reads knowing he is an audience to epideictic discourse, and in this sense, Coles's way of reading is wise. It is the rare occasion when a teacher finds herself persuaded by a piece of student writing. I do not want that claim to belittle, or sound dismissive of, student writing. Rather, there is another set of criteria governing how it is read. More often than not, teachers are interested in how well the student engages sources, or follows generic conventions, or applies a certain method to a given text, or organizes an argument, etc. These are not criteria of pragmatic discourse but of epideictic discourse—of a discourse predicated on the display of the shared values of a community, in this case, the shared values of particular ways of reading and writing. A teacher does not read student work expecting to be persuaded; a teacher reads student work to assess it against some set of values. This assessment is a matter of praise and blame, and it is an epideictic rhetoric that feeds into pragmatic rhetoric. The pragmatic comes not in terms of persuasion, but in terms of where a given piece of student work sits in relation to the shared

values propagated by the classroom—that is, the praise and blame of the epideictic informs the judicial act of grading papers.

Readers are left, then, with the question of what to do with *The Plural I*. The book wants, at times, to be read as a memoir, as Coles's first attempt to teach writing without Baird's oversight. But so too, the book wants to be read as a novel, the story carried along by the sequenced assignments, a narrative of the students' development over the term. *The Plural I* can be read as an ethnography as well, Coles with his 300-plus pages of documentation. But there is one reading Coles guards against: he does not want a teacher to imitate this sequence. Or at least so he says. The reprinting of *The Plural I* assignment sequence in various forms, Coles's reuse of Baird's pedagogy and course materials, and the weight of Coles's scholarship (so much of it describing his classroom practice) suggest he values imitation and that he invites others to imitate him. Against that, though, Coles decries the sequence in *The Plural I* (his first attempt at writing one) as "really not very good (and really it is not very good)" (*The Plural I—and After* 272-73; see also *Composing II* 1).

But it is not for the sequence's shortcomings—shortcomings Coles is well aware of—or even for its multiple failed assignments that Coles claims imitation of *The Plural I* is an inappropriate response.[25] Coles, on his intent for *The Plural I*:

> Beyond wanting to say that a course in writing ought to focus on the writing of
> the members of it (rather than on something else), and that teachers of writing
> ought to develop a methodology with the subject that is an extension of

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[25] Assignments 6, 12, 16, 24, and 29 each fall flat. Coles rewrites each, sometimes showing these revisions to students, but often not. (Curious that Coles revises his own writing but gives students no space to do so.) Keroes, in her review of *The Plural I*, notes that the many failed assignments call Coles's teaching into question. I would say the opposite; through the inclusion of the failed assignments, Coles pushes against the hero-narratives so common in teaching scholarship.

themselves, I had no desire with that book to tell anyone else how he or she ought to go about handling the subject. My purpose, rather, was to dramatize, with my mistakes and failures as much as with my successes, what is involved in the teaching (and learning) of writing, however one approaches it, in hopes that this would enable other teachers to take a fresh hold on whatever they might choose to do. (*Composing II* 2)

There certainly is an argument made concerning writing both within *The Plural I* and the opening sentence of this quoted passage, but Coles's purpose is to dramatize his own experiences such that teachers would gain insight into their own. It is in this sense that Coles would later call *The Plural I* a "teacher's manual" (*Composing II* 2, 10). *The Plural I* offers neither lesson plans nor pedagogical theory but a display of teaching.[26] It is not unlike Tufte's *Artful Sentences*, in that Coles models a method, performs a particular way of reading student work. Just as Tufte offers not conclusions but observations (*Grammar* iii), Coles offers not pedagogical conclusions but a demonstration of a stylistic self in the classroom. There is a tension here regarding imitation of Coles: he is aware of the dangers of a mechanical imitation of a pedagogy. That is why, I believe, he inserts himself into Baird's course description, revising the course Baird so carefully pieced together. Coles is independent, yes, but he still works within the Amherst framework. But Coles does not want teachers to imitate his teaching as Fish imitates the Updike sentence: such teaching would become rote, lifeless, habitual. And yet, he still gives readers his sequences, baiting the reader to try some of these assignments.

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[26] While Coles does not wish for the assignment sequence in *The Plural I* to be used, in 1981 Hayden published a revision of it as *Composing II*, a textbook for first-year writing courses. It was not Coles's first published textbook. In 1974, he published *Composing: Writing as a Self-Creating Process* and its companion piece *Teaching Composing*; both received a glowing review from Philip Keith. *Composing II*, however, did not garner a single review.

If not imitation, then what is an appropriate response to *The Plural I*? Coles believes, "[W]hen it comes to someone's helping someone else to write or to teach writing, the most that would seem possible is for the someone to enact his notion of what is involved in the activity in such a way as to demand that others respond with an enactment of what for *them* is involved in it" (*The Plural I* 1, emphasis Coles's). All that a teacher can do in the classroom is perform, and that performance provokes response. Coles continues: "Which is to say that when it comes to the teaching of art, what teaches finally is style. Learning, the other end of the activity, would seem to be connected with a stylistic response to style" (1). This enactment becomes one's style, style "a metaphor of the self, a way of performing one's understanding of experience" ("An Unpetty Pace" 380). Elsewhere, Coles describes this pedagogical, performative style as "a way to enable others to make for themselves, or to make better, styles of their own" (*Composing II* 2). This stylistic performance teaches, for it demands a stylistic response from its audience. Perhaps William Irmscher offers the best published response to the book, Irmscher developing a stylistic response in his own pedagogy after reading Coles, coming to the conclusion "I know I don't want to be like Coles" (87), that response possible only after sustained stylistic engagement with Coles. In this regard, Coles's own teaching can be read as a stylistic response to Baird's, Coles developing his pedagogy within and against his mentor's, modeling what he hopes his readers will do upon finishing *The Plural I*.

Coles takes performance seriously, a teacher who attends to sentences and their style as dramatic displays of a writer's sense of the self and its constitution through and by language. For Coles, style becomes manifest through criticism, through the demonstration of a way of reading, through the showing forth of the shared values (or, rather, values that come to be shared) of the classroom, through praise and blame. I read Coles within a progression of stylistics begun in the

first chapter, where I brought together style and delivery to push against the pejorative associations between style and current-traditional rhetorics. Syntactic delivery offers readers and writers, teachers and students a means to invigorate the work of the sentence, reclaiming it as a site of consequential pedagogical instruction. From there, I turned to Austin, Fish, and Tufte, who through their own performances as readers put aside concerns with what sentences mean and attend instead to what sentences do on the page. To this discussion, Coles brings the contextualized display of the sentence, his praise and blame necessarily couched within the community's values concerning writing. The final assignment Coles gives his students concerns location—"*Where did you start this term? Where do you seem to come out?*" (258, emphasis Coles's) and in the next chapter, "A Located, Habituated Ethos," I take up this question of location with an eye toward grammar, considering how the syntactic delivery of the performative, displayed sentence locates a writer within a text, within a conversation.

3.6   INTERCHAPTER: THE SENTENCE, DISPLAYED

In "The 'Banking' Concept of Education," Paulo Freire contends there are two models of education. In the banking model, the teacher's "task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance" (71). The other model is based upon "problem-posing," where "students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own"

(81). I asked my class to write in response to Freire and what seemed to me a fitting question: What would the ideal classroom look like?

From the first paper I read: "The ideal class should be a combination of both banking and problem-posing." From the second: "I think the ideal classroom should combine both of Freire's concepts." From the third: "I think the ideal classroom would be a combination of a lecture like classroom and discussion." There is a pattern here. Not only are these responses akin to the Themes Coles's students write, avoiding the difficult moments of Freire's argument concerning hegemony, oppression, narrative, and epistemology in favor of a stock response, but so too is their syntax remarkably similar. [27] Here are those three responses again, set alongside eight others from the class:

> The ideal class should be a combination of both banking and problem-posing.
>
> I think the ideal classroom should combine both of Freire's concepts.
>
> I think the ideal classroom would be a combination of a lecture like classroom and discussion.
>
> Personally, I believe that the ideal class is a combination of these two concepts that were presented.
>
> Personally, I think the ideal classroom is a combination of both the banking concept and the problem-posing method.
>
> I think it would be a healthy mixture of the two, banking and problem-posing.
>
> I think that the ideal class should be a mixture between banking and problem posing.
>
> The ideal classroom scenario is a mix of both of these concepts.

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[27] I take "stock response" from I. A. Richards (228).

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I believe that there needs to be a mixture of both of Freire's concepts in a classroom.

I think the ideal classroom should be a mix of the banking and problem-posing concepts.

The ideal class should be a class with balance.

Nothing in excess, everything in moderation is the trope governing these responses. All follow a This-is-That structure, saying This (the ideal classroom) is That (balanced, a mixture, a combination). Just as Freire's work revolves around metaphor, so too do these responses, the This-is-That structure setting up the vehicle-tenor relationship between the classroom and mixture, balance, and combination. Modal verbs—"should be" appears five times, "would be" twice, and "needs to be" once—make the tacit argument that this ideal classroom does not yet exist. Eight students preface their statements with an "I believe" or "I think." Two open their sentences almost identically—"Personally, I believe" and "Personally, I think"—and those sentences continue in liked-minded syntax—"the ideal class is a combination of these two concepts" and "the ideal classroom is a combination of both." That the classroom should be a combination appears five times, that it should be a mixture five times also, and that it should be balanced once. Such similarities led one student to remark during class discussion, "I don't even know which one I wrote!"

To some extent, these stock responses are not surprising. The prevalence of "ideal classroom," "banking," and "problem-posing" can be traced to my writing prompt and Freire's text. These words were given to the students, and students were asked to do something with them. My assignment was an unintentional, and unfortunate, iteration of Coles's Themewriting game. Despite my hopes that the question would move students away from papers that do little

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more than give examples of Freire's banking and problem-posing models and into the difficult moments of his text, instead I got one commonplace in place of another. Students swapped the "I've been in a banking classroom" response with the "A classroom needs to have balance" response.

These sentences are stock responses, but they are also epideictic rhetoric, sentences showing forth the shared values of a community. I see two displays here. The first is the response to Freire, this impulse toward balance, mixture, combination. The second display I find more compelling: the students' syntax. Surely there are other ways to express the belief that the ideal classroom is a mixture of the banking and problem-posing models. From another paper in the class:

> Students must build up the ability to challenge by starting off with a "banking" overview of the subject to learn what they will be learning and once that is accomplished, then they can pose questions.

This student expresses the same vision of the ideal classroom as balanced, though she does so through a different syntax and diction than her peers; balance, mixture, and combination do not appear here, neither does the This-is-That formation. Still a stock response, but shown forth differently. This sentence and how it displays the potential for other ways of responding to Freire prompts me to call the eleven "volunteer sentences," a term I take from Verlyn Klinkenborg to describe a sentence that offers itself up too easily for a writer's use:

> You may notice, as you write, that sentences often volunteer a shape of their own
> And supply their own words as if they anticipated your thinking.
> Those sentences are nearly always unacceptable,
> Dull and unvarying, yielding only a small number of possible structures

And only the most predictable phrases, the inevitable clichés. (44-45)

Klinkenborg sees volunteer sentences as volunteering not only their syntax ("a shape of their own") but their ideas too ("their own words"). Because these sentences appear "as if they anticipated your thinking," they are not unlike the Theme, not unlike the stock response, and not unlike epideictic discourse, all of which are welcome, familiar, easy, comfortable, so ingrained in our shared cultural values that they anticipate our thinking.

Klinkenborg claims volunteer sentences offer "only a small number of possible structures," which seems to be the case when looking at these eleven responses from my students. Mina Shaughnessy elaborates:

> Before a practiced writer begins a sentence, he has—or feels that he has—almost an infinite number of ways of saying what he has to say. But with each word he writes down, the field of choices narrows. The sentence seems to take its head and move with increasing predictability in the directions that idiom, syntax, and semantics leave open. (44)[28]

My students' responses to Freire demonstrate this tendency of volunteer sentences to move with increasing predictability as the field of choices narrows. Each sentence starts from a similar place—"I believe" or "I think"—and progresses to language offered by the prompt—"the ideal classroom." This is not surprising, given that from elementary school onward, teachers require that students repeat the question in their answer; the students in my class are showing forth their knowledge of such school-talk. The sentence then must move to a modal and linking verb, because this is, after all, an exercise in imagination and metaphor, the modal setting up the

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[28] See also Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." In describing how each successive word of a sentence shapes the possibilities for how that sentence might end, Fish employs the same metaphor as Shaughnessy, arguing that the "range of options" available for completing a sentence "*narrows* considerably" as words are added (24, emphasis mine).

subjunctive and the linking verb setting up the metaphor. The field of choices has narrowed, and

in this syntactic place, the student draws upon her reservoir of cultural commonplaces. Knowing

that moderation is good and that extremes are bad, and recognizing that the problem-posing and

banking models are extremes, she completes the sentence: "I believe the ideal classroom should

be a balance between banking and problem-posing." And so it goes, with little variance, for

eleven writers delivering eleven volunteer sentences.

But even within these volunteer sentences, there are moments of distinction, moments

where the writer makes a claim that begins breaking away from, even reshaping, the stock

response. Consider the following:

> I think the ideal classroom should combine both of Freire's concepts.
>
> I think the ideal classroom would be a combination of a lecture like classroom and
>
> discussion.

The only difference between these two sentences is that the first assumes a readerly familiarity

with Freire's argument—"both of Freire's concepts" glossing the text—whereas the second

explicates Freire—"a lecture like classroom and discussion," Freire and his terms absent. This

second sentence, in using "lecture like classroom and discussion" to represent the banking and

problem-posing models respectively, offers a bit of commentary on Freire's work not present in

the first sentence. That commentary, though, is subtle—how did the writer leap from banking

and problem-posing to lecture and discussion?—so subtle that it is subsumed under the power of

the stock response, of the volunteer sentence, of the epideictic. Yet in that sentence, the writer

begins applying Freire to her own experience, equating lecture with the banking model and

discussion with problem-posing education. This association is still a stock response, but so too it

could be read as the instance where the student has put Freire into her own terms, transferring

him from the Brazilian to the American classroom. Her sentence is one of the few that avoid "banking" and "problem-posing," replacing them with terms of her own. I read this sentence as a step away from Freire toward the writer's agenda as she redefines Freire's key concepts for her own purposes. A small step, yes, one that is fairly predictable, yes, but a step nonetheless. I see space for revision here, a space to interrogate the leaps made by the student from Freire's key terms to her own.

In the first sentence, I see a similar subtle work. "I think the ideal classroom should combine both of Freire's concepts" is the only sentence among the eleven that does not revolve around a linking verb. This sentence gives the classroom agency; it does something; it "should combine" two concepts. I am not sure how this student uses the term "classroom"—whether it means the physical classroom, those in the classroom, teacher and students, a curriculum—but whatever its semantic range, the classroom here is something that has the potential to act, to do, to transform. It is a performative classroom. This student has an understanding of the epideictic potential of a classroom to refine and reform ideas, as evident by her attributing grammatical agency to the classroom. The classroom is not a passive construct made by the actions of others; it is not a classroom that merely exists; rather, it does things on its own accord.

These eleven responses suggest that just as there are commonplaces concerning content, so too are there commonplaces concerning the rhetorical practices of style and delivery. The epideictic, then, might work not only to uphold the shared beliefs of a community, but also to uphold the shared practices of that community, its customs—in this case, its way of delivering an idea. Klinkenborg, on the origin of volunteer sentences:

> Volunteer sentences are the relics of your education
>
> And the desire to emulate the grown-up, workaday prose that surrounds you,

> Which is made overwhelmingly of sentences that are banal and structurally thoughtless. (46)

The relics of your education, the desire to emulate the speech of others—these are the trappings of the disparaged epideictic, a discourse handed down through ancestors and archives, a discourse emulating the discourses of others. Klinkenborg calls volunteer sentences "banal and structurally thoughtless," which certainly can be the case, but so too these epideictic sentences are the relics of an education, showing forth the desire to emulate the prose of others.

Recognizing these sentences as epideictic rhetoric does not absolve them of being bad sentences. They don't say much and they need revision. And it might be that these eleven students are frustrated with their responses, resorting to the stock response knowingly but begrudgingly, feeling stymied. The place to begin pushing students' reading of Freire past the stock response is to attend to delivery. The eleven sentences rush forward, progressing from "I" to the "ideal classroom" to the metaphor of balance. There is no "however" or "since" or "although" or "because" or "even though" to qualify the assertion; no parenthetical asides to open up a dual-voiced discourse; no dashes or semicolons or ellipses or colons to offer space to nuance a claim. If these eleven students are to do something more with their readings of Freire, if they are to write sentences that show forth the shared values of the community while also working to reshape those values, if these students are to realize the full potential of the epideictic, then I suggest they turn to the sentence. Perhaps they start by rewriting the sentence using a comma, the lesson not one on comma splices or how to subordinate ideas, but on how punctuation complicates meaning. This is an instance where grammar becomes a generative space of productive inquiry into the relationship between style, delivery, and ideas, a relationship shown forth by syntax.

4.0   LOCATING A SYNTACTIC SELF

> But, in fact, sentences promise more. They promise nothing less
> than lessons and practice in the organization of the world. That is
> what language does: organize the world into manageable, and in
> some sense, artificial, units that can then be inhabited and
> manipulated.
>
>   Stanley Fish
>   *How to Write a Sentence*
>   *and How to Read One* (7)

The Coles of Chapter Three offers one way to talk about the self in relation to the sentence,

Coles teaching that a writer's use or disavowal of the canned discourse available to him

construes a stylistic self on the page. There is another way, though, to think about how the self

can be present in writing, and that is through how a writer (knowingly or not) adheres to or

works against sentence-level conventions.[1] In *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide*

to Writing in the 21ˢᵗ Century, Steven Pinker claims, "If readers can see that a writer cares about

consistency and accuracy in her prose, they will be reassured that the writer cares about those

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[1] In "Mistaking Subject Matter for Style," Gary Sloan offers a third way to think about style and
the self, arguing that what readers recognize as style and, therefore, as a writerly presence, is
actually characteristic subject matter. Sloan goes so far as to say there is no such thing as
individual style; rather, subject matter betrays the self in writing.

virtues in conduct they cannot see as easily" (9). Because of this link between style and trust, Pinker argues, conventional correctness is important. This argument is no different than Aristotle's: "[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others], on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt" (*Rhetoric* 1.2.4). Aristotle teaches that if a speaker handles discourse well, the audience will be more inclined to trust her with the larger matters under dispute. So too of style, says Pinker. If the writer knows how to handle a conjunction, how to use an appositive, how to conjugate verbs—if the writer puts together her sentences with care—then readers will trust her.

It is not a far leap from the argument Pinker makes to the pedagogies from the Golden Age of Style based upon internalizing sentence forms.[2] What connects the two is Aristotle's teaching on virtue formation: practice internalizes actions that, when the occasion demands, we then perform out of habit; virtue is a product of habit habituated by repetition (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1). And so, a student combines sentences, imitates them, copies them into a commonplace book, spending time inside the prose of others and internalizing forms such that when the student needs to write, sentences are ready and available. The student writes as if these

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[2] See, for instance, Edward P. J. Corbett's, "The Theory and Practice of Imitation in Classical Rhetoric;" Frank D'Angelo's "Imitation and Style;" and Ross Winterowd's "Style: A Matter of Manner." Pinker, on why internalization works to teach the sentence: "The words and structures lie waiting in memory, bearing little tags like 'here's a way to delay mentioning a modifier'… Accomplished wordsmiths identify a need while writing, or spot a problem in a sentence while revising, and when all goes well the suitable word or construction pops into mind" (*Sense* 137).

forms were second nature, writing with the "consistency and accuracy" Pinker and readers both value, these stylistic virtues products of habit.[3]

In Chapters Two and Three, habit emerged as a key theme of this project. The Virginia Tufte of 1971 based her entire pedagogy on habit, her students imitating so as to internalize the hundreds of sentences gathered in *Grammar as Style*. The Tufte of 2006 casts it aside, distancing herself from Chomsky and the transformational grammar and the new linguistics underlying that pedagogy. Coles, too, resists habit and the Themewriting it produces. He does not want his students to write, out of mindless habit, the rhetoric of cant. Coles and Tufte point to the limits of habit as a pedagogy; here, I further that discussion, considering the sentence not through habit, but through habitation—that is, the sentence as a place a writer inhabits. The inhabited sentence offers a different conception of the sentence-level self than what Pinker describes, basing his on habit and its accord with convention, on the little details a writer must attend to in order to be credible. The self I address in this chapter falls in line with Coles's understanding of the self located in relation to a text, an idea, a way of speaking, a sentence. Coles calls this the stylistic self. I might call it a syntactic self, one situated by the grammar of the locative sentence, and for this chapter, in an effort to draw attention to the work of the sentence in locating writers, I will use syntactic self instead of ethos when referring to a writerly self.

In what follows, I bring style to bear upon ethos and delivery so as to interrogate the relationship among the three. Within classical rhetoric, delivery and ethos go hand in hand; it is no coincidence that Quintilian (11.3) and the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (3.11) both

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[3] For more on the connection between virtue formation and writing instruction, see Eugene Garver's "Teaching Writing and Teaching Virtue." See also James Murphy, "The Key Role of Habit in Roman Writing Instruction."

hold delivery as of utmost importance in rhetorical practice and that Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.2.4) does the same for ethos. Within the classical tradition audiences trust a speaker not only based on what he says, but also how he says it, how he presents himself on the stage, in the courtroom, in the senate, behind the pulpit. Delivery and habit, too, have a long relationship; I think of the prescriptions from Quintilian and Cicero and other classical rhetoricians as well as 18th-century elocutionary guides for what constitutes effective delivery, prescriptions ingrained through repetitious practice—a mode of teaching not unlike sentence-level instruction. The missing piece here is how style can enrich this relationship between ethos and delivery: I claim syntax locates a writer, the writer inhabiting a sentence, this self a product of the textual and discursive relationships governed by grammar.

To make this claim, I begin with scholarship recuperating the etymology of ethos and connecting it to location and inhabitation. This work redefines ethos, moving away from character and habit and toward a theory of the self set in relation to others. After looking to how Composition has taken up this notion of the locative ethos, I suggest the locative sentence is the foundation for two books of writing instruction. One sits at the center of Composition: Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, a book assigned at over half the colleges and universities in America (xiii). The other is an anti-textbook of sorts (in the spirit of Lanham's) located at the margins of Composition: Verlyn Klinkenborg's *Several Short Sentences about Writing*, a book that—aside from my own publications—has not received a single mention in Composition and Rhetoric's journals. Put together, *They Say / I Say* and *Several Short Sentences about Writing* provide a rich conception of how the syntactic self is located in the delivered sentence. Each pedagogy presents markedly

different assumptions concerning the relationship between reader and writer—assumptions that dramatically shape writing instruction.[4]

4.1   A LOCATIVE, HABITUATED ETHOS

In the previous chapter, Coles offered a way of reading sentences predicated upon their display. Through the performance enacted at the sentence level, students display certain values concerning writing. That display, in turn, reifies or challenges those values. Coles often uses the metaphor of location to describe this work, asking his students where they locate themselves in relation to a problem or an idea, where they started the term and where they finished the term. Coles is often read as an Expressivist because of his concern with voice, but I see something else in his reading of student sentences based upon location: Coles's pedagogy resonates with scholarship begun in the mid-1970s working to complicate Composition and Rhetoric's understanding of ethos.

In "Aristotle on Habit (εθος) and Character (ηθος): Implications for the *Rhetoric*," Arthur Miller explains that the Greek for habit, εθος, and the Greek for character, ηθος, differ by a single letter. The latter derives from the former, and Miller notes the "basic consubstantiality between the two words" and the "good sense observation that a man's habits are indicative of his character" (309). Miller then points to the wide range of meanings for ηθος in addition to character: "Significantly, the basic denotation is *not* character, but '*an accustomed place*' and in the plural may refer to the '*haunts or abodes* of animals'; it may also refer to '*the abodes of men*' " (310, emphasis Miller's). S. Michael Halloran offers a similar recuperation of ethos

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[4] I've written elsewhere on style and ethos. See "Of Chiasms and Composition, or, The Whale, Part II."

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(though not citing Miller), setting it against prevailing definitions of the term: "In contrast to modern notions of the person or the self, *ethos* emphasizes the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private"—Halloran, here, gestures toward a social definition of ethos, one predicated upon a situated rhetorical act; he continues—"The most concrete meaning given for the term in the Greek lexicon is 'a habitual gathering place,' and I suspect that it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests" (60). Miller's "*the abodes of men*" hints at a communal aspect of ethos, and though Miller does not address it at length, Halloran does, arguing ethos is not a matter of the self but instead fundamentally public and social, situated in the gathering places of a community. There are obvious resonances between this understanding of ethos and Coles's stylistic self predicated not upon some individualistic voice but rather the sentence set within the context of a discourse community.

I pause to note the discussions happening in Composition when Miller and Halloran retrieve this etymological sense of the locative ethos. Miller writes in 1974, Halloran in 1982, both in the Golden Age of Style (and the Rhetoric Revival). The sentence is yet to fall from its place of prominence in the composition classroom, though by the time Halloran writes its influence is dwindling; Expressivism is gaining traction as the field shifts its focus from product to process; Voice has emerged as a metaphor for a writerly self, though Composition would soon become skeptical of the term; post-structuralism has begun its critique of the author's presence in a text—it is in this moment that Miller and Halloran recuperate an etymological sense of ethos as a place someone inhabits. And it is because they write in such a moment, I suggest, that their work has been taken up. The locative ethos addresses many of the tensions within Composition at the time, particularly its unease with an uncritical, naïve view of the self, this unease seen in

Composition's eventual setting aside of Expressivism and move toward what James Berlin calls the "New Rhetoric" wherein "Truth is dynamic and dialectical, the result of a process involving the interaction of opposing elements" (774). As Miller and Halloran write, Composition was moving toward social constructivist theories of writing and rhetoric, and this growing concern with a dialectical truth is mirrored in the field's embrace of an ethos redefined as a matter, too, of social construction.

At a time when Voice and the relatively simple version of ethos it represents found itself unable to account for post-structuralist shifts in Composition theory, ethos emerges anew. With overtones of the New Rhetoric, in 1993 Nedra Reynolds claims, "Considering the social construction of *ethos* … shifts its implications of responsibility from the individual to a negotiation or mediation between the rhetor and community" (328). This social understanding of ethos enables Reynolds to nuance Aristotle's view on virtue formation. Reynolds agrees that "Character is formed by habit, not engendered by nature" but she then makes that character not a matter of the self, but of the social: "and those habits come from the community or culture. One identifies an individual's character, then, by looking to the community" (329). Rather than take sides in a reductive binary between the individual and the community, Reynolds argues the two inform each other: "An individual's *ethos* cannot be determined outside of the space in which it was created or without a sense of the cultural context" (329). Reynolds uses Miller and Halloran to reframe ethos as socially constructed: it is not something the individual creates in isolation but a product of that individual's position within a community. By claiming habits are not removed from the places and communities in which they are located, Reynolds brings together the locative and the habituated senses of ethos.

Reynolds is one of the first in Composition to make use of the locative ethos, and her work with Miller and Halloran is foundational to two other scholars rethinking ethos. The first is Julie Nelson Christoph, a Fulbright scholar whose research largely concerns literacy sponsorship and the role of the personal in writing, particularly for students writing in and for the academy. I turn to Christoph because she, like Walker and Jost, looks to the classical tradition with a critical eye, not appropriating it entirely but nuancing its rhetorical theory. In her 2002 *College English* article "Reconceiving *Ethos* in Relation to the Personal: Strategies of Placement in Pioneer Women's Writing," Christoph uses the locative ethos to critique the Aristotelian model of ethos that depends upon the choices a rhetor makes.[5] Christoph argues that "For Aristotle, constructing *ethos* is a matter of clear and deliberate choice—which is problematic in light of more recent understandings of constraints on individual agency" (664). Christoph identifies two problems with Aristotle's view of ethos. First, it "offers no guidance for how a rhetor might sort out contradictions in the composition of an audience," assuming "individual character types are relatively straightforward and consistent" (664).[6] Second, it assumes the rhetor can "deliberately control all aspects of his *ethos*" (664). Christoph challenges Aristotle, asserting that an ethos dependent upon personal choice and a homogenous, consistent audience "is impossible when cultural, linguistic, and psychic forces that are beyond a rhetor's conscious control affect what he or she is able to say" (665). "Able to say" is key here—it points to the affordances and constraints the social places upon the rhetorical, something Christoph argues Aristotle's account of ethos wherein the rhetor simply decides how to present himself to a homogenous audience fails to account for.

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[5] The article comes from her dissertation, written at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the advisement of Deborah Brandt.

[6] See also Reynolds on the problem of assuming a homogenous audience (329).

In response to this shortcoming in Aristotle's rhetorical theory, Christoph turns, as do many, to post-structuralism and its understanding of the situated self. Because identity is neither as "stable" nor as "under the control of the individual" as Aristotle presents it, post-structuralism offers Composition a theory of identity that accounts for "the shifting dynamics of social and cultural conditions" (665). Christoph claims a writer is "limited by political, social, and psychological constraints that restrict his or her ability to choose any option for self-representation" (665). And yet, while post-structuralism accounts for such constraints upon the individual, Christoph points to its own shortcoming: an emphasis on the subject position of the writer risks essentializing those traits that come to define the writer. The "particularities" of each writer's situation tend to be erased in post-structuralist analyses, Christoph claims, such that it is difficult, for example, "to distinguish between Audre Lorde and, say, Gloria Anzaldúa—both lesbian women of color who write feminist theory and literature" (667). While post-structuralism brings race, class, sex, gender, etc. to the fore, the nuances of the individual can be lost amid the ideological forces shaping the self.

Christoph's solution is to look to a locative ethos, and it allows her to navigate the problems of both Aristotelian and poststructuralist accounts of the self. Whereas "Aristotle's advice on constructing *ethos* depends too strongly on the complete control of the rhetor," and whereas post-structuralism "gives due consideration to the forces beyond the rhetor's conscious control" yet "gives insufficient attention to the rich particularities that are at the heart of what makes an individual writer's work compelling," a locative ethos is able to account for both (667). A locative ethos considers how the writer locates herself within a particular discourse community (thereby accounting for the agency of the writer) while also attending to how that community acts upon the writer (thereby accounting for the social). A located writer exercises

agency in the choices made in the text yet also is subject to the social, cultural, political, and rhetorical forces acting upon her.

Seeking to "look closely at the particular ways in which writers establish authority for themselves through defining and redefining their evolving positions in particular communities," Christoph offers a case study pulled from autobiographies of nineteenth-century American pioneer women (668). In these autobiographies, Christoph identifies three "strategies of placement," ways the writers locate themselves and, consequently, locate an ethos. The first are "identity statements in which a writer explicitly refers to some facet of her self-identity as a person affiliated with a particular place or community, saying in effect, I am a _____" (670). Identity statements are a rich source for ethical appeal because they are often contradictory—a writer may, in Christoph's example, identify with her friends on the East Coast while speaking of her job on her western farm—such that "different affiliations approach and recede from the foreground depending on the circumstances" (671). Identity statements situate the speaker in multiple locations at once, challenging the notion of a speaker with a monolithic ethos. The second strategy of placement is the "moral display," wherein the writer "connect[s] with the moral standards of the community and … establish[es] trust through demonstrating similar values" (671). The third strategy of placement is "material associations," wherein a writer locates herself within particularities of her lived experience in a given locale "through the references they make to particular possessions, the maxims and regional terms they use, and the kinds of education they imply having experienced" (671). I note that these three strategies are largely content-based: in Christoph's analysis, it is what the pioneer woman says through identity statements, moral displays, and material associations that locates her in the American west.

A decade later, Risa Applegarth furthered this understanding of ethos by turning to genre theory. In "Genre, Location, and Mary Austin's Ethos," Applegarth argues that "*location*, a richly layered term that includes one's material environment as well as the social and symbolic processes that imbue environments with meaning, shapes who one becomes and how one communicates with others" (43, emphasis Applegarth's). This understanding of a situated ethos draws upon the rhetor's "participation in particular communities and their habituation, within *places*" (43, emphasis Applegarth's). Applegarth places Halloran, Reynolds, and Christoph alongside Charles Bazerman and Anis Bawarshi to argue genre is one of these situated places from which a rhetor speaks: "*Ethos* traces a boundary between individual, strategic performance and the constraints of social norms; this same tension between strategy and convention is emphasized in contemporary theories that conceptualize genres as locations" (45). Genre theory allows Applegarth not only to theorize ethos as a matter of engaging the conventions and values of a particular discourse and a community, but also to emphasize the dynamic and responsive capacities of both genre and ethos.

As a case study, Applegarth reads acclaimed nature writer Mary Austin. Austin, in Applegarth's analysis, uses three strategies to "[foreground] her location in the U.S. west and [exploit] this location for *ethos*, positioning her narrator as a desert insider, enjoying intimacy with and access to spaces that her readers lack" (53). The first strategy is "attestation" whereby Austin witnesses the land first-hand. For example, Austin attests, "I have seen badgers drinking about the hour when the light takes on the yellow tinge it has from coming slantwise through the hills" (Austin 14 qtd. in Applegarth 55). With such statements, Austin distances herself from "secondhand knowledge of the desert," her observations ones that only someone in the desert could make (55). Second, Austin describes the desert in vivid detail. Applegarth provides a

number of examples from Austin's prose: hills "blunt, burned, squeezed up out of chaos," valleys "drowned" in haze, evaporated pools "dark and bitter, rimmed about with the efflorescence of alkaline deposits" (Austin 1 qtd. in Applegarth 56-57). With each, Austin presents the "violence and danger of the desert" and consequently "affirm[s] her narrator as anti-sentimental, capable of seeing and recounting frankly a land where death and danger are ubiquitous" (57). And third, Austin compares the desert to the world her east coast readers know. As an example, Applegarth points to Austin's frequent acknowledgments of the vastness of the desert, a vastness unknown by Austin's east coast readers, a vastness suggested when Austin speaks of a nearby town as "three days from anywhere in particular" (Austin 39 qtd. in Applegarth 57). Such statements, Applegarth argues, show that "the desert exists on a larger scale than that experienced by [Austin's] readers" (57). Comparison abounds in *Land of Little Rain*, Austin "emphasizing *her reader's distance* from the desert" (58, emphasis Applegarth's).

Just as Christoph's strategies of placement are content-based, so too are the strategies Applegarth identifies in Austin's writing. When Austin attests to what she has seen, when she describes her first-hand observations of the desert, when she compares that desert to the world of her readers, Austin relies upon the starkness, the danger, the beauty of the desert—the content of her sentences—to locate her ethos. Yet, within both Applegarth and Christoph's triads, there are avenues into considering the work of style in locating a writer. Consider, for instance, how Applegarth's strategies are rhetorical figures of thought. Attesting to the desert, offering first-hand observations of it, is the rhetorical figure *enargia*, which Lanham defines as "a generic term for visually powerful, vivid description which recreates something or someone, as several theorists say, 'before your very eyes'" (*Handlist* 64). Austin's descriptions of the desert fall under the rhetorical figures of thought *topographia* or *geographia*—descriptions of the earth—

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both of which Lanham notes are variants of the aforementioned *enargia* (*Handlist* 81; see also Applegarth 56).   And Austin's comparisons of the east coast to the American west are *comparatio*, "comparison in the general sense" (38). Austin's use of rhetorical figures of thought evidence how language use can be a locative device, one that situates its writer in a particular place.

So too, in Christoph's strategies of placement, there is an opening to consider the work of the sentence. Christoph notes that material associations can include "linguistic tools, such as uses of maxims, intertextual references, and regional language," each of which locating an individual within a community within a location (672). She gives a few examples: a writer who adopts a colloquialism—"my husband's better judgment gave way to his sand, (*as the old Colorado settlers say*)"—and a writer who adopts the regional "word 'vamos' in narrating her experiences during the California Gold Rush" (673, emphasis Christoph's). With each, the writer appropriates the regional language of the American West, this appropriation a matter of the social that touches upon class and race issues. This work happens through a revision of the sentence, in the shift from an east coast way of saying something to how someone in the desert might say it, and this sentence-level revision suggests delivery can be a means of locating a writer. The pioneer women adopt the phrasings of a particular region; they adopt the culturally sanctioned ways to deliver discourse, and by so doing, they locate themselves within that community. The language comes from within the scene—just as it does for students writing for the academy. [7]

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[7] For others thinking about the locative ethos, see Michael Hyde's introduction to *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, which traces ethos from Isocrates to Aristotle to Heidegger's notion of dwelling. See also LeFevre, who uses Halloran's definition of ethos as a gathering place to argue the text itself is one such place where reader and writer gather (45-46).

I've been working with etymology this chapter, and I offer two more. I am well aware of the etymological fallacy—the mistaken notion that words ought to retain their original meanings—yet these etymologies are instructive when thinking about how language use might situate its writer within a text. Composition derives from the Latin prefix *com*– meaning "together" and the verb *ponere* meaning "to place." Composition is the act of placing things together. *Elocutio*, the Latin for the rhetorical canon of style, has a similar etymology, deriving from the prefix *e*– meaning "out of" and a variation of *locus*, meaning "place." Style is language coming "out of a place." Carl Holmberg looks to this etymology and suggests the place in question is the stage, hence the overlap between *elocutio* and our modern word elocution (137). That may be—but there is more here. *Ethos*, *componere*, and *elocutio* all rest upon a theory of language bound up in situated discourse. It is a theory of language evident in the pioneer woman who adopts the language of the American west, or of Coles's student who knows to say "run the rack" when shooting pool. It is a theory of language wherein the text is a gathering place, a haunt, an abode (*ethos*) wherein ideas are placed together (*componere*) by a writer operating out of a particular place (*elocutio*).

I recall the Fish of my epigraph, who argues that sentences are more than mere performances of a writer's virtuosity. Sentences, according to Fish, "organize the world into manageable, and in some sense, artificial, units"—that is, they place together (compose) the elements of a writer's world, such that they "can then be inhabited and manipulated" (*How to Write* 7). In this claim, I see both notions of ethos I've been discussing. A habituated ethos appears in Fish's assertion that sentences offer "nothing less than lessons and practice in the organization of the world": students learn though the repeated—and repetitious—act of placing subject, verb, and object together, time and time again, how to piece together the world using

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language. A locative ethos appears in Fish's assertion that those sentences—those worlds composed, placed together, by syntax—can then be "inhabited." This inhabitation is possible only by the habits ingrained by writing sentences.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how Tufte's reading of the sentence brings forth its performativity, the ways in which the sentence moves on the page and the reader's role in activating that performance. In Chapter Three, I considered how the display of a sentence locates the writer within a particular discourse. But Coles does not attend to matters of grammar; his discussions hinge on the use of "run the rack" or the presence of Steve. Here, in Chapter Four, I turn now to the role of syntax in locating the writer within that discourse. This syntactic self is both the product of habit (as the Fish of my epigraph suggests) but so too of location, bringing together these two conceptions of ethos, revisiting again Coles and Tufte's unease with the role of habit in writing instruction. It is a syntactic self inhabiting the sentence.

4.2   READING GRAFF AND BIRKENSTEIN READING SENTENCES

Reynolds asks that teachers move ethos to a central position within their classroom and "[attend] to the rhetorical strategies writers use to locate themselves, their texts, and the particular discursive communities they are mediating within and between" (333). Though not written in response to Reynolds, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's bestselling textbook *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* strongly answers her call.[8] The book, now in

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[8] Another way to trace the influence of the locative ethos would be through the emergence of ecocomposition. I would begin with Marilyn Cooper's 1986 "The Ecology of Writing" and move to Weisser and Dobrin's 2001 edited collection *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* followed by Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon's 2006 edited collection *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers*, all of

its third edition, does not use any Greek or Latin rhetorical terms; the word ethos does not appear once in the text; Graff and Birkenstein are not at all concerned with its etymological recuperation. But the book is, in my reading of it, first and foremost a book about a syntactic self, a self set in relation to others by way of internalized linguistic forms.

Graff and Birkenstein claim, "all writers rely on certain stock formulas that they themselves didn't invent" (xviii). *They Say / I Say* teaches those formulas, formulas "so commonly used that they can be represented in model templates that students can use to structure and even generate what they want to say" (xviii).[9] The student learns the valued forms of argumentation within a community, and by learning these moves, the student gains entry into that community's way of talking, its way of thinking, its way of being. The first part of the book, "They Say," has three chapters ("They Say," "Her Point Is," and "As He Himself Puts It") that teach templates of summary, paraphrase, and quotation. The second part, "I Say," has four chapters ("Yes / No / Okay, But," "And Yet," "Skeptics May Object," and "So What? Who Cares?") that teach the templates that facilitate response to the They of part one.[10] Early in the book, Graff and Birkenstein offer an example paragraph composed of templates:

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which address the relationship between writer and place. I would also look to two special issues in *College Composition and Communication* devoted to "Locations of Writing" (66.1 and 66.2). Editor Kathleen Yancey introduces the issues' central questions: "Where do we write? And what difference, if any, does the location of our writing make? How does our location influence what we write and how we share our writing? And what about our own located-ness?" (5). The special issues of *CCC* do not frame themselves as ecocomposition, nor do they frame themselves as addressing ethos, but the central issue addressed—how places of writing affect the writing itself—draw upon both ethos and ecocomposition.

[9] In his 2003 *Clueless in Academe*, Graff offers a similar pedagogy for writing instruction predicated upon templates. See, in particular, chapter 8, "Why Johnny Can't Argue."

[10] There are two other parts to *They Say / I Say* addressing revision, writing in the disciplines, the moves of classroom discussion, and other sundry topics. They are beyond the scope of this chapter.

> In recent discussions of _____, a controversial issue has been whether _____. On the one hand, some argue that _____. From this perspective, _____. On the other hand, however, others argue that _____. In the words of _____, one of this view's main proponents, "_____." According to this view, _____. In sum, then, the issue is whether _____ or _____.
>
> My own view is that _____. Though I concede that _____, I still maintain that _____. For example, _____. Although some might object that _____, I would reply that _____. The issue is important because _____. (9)

At first glance, this template-paragraph seems cutesy, gimmicky even, an academic Mad Libs. And it may look somewhat familiar, an academic version of the Themewriting game, where the students learn how to put pieces together to create discourse (see Coles *The Plural I* 34-42; see also Chapter Three of this dissertation). But Graff and Birkenstein do not present this particular paragraph as a model for imitation. The paragraph shows how these templates can structure sentences, paragraphs, pages, essays, chapters, even entire books. The paragraph also illustrates how common these templates are in writing (and speaking too), the phrases part of the workaday language of academic prose. In highlighting this metatext for students, Graff and Birkenstein demystify academic prose, showing that it is a matter of learning simple moves, moves that can then become generative for the student's own writing. The student may not feel especially smart, but if he can learn these moves, he can fill the templates with his own ideas, deliver them in ways the academy approves of, and thereby gain access into academic discourse.[11]

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[11] Peter Elbow offers an alternative route into academic discourse, advocating students write first in their "mother tongue" and then revise into Standard Written English. See "Inviting the Mother Tongue: Beyond 'Mistakes,' 'Bad English,' and 'Wrong Language.' " See also his 2012 *Vernacular Eloquence*. Space and time constrain me from following this line of inquiry, but in revision of this project Elbow's work will likely become a point of reference.

They Say / I Say teaches students to speak as we do, to move on the page as we do; the book invites students into the academic community by teaching the delivery it values. The delivery is based on habit, on internalizing these moves: "Once you get used to using [the templates], you can even dispense with them altogether, for the rhetorical moves they model will be at your fingertips in an unconscious, instinctive way" (11). And these moves create a self situated in location to others. Graff and Birkenstein claim the most distinctive characteristic of academic writing is how it sets ideas in relation to one another (xvi). In some regards, their pedagogy is no different than Coles's: both concern themselves with how the student is located within the text: each teaches a particular way of speaking within a particular community. Yet theirs is a significant step in a different direction. Coles strays from grammar and syntax while Graff and Birkenstein base their project on it. Theirs is a stylistics harkening back to the Golden Age of Style in its valuing of the sentence, though very much grounded in post-structuralist understandings of how the self is construed by its social, cultural, and political—and, as their textbook teaches, grammatical—relationships.

This valuing of relationships is evident in Graff and Birkenstein's claim that the "They say / I say" move "represents the deep, underlying structure, the internal DNA as it were, of all effective argument"—hence its use as the book's title (xix). This pedagogy implies that the marker of a good argument is not necessarily logic, or a parade of evidence, or the status of the writer, but instead the writer's use of sources—how the writer situates her argument in relation to others. (In this sense, the book teaches an Austin-esque performative writing where the constative statements themselves do not matter as much as how the writer performs them on the page.) Graff and Birkenstein elaborate: "Effective persuasive writers do more than make well-supported claims ('I say'); they also map those claims relative to the claims of others ('they say')"

(xix). Note the metaphors of place; these writers *map* their claims *relative to* others. This is a syntactic self set in relation to others, a product of learning templates through repetition, through habit.

While the templates situate the writer in relation to texts and ideas, a concern late in the book is how the writer situates herself in relation to the reader. Because "it is your job as a writer to do the hard work of making connections rather than … leaving this work to your readers," Graff and Birkenstein recommend students utilize metatext, particularly transitions (108).[12] Transitions, according to Graff and Birkenstein, help readers connect paragraphs and ideas. "More specifically, transitions tell readers whether your text is echoing a previous sentence or paragraph ('in other words'), adding something to it ('in addition'), offering an example of it ('for example'), generalizing from it ('as a result'), or modifying it ('and yet')" (109). Graff and Birkenstein list a number of transitions under the headings of particular moves. Under Addition, they include "also, and, besides, furthermore, in addition, indeed, moreover, so too" (109). Under Elaboration, they include "actually, by extension, in other words, in short, that is, to put it another way, to put it bluntly, to put it succinctly, ultimately" (109). Graff and Birkenstein continue, listing 51 more transition words under the headings of Example, Cause and Effect, Comparison, Contrast, Concession, Conclusion.[13] Framing metatext as a gesture of

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[12] Graff and Birkenstein offer additional means to guide the reader, such as "pointing words" that "point or refer backward to some concept in the previous sentence," words like this, these, that, those, their, and such (112-13). Graff and Birkenstein also recommend repeating key words, phrases, and ideas throughout a text (114-18). Pointing words and repetition establish coherence in a text, orienting the reader to the moves a writer makes within that text.

[13] There is a resonance between the list of transitions Graff and Birkenstein provide and the five "classes of utterance, classified according to their illocutionary force" Austin provides in Lecture XII of *How to Do Things with Words* (151). Austin groups his illocutionary acts under the headings of Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives, and Expositives. For example, the Verdictive, wherein a "jury, arbitrator, or umpire" gives a verdict (151), includes such actions,

goodwill toward the reader, Graff and Birkenstein teach that transitions "guide readers through the twists and turns of your argument," lending a hand to the reader, ushering him through the prose, standing as signposts to the main movements of a piece of writing (111).[14]

Transitions have an additional purpose: ensuring the writer has an argument in the first place. Graff and Birkenstein claim "it's hard to use [transitions] without making some kind of argument" (111). They point to how a "therefore" pushes the writer toward a conclusion, how a "for example" necessitates an illustration. Such transitions not only signal to readers how and where an argument progresses, but also force the writer into following that path as well. Graff and Birkenstein's lesson in transitions can be read as both a lesson in writing and in reading. Reading for transition words can help the student follow an academic text more easily, using transition words to guide herself through the text, to orient herself to the moves the argument makes. So too, those transitions can then help the student in writing her own text, the terms themselves ensuring she makes an argument and locates herself in relation to the work and words of others.

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among others, as "acquit, hold (as a matter of law), read it as, reckon, place, put it at, grade, assess, characterize" (153). Although Graff and Birkenstein list adverbs and Austin lists verbs, both provide taxonomic treatments of things one might do with words. That is, both list performative moves in language—the performances of various verbs and the performances of various adverbs. In this sense of taxonomizing the possible performances of language, Graff and Birkenstein's transitions and Austin's classes of utterance are not unlike Aristotle's 28 common topics for argumentation—the topoi—listed in the *Rhetoric* (2.23). Aristotle's topoi, Austin's illocutionary acts, and Graff and Birkenstein's transitions all catalogue rhetorical uses of language, each with an eye toward invention.

[14] It is not uncommon to frame metatext as a matter of goodwill. In their textbook *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray claim, "[M]etadiscourse markers send messages to the reader from and about the writer. They say, in effect, 'I'm helping you out here, trying to make your job of reading and understanding easier' " (132). Joseph Harris, in his textbook *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*: "Metatext lets you speak directly to your readers, to say to them, in effect, *Here's why I'm approaching this subject this way*. … [Metatext] help[s] your readers understand your text from your point of view" (90-91, emphasis Harris's).

That a writer can locate herself in a piece of writing by transitions is not surprising. Transitions are adverbs. Adverbs denote, among other things, place and time—that is, the Where and the When. These are clues to the context governing a rhetorical situation, and they point to the classical notion of kairos, the sense of timing, of context, essential to rhetorical practice. Kairos concerns context; context concerns when and where; when and where are the grammatical province of the adverb. Yes, there are other parts of writing that point to the rhetorical situation—the formality of the prose, its diction, its formatting, its generic demands, its medium, etc., etc.—but in terms of syntax, the adverb most readily tells readers when and where something occurs. In this sense of providing temporal and spatial information, the adverb orients a reader and writer to each other and to the text, the adverb the metatext of kairos.[15]

Adverbs, in Graff and Birkenstein's teaching, are essential to academic writing whose defining characteristic is the way it sets itself in relation to other ideas.[16] Theirs is not a critical project of praise and blame (as Coles's is), but instead one of function, of utility. Theirs is the pragmatic to Coles's epideictic. It is perhaps an answer to a pedagogy like Coles's that claims to be about writing but is about criticism; Graff and Birkenstein's is very much about writing, their

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[15] I can also see pursing the question of a locative syntax through the conjunctions "and" and "but." Consider Stanley Fish, who argues transitions do little for a piece of writing; it is the conjunction, that propels prose: "Rather than indicating the logical progression of thought, connectives such as 'thus' and 'so' are just place markers; 'but' and 'and' are the words that carry the experience forward, the first signaling a thought going in a new direction, the second saying 'and, oh, this has just occurred to me" (*How to Write* 62). Punctuation, too, can be read as a means of orientation, as can paragraph breaks; each signals the large movements of a piece of writing. Another line of inquiry could consider the preposition as a locative, kairotic device, as it sets nouns in relation one to another—above, below, in, out, beside, with, under, etc. Or consider the parenthetical citation, which tells readers where and when a writer found the words of others, thereby locating the writer both within the text she cites while also locating the reader in relation to that ongoing conversation. The locative possibilities of conjunctions, punctuation, paragraph breaks, prepositions, and parenthetical citation are beyond the scope of this chapter.

[16] See also Joseph Harris, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Words* (2).

students looking to their sentences and rewriting them, experimenting with sentence forms and templates, attending to their prose and how it locates them within the academy and within the discussions they enter.

They Say / I Say is popular not only for the practicality of its templates, but more so, I argue, for the novelty and effectiveness of this pedagogy of the adverb. Graff and Birkenstein offer a pedagogy of kairos bound with a locative and habituated ethos. In its implicit reliance upon theories gleaned from classical rhetoric, *They Say / I Say* pulls from a rich rhetorical tradition, appropriating it without the heavy-handedness of, say, Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student.* In its reliance upon internalizing templates, *They Say / I Say* draws upon Composition's long-since set aside work with the sentence during the 1960s-80s. The insistence in *They Say / I Say* on the work of the sentence has a nostalgia about it: the templates are forms a student can internalize, forms that can be manipulated, worked with, revised, rewritten. *They Say / I Say* is not billed as a book on sentence-level instruction, yet its avenue into teaching what it means to write for the academy and how a student learns to do so is through the sentence, the sentence very much the centerpiece of a pedagogy that seems to be addressing issues much larger than the lowly sentence—how to engage sources, how to respond to those sources, the art of summary, organization, etc. And so too, in its reliance upon an understanding of rhetoric as a necessarily socially and textually situated practice, one wherein the writer always works in relation to others and always sets her words in relation to the words of others, *They Say / I Say* utilizes recent rhetorical theory—well-articulated by Christoph and her critique of both Aristotle and post-structuralism—that emphasizes the role of the social in writing while still retaining a sense of the agency of the individual writer. *They Say / I Say* pulls all this together—kairos, ethos, and classical rhetoric; the work of the sentence; current understandings of the social

construction of writing—to present a theory of writing wherein the moves made at the sentence level are the means by which a writer engages a community by setting ideas together (composition), speaking from a place (elocutio), and inhabiting that place (ethos).[17]

4.3   READING KLINKENBORG READING SENTENCES

And yet, this pedagogy of the adverb is problematic. Graff and Birkenstein briefly acknowledge this, cautioning that writers must not "insert transitions without really thinking through their meanings" (112), but I want to push the point further. *They Say / I Say* offers the moves that matter in academic writing—that is, they develop a limited system that offers guidance for writing within the particularities of the academy—and I won't fault them for the narrow scope of their project. I do, however, want to think through how this locative metatext might hinder the writer's ability to perform, to display, to deliver the sentence, and what this locative metatext assumes about the reader-writer relationship. To do so, I turn to another figure located at the fringes of Composition, Verlyn Klinkenborg.

Klinkenborg took his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1982. He wrote a dissertation titled "Canon and Literary Criticism" that used Matthew Arnold, Northrop Frye, and Harold Bloom to examine canonicity in both the Biblical and the secular sense.[18] Though Klinkenborg has this

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[17] For two textbooks teaching metatext along similar lines as Graff and Birkenstein, see Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray's *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, and also Joseph Harris's *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*.

[18] Klinkenborg's dissertation was co-chaired by Charles Ryskamp and Arthur Walton Litz, Jr. "Canon and Literary Criticism" grew out of an earlier archival project where Klinkenborg sorted through some 20,000 to 25,000 British literary manuscripts and selected 260 to catalogue for the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. The project also required "providing a rational for including those manuscripts whose inclusion was not immediately assumed" ("Canon" x). The

literary training, he has taught creative writing for over 30 years—at Harvard, St. Olaf, Fordham, and Yale, among others—while sitting on the editorial board for the *New York Times*.[19] In 2012, Knopf published Klinkenborg's *Several Short Sentences about Writing*. The product of "years and years and years of teaching," *Several Short Sentences about Writing* attempts to distill a semester's worth of writing instruction into a book that is "encouraging to the reader and yet at the same time is still honest with the reader about what writing really means" (Klinkenborg "Book Nook").

In its prologue, Klinkenborg characterizes his project: "The premise of this book is that most of the received wisdom about how writing works is not only wrong but harmful. This is not an assumption. It's a conclusion" (1). This is a book of resistance. Klinkenborg immediately positions himself in relation to the shared values of the writing community—both its teachers and its practitioners—and rather than parrot conventional wisdom, Klinkenborg unravels it. (He is not unlike Coles pushing against the Theme, or Tufte, late in her career, pushing against Habit.) Klinkenborg speaks of his own struggle to "overcome my academic training, which taught me to write in a way that was useless to me (and almost everyone else)";

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process prompted questions of canonicity, and it lead to both Klinkenborg's dissertation and his editing of *British Literary Manuscripts: Series I and II.*

[19] His *NYT* pieces blend occasional short editorials on sentence craft and the teaching of writing with more regular essays on farming and rural life. Klinkenborg's column, "The Rural Life," ran 16 years in the *NYT*. Its final piece was published Christmas 2013. (Klinkenborg's regular column ended the same week as Stanley Fish's; both were casualties of a five percent cut at the *Times* [Kassel]). The column produced two collections, *The Rural Life* and *More Scenes from The Rural Life*. The former devotes a chapter to each month of the year; the latter devotes a chapter to a full year, the book covering 11 years on the farm. His editorials often drew the ire of Gawker columnist Hamilton Nolan, who reads Klinkenborg as a navel-gazer: "The very worst part of Verlyn Klinkenborg's shtick is the pose that he is writing about something more *grounded* and *timeless* and *real* than the average columnist who is mired in the day-to-day vagaries of city life, when in fact his form of nature fetishization is the most pretentious content in the entire *NYT* op-ed section" (n. pag., emphasis Nolan's).

this was a process of "unlearning," Klinkenborg acting as an autodidactic "teaching myself to write well" (1-2).[20] Klinkenborg signals that his readers are not to give his teaching too much authority: "This book isn't meant to replace received wisdom. 'Received' means untested, untried, repeated out of habit. Everything in this book is meant to be tested all over again, by you" (2). I note Klinkenborg's use of "received wisdom" and "habit": habit forms the self into a particular writer, one who writes—for better and for worse—in accord with the discursive values of the community. This is the trite and banal discourse critics of the epideictic warn against.

To resist how writing is most often taught, Klinkenborg turns to the short sentence by writing short sentences himself. The opening paragraph of his book:

> Here, in short, is what I want to tell you.
>
> Know what each sentence says,
>
> What it doesn't say,
>
> And what it implies.
>
> Of these, the hardest is knowing what each sentence actually says. (3)

This initial assertion does not seem to buck the system as Klinkenborg promised, in the prologue, that he would. Yes, a writer should know what her sentences say. But in the presentation of this claim, Klinkenborg is already working against the received wisdom of the writing classroom. Notice the way Klinkenborg presents his sentences on the page. Later in *Several Short Sentences*

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[20] Klinkenborg says the best writing lesson he ever received was from Robert Gottlieb, editor of *The New Yorker*. Gottlieb asked Klinkenborg to cut his book *The Last Fine Time* from 90,000 to 20,000 words, because the text was "too tightly woven to excerpt" for *The New Yorker* (Wolper, n. pag.). Gottlieb also asked Klinkenborg to "detumesce" the writing. "It wasn't a piece of writing advice," Klinkenborg says, "but an instruction in refinement. What I learned about my own excesses and what's necessary for narrative—it was just a fabulous exercise, to force me to go back and reexamine a book I'd just written" (qtd. in Gassó, n. pag.). The experience was not only formative for Klinkenborg as a writer, but also it "changed my ability as a teacher dramatically" (qtd. in Wolper, n. pag.).

about Writing, he explains his rationale, his formatting a means "to make your prose look less familiar":

>Turn every sentence into its own paragraph.
>
>>(Hit Return after every period.   If writing by hand, begin each new sentence at the left margin.)
>
>What happens?
>
>A sudden, graphic display of the length of your sentences
>
>And, better yet, their relative length—how it varies, or doesn't vary, from one to the next.
>
>Variation is the life of prose, in length and in structure.
>
>Having all your sentences in a column, one above the other, makes them easier to examine.
>
>Suddenly you see similarities in shape.
>
>You notice, for instance, how your sentences cling to each other
>
>Instead of accepting their separateness.
>
>And you can begin to ask questions—simple ones—that will help you understand how to revise
>
>And make better sentences. (55-56)

Klinkenborg strives to make prose look less familiar because only then can a writer begin to see what the sentences actually say. It is too easy, Klinkenborg argues, to be lulled into writing "volunteer sentences," sentences that offer up a shape and a meaning readily, sentences that hijack a writer's ability to say something with nuance, with precision (44-47).[21] These are the

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[21] I address volunteer sentences in the Interchapter, "The Sentence, Displayed."

sentences of the Theme, the sentences written out of the Habit that Tufte resists, sentences like Fish inside of Updike's syntax, sentences Fish could keep on writing "forever" (*How to Write* 10). Klinkenborg's formatting allows the writer to address meaning while working against the pressures of conventional language and the volunteer sentences that so easily take over prose. Not only modeling how presentation leads to an interrogation of sentence craft, so too Klinkenborg taps into delivery-as-display—the very act of showing forth his prose an act of resistance, his delivery working against uniformity and ever toward variety.[22]

This unconventional presentation facilitates the writer's ability to ask questions of her prose, as the prose and its craft are more visible. By his own admission, the questions Klinkenborg wants a writer to ask are "basic" (57)—

How many sentences begin with the subject?

How many begin with an opening phrase *before* the subject?

Or with a word like "When" or "Since" or "While" or "Because"?

How many begin with "There" or "It"? (56)

—and he offers two dozen questions along these lines. Klinkenborg does not advocate a sentence-level pedagogy founded upon strict adherence to the rules of grammar. Rather, he wants his students to observe their prose and what it does on the page, attentive to what those sentences actually say. This is a pedagogy of noticing (36-44), wherein "The most valuable thoughts may begin 'I don't know if this is important, but …' or 'This will sound like

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[22] In a radio interview with Vick Mickunas of WYSO-FM, Klinkenborg gives another reason for his formatting: "It allows me to put emphasis on the things I want to put emphasis on in a way that's a little simpler than the ways you'd normally do it in prose with italics or exclamation marks or that sort of thing" ("Book Nook").

nitpicking' " (150-51). The formatting of Klinkenborg's prose teaches how to read sentences

with the question "Why is this sentence this way and not another way?" guiding the way (34).

To help his readers write with that question in mind, Klinkenborg turns to the short

sentence.

> At first, it will help to make short sentences,

> Short enough to feel the variations in length.

> Leave space between them for the things that words can't really say. (3) [23]

Klinkenborg knows this idea is unwelcome. Again setting himself askance from conventional

wisdom, Klinkenborg writes, "You've been taught to believe that short sentences are childish, /

Merely a first step toward writing longer sentences" (5). But short sentences have value, able to

"[C]arry you back to a prose you can control," able to "make it easier to examine the properties

of the sentence" (9). In contrast, the long sentence puts writers in "a wilderness of false

assumptions and bad habits, / A desert of jargon and weak constructions, a land of linguistic

barbarism" (5). Klinkenborg claims "Clarity and directness" suffer from the onslaught of

"clichés and meaningless phrases" that take over the prose (5). Bloated, long sentences "can

sound quite grown up, quite authoritative, in the manner of college professors and journalists and

experts in every field" (5). That authority comes from the clichés and the meaningless phrases,

from the received language that the writer parrots. But Klinkenborg asks, "How well do they

---

[23] An easy critique of Klinkenborg: some of his sentences are long, and he himself does not stick to the six- or seven-word sentence that he recommends his students write ("Some Suggestions"). This critique misses the point of the lesson Klinkenborg is teaching; he nevertheless offers a response: "You'll make long sentences again, but they'll be short sentences at heart. / Sentences listening for the silence around them. Listening for their own pulse" (5). That is, after practice writing short sentences, the writer's long sentences will retain the compact punch, efficiency, and tautness of the six-word sentence.

write? / How much do you enjoy reading them?" (5).[24] Klinkenborg's concern is not with an authority gained from the posturing that comes with using the language passed down from others; rather, he is concerned with the reader's experience.

And the reader's experience, according to Klinkenborg, is one of searching for the writer, for some sense of a writerly presence within the text:

> You've been told again and again that you have to seduce the reader,
>
> Sell the story in the first paragraph.
>
> (Nonsense, but it explains a lot of bad writing.)
>
> The reader isn't looking for the tease of a single paragraph,
>
> Or numbingly clever prose, or sentences full of self-exhibition.
>
> The reader is in love with continuity, with extent, with duration,
>
> Above all with presence—the feeling that each sentence isn't merely a static
>
> construction but *inhabited* by the writer. (128, emphasis Klinkenborg's)

Klinkenborg believes a writer's authority comes not from whomever the writer cites or even from the writer herself, but from the reader. Because the reader can stop at any time, any shred of authority the writer has is granted by the reader's goodwill to continue reading. What keeps a reader reading, and consequently what contributes to the writer's authority, is not flashy and seductive prose but prose "*inhabited* by the writer."

Klinkenborg's use of "static" alludes to how such inhabitation might happen. Static suggests stiffness, rigidity—the opposite of movement, vivacity, life, dynamic. To move away

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[24] Some readers do, in fact, enjoy reading the prose of a "college professor, a journalist, or an expert in some field" (Klinkenborg 5). See, for instance, Eric Hayot's "Academic Writing, I Love You. Really, I Do" for a rousing defense of academese. Hayot argues that the metatext, footnotes, and obfuscation so characteristic of academic prose serve a rhetorical purpose and enable a particular type of thinking. His essay is a smart defense of difficulty. See also Hayot's *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*.

from lifeless writing, Klinkenborg turns to rhythm as a writer's means to inhabit prose, to make it more than a static construction.

> Rhythm comes to the reader as a precursor of many things.
>
> It anticipates the intelligibility of the sentence.
>
> It grounds the tongue and the mind.
>
> It creates balance and propulsion.
>
> It's deeply assuring and worth getting right. (129)

In linking rhythm—something bodily, the product of delivery—to intelligibility, Klinkenborg builds upon the argument made through the formatting of his prose: the delivery of a sentence is directly connected to its meaning. He argues rhythm is "worth getting right" because rhythm is created through choices—this word instead of that word, this adverb here instead of there, this word repeated but that one not.

> Writing is always a gesture requiring your dramatic presence, no matter how subtle—
>
> A presence made up of rhetorical choices:
>
> Choices about how you are in relation to your subject and reader,
>
> Choices about your presence in the piece, about diction, structure, and the rigor or casualness with which your sentences are constructed or linked. (82)

Klinkenborg claims, "You're always building a habitation in your prose, / A place from which you speak to the reader" (83). That habitation is built through those choices that affect a writer's presence within the prose, the writer able to inhabit the prose only when it has the continuity, extent, duration, and presence that makes it more than a static construct.

Several Short Sentences about Writing is a project of resistance, and here, in Klinkenborg's sense of how a writer might be located within the text, is where resistance comes to a head. It is not so much Klinkenborg's assertion that rhythm is the means through which a writer can inhabit prose. More so, it is Klinkenborg's disavowal of metatext as a possible means to accomplish that same work. Klinkenborg presses against the adverb as an agent of kairos, as a means of syntactic location. His reason: metatext foists a false logic upon a text, an obsession with argument and rationality that serves no useful purpose to the writer and is an affront to the reader.

> In school you learned to write as if the reader
>
> Were in constant danger of getting lost,
>
> A problem you were taught to solve not by writing clearly
>
> But by shackling your sentences and paragraphs together.
>
> Think about transitions.
>
> Remember how it goes?
>
> Late in the paragraph you prepare for the transition to the next paragraph—
>
> The great leap over the void, across that yawning indentation.
>
> You were taught the art of the flying trapeze,
>
> But not how to write. (24)

When I read this passage, I recall Francis Christensen's desire for his students: "I want them to become sentence acrobats, to dazzle by their syntactic dexterity" ("Generative" 32).[25] For

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[25] Christensen's pedagogy of the generative sentence is not unlike Graff and Birkenstein's templates in that each understands the sentence as a generative space. For a similar argument that form can generate content, see Ross W. Winterowd's "Style: A Matter of Manner."

Robert Connors, in his account of the demise of sentence-level instruction, notes the scrutiny Christensen's generative sentence faced. Connors quotes Sabina Thorne Johnson's

Christensen, syntactic dexterity means the ability, and ease, of a student to perform within prose, the acrobatics metaphor speaking to that performance. But for Klinkenborg, acrobatics mean something markedly different: flashy performances that mask the poor writing in the paragraphs proper. Such acrobatics necessitate transitions for two reasons: first, because the writing is hobbled together and can't stand as a coherent whole without metatextual jerry-rigging, and second, because the writer has a pejorative view of the reader:

> Nearly everything you've been taught about writing
>
> Assumes that the reader is plodding at best,
>
> Always distracted and needing a surfeit of superficial cleverness
>
> To keep his head pointed toward the text.
>
> You'll find this assumption all around you.
>
> We remove the unfamiliar words for him
>
> So he'll never have the chance to learn them.
>
> We over-reason for him, filing our prose with approximations of logic,
>
> So he'll feel he's had a good think. (138)

Transitions are nothing more than "the scatting of rhetorical tics—overused, nearly meaningless words and phrases," according to Klinkenborg (118).[26] He lists eleven of them, a list remarkably similar to that provided by Graff and Birkenstein: in fact, indeed, on the one hand, on the other

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critique of Christensen's belief that "form can generate content" and her response that "I don't believe it can, especially if the content is of an analytical or critical nature" (159, qtd. in Connors "Erasure" 464). Mocking Christensen's metaphors of the syntactic acrobatics of his students, A. M. Tibbets adds that a focus on forms alone will yield "dexterous rhetorical acrobats who dexterously tell untruths" (143, qtd. in Connors "Erasure" 465). Graff and Birkenstein's pedagogy provides a response to Johnson and Tibbets, especially the mistaken notion that attention to form cannot generate critical or analytical content.

[26] See also Roger Sale, who notes that adverbs can often be meaningless, the result of "careless" use (61).

hand, therefore, moreover, however, in one respect, of course, whereas, thus (118). The catalogue is not exhaustive; Klinkenborg gathers the adverbs to make his point:

> They insist upon logic whether it exists or not.
>
> They often come first in the sentence,
>
> Trying to steer the reader's understanding from the front,
>
> As if the reader were incapable of following a logical shift in the middle of a sentence,
>
> …
>
> These words take the reader's head between their hands and force her to look where they want her to. (118)

There is a tension here between Graff and Birkenstein and Klinkenborg. The three agree that metatext guides the reader, yet Graff and Birkenstein see it as an act of goodwill, one of concern for the reader, whereas Klinkenborg sees it as an act of violence, one of force, one that over-determines how the reader will engage the piece. Because Klinkenborg believes authority rests with the reader (127-28), heavy-handed adverbs overstep the writer's bounds, violently encroaching on the reader's territory.

Klinkenborg will have none of it. "If a piece is truly assured in its order, no matter how connected or oblique, / It needs no logical indicators. / It will be obvious when one sentence negates or affirms another" (119). Clear writing does not need metatext. Though Graff and Birkenstein would argue that it is metatext, in fact, that makes writing clear, Klinkenborg argues such words "betray the writer's anxiety" (119). In a handout to his students, Klinkenborg writes: "If your point is clear and your sentence is clear, its logic will be clear too. 'Thus' is usually an

act of utter desperation" ("Some Suggestions").[27] Klinkenborg's response is characteristic of his

project as a whole: write short sentences—or, as is often said, "omit needless words."[28]

> A simple experiment:
>
> Try removing "but" wherever you can,
>
> And see if the sense of negation or contradiction—
>
> The feel of a reversal taking place—isn't still present. (119)

Yet, Klinkenborg does not recommend removing each and every piece of metatext; he teaches its

judicious use. Metatext, well placed and well used, "recall[s] the moment, as children, when we

came upon the phrase / 'And then one day' " (27). The magic of such phrases resides in "the

possibilities they contain":

> To rise above the level of the prose and look around,

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[27] In *On Writing*, Stephen King agrees, seeing the adverb as a mark of insecurity: "I've spilled out my share of adverbs in my time … When I do it, it's usually for the same reason any writer does it because I'm afraid the reader won't understand me if I don't" (127). One response to King's and Klinkenborg's aversion to adverbs would be to say that both are "creative writers" whose narrative prose does not need the metatextual markers academic discourse does. I disagree: King and Klinkenborg speak to the insecurities any writer has, insecurities that transcend genre and manifest themselves in an onslaught of metatext.

[28] Klinkenborg, of course, is not the first to recommend writers "Omit needless words." See Strunk and White for that famous dictum (23). Nor is he the first to repeat the advice; see Stephen King, in *On Writing*, for example (282), or William Zinsser, in *On Writing Well* (6-16), or virtually any text on writing.

Steven Pinker suggests the "major justification" for "omit needless words" comes from the cognitive demands each word in a sentence places upon its reader: first, the reader must interpret the word, and second, the reader must understand its syntactical relationship to other words. Too many words in a sentence results in confusion at the syntactic level; hence the directive to omit needless words (104-06). But Pinker continues, noting that what is "needless" is often hard to define, and too much deletion of supposedly "needless" words can also result in confusion (122-24). Often, "needless" words shape the rhythm of a sentence, or designate important syntactic relationships within a sentence—such as the way "the" signals the following word will be a noun or part of a noun phrase—the word needless grammatically but necessary for readability.

As if you were standing in a crow's nest

Looking out over a sea of words,

Detecting a shift in the wind,

A change in the current,

A new impetus in your expectations,

And pointing it out to the reader. (27)

The transition is a means of orientation—a view of the adverb not unlike Graff and Birkenstein's—such orientation evident in the sailing metaphor: rising above the prose, looking around, and seeing the sea of words, the shift in the wind, and the change in the current. The writer points all this out to the reader.

The sailing metaphor—its soothing, comfortable voyage—is a far cry from Klinkenborg's other characterization of metatext as a violent act, one where textual cues "take the reader's head between their hands and force her to look where they want her to" (118). I account for this difference with the relationship each implies between the reader and the writer. The issue here is trust. Trust governs the reader's ability to make sense of the text without the aid of metatext. Trust governs, too, the writer's own insecurities, the fear of whether what has been written will be legible, accessible. The writer trusts what has been written and trusts the reader to make sense of it. This is, of course, not easy to do, which is why the gentle direction of the writer in the crow's nest so easily becomes the violence of the writer clutching the reader's head, forcing him to look a particular direction.   And it is perhaps this issue of trust that prompts Graff and Birkenstein to recommend "not to forgo explicit transition terms until you've first mastered their use" (112), implying that only the established, proven, skilled, "good" writers can finesse a piece of writing without relying on metatext to guide readers. Again, Klinkenborg

disagrees: "Imagine a reader you can trust" (139). (And this is, I note, what most students lack: a reader they can trust.) Such trust will free prose from "all the grappling hooks of transition and false logic," creating prose that "move[s] briskly and freely" (139). When the writer trusts the reader, "All the devices of distrust fall away / The pretense of logic, the obsession with transition" (140). And the way to do this, to write with trust? According to Klinkenborg, write short sentences. Sentences with rhythm, sentences with continuity, duration, extent, and presence, sentences short enough to feel the variation between them—sentences inhabited by the writer.

4.4   WRITING AND TEACHING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE COMPOSITION

In its resistance against how writing is taught, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* also resists traditional framings of ethos. Whereas Aristotle understands ethos as a matter of the audience placing their trust in the speaker, Klinkenborg inverts that relationship, the writer placing trust in the reader, the reader the one with authority, the writer's moves predicated upon a particular understanding of who that reader is. Klinkenborg asks that the writer trust this reader, not pander to her, not dumb down discourse nor litter it with metatextual signposts insulting her intelligence and goodwill and good faith. Klinkenborg imagines a reader who works while reading, one willing to devote care and attention to the act of engaging sentences.

And this is the same reader Klinkenborg writes for in *Several Short Sentences about Writing*. It is not meant to be read from its first to its last page. There are no chapter headings, no thesis statements, no topic sentences. Rather, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* asks to be read in—and teaches a reading practice of—a scatter shot fashion. Klinkenborg gives his reader plenty of room to maneuver through the book, believing his unconventional formatting

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creates "very small units that you can lift out of the book and think about on your own without feeling like you're in the middle of an argument" ("Book Nook"). His project invites readers to sample, to jump around, to move selectively through the text.

This is a markedly different reading and writing practice than the one Graff and Birkenstein teach, and a more compelling and demanding pedagogy. Students come to the first-year writing course well trained at picking out Thesis Statements, Topic Sentences, and Key Words. They are used to reading textbooks that present clearly laid-out arguments that move logically from one point to the next. They are used to reading for the Main Point of a text. They are used to having Key Words in bold font corresponding to a glossary in the back of the book. This is not necessarily a bad thing. As Coles's students say, you've got to know how to do it; it gets you by (*The Plural I* 37). But it is not the type of reading students will encounter outside the academy, when they sit down to read a piece in *The New Yorker*, or a novel, or a memoir, or any genre of writing not governed by the thesis. By working against the set way of reading students are so familiar with, so accustomed to, Klinkenborg prepares students to engage a wider range of discourse than Graff and Birkenstein's pedagogy allows. Graff and Birkenstein teach the moves that matter for academic discourse; Klinkenborg wants to move outside academic discourse, and to do so he writes a text that asks more of its readers than the prose Graff and Birkenstein both write and teach others to write.

Klinkenborg is useful, then, for how he disorients students. When I have taught *Several Short Sentences about Writing*, students stumble when Klinkenborg recommends one practice only to then qualify that claim such that it is not unilateral.[29] Students approach Klinkenborg

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[29] There are many such moments in the book; see, for instance, the aforementioned discussion of metatext, where Klinkenborg lambasts it after initially recommending its judicious use (119; 27).

wanting his argument to be tidy and consistent. Klinkenborg works against such tidiness largely because writing—and life—is not orderly[30]. *Several Short Sentences about Writing* is full of what students call Contradictions and what I reframe as a writer working through subject matter that does not allow for reductive claims.

By eschewing thesis-driven argument in his own writing, Klinkenborg disorients his readers, and he carries this disorientation into his own teaching. His classroom sits fundamentally opposed to that of Graff and Birkenstein. Klinkenborg wants "to put students in a state of constant creative turmoil" ("RE: Teaching the Sentence"). In fall 2014, he taught a writing course at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. In that class, Klinkenborg distributed a handout asking that students "Choose a word limit for your sentences, say 6 or 7 words a sentence, no more. Let the sentences expand or shrink as needed, but return again and again to that limit" ("Some Suggestions"). This six- or seven-word sentence becomes the focal point of a semester's worth of writing instruction, the challenge of writing them creating that "constant creative turmoil." Klinkenborg's students write an essay every week— "usually we start at about 2 pages in length and increase only as the prose improves"— Klinkenborg urging his class "to make the shortest sentences they can force themselves to write, which always turn out to be half again too long."

I pause on his use of "force." Writing in the Klinkenborg classroom is a struggle, a place of "creative turmoil." This is a classroom working against Volunteer Sentences, a classroom working against Habit, against the Theme. Klinkenborg reminds his readers, several times over,

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Or consider Klinkenborg's own writing of long sentences within a book praising the short sentence.

[30] On the tidiness of life, or lack thereof, see Klinkenborg on resisting chronology in writing (120-22).

"Your job as a writer is making sentences" (13, see also 47, 56, 67, 78). *Several Short Sentences about Writing* is a book of writing instruction, yes, but so too it is a book concerning the formation of the self, a claim implied in the present progressive "is making." The process of making sentences, again and again, is what shapes an individual into a writer (an Aristotelian view of the formation of the self). Klinkenborg admits that "Short sentences aren't hard to make" but he clarifies: "The difficulty is forcing yourself to keep them short" (4). The present progressive appears again ("is forcing") and it reiterates a writer's continual fight against habit, the formation of a syntactic self located within the sentence an on-going process.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

And yet, Klinkenborg has not been taken up by Composition, despite the provocative ways he teaches writing, despite how he works against tired pedagogies, despite his presence on a range of college-level writing course syllabi.[31] The field has not engaged Klinkenborg—neither his nonfiction nor in particular *Several Short Sentences about Writing*—as evident by the dearth of citations in the field's flagship journals. The book has been reviewed once (by me) and cited twice (both times by me ["Of Chiasms" and "Grammar"]). This lack of uptake is, in part, because Klinkenborg has written an anti-textbook, in the same spirit as Coles and Tufte, a project that works against the received wisdom about how to teach reading and writing. Just as the field was unsure how to read Coles and Tufte, so too Composition does not know how to read

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[31] A cursory Google search of "Klinkenborg syllabus" shows his work appearing on composition, creative writing, nonfiction, and journalism course syllabi in university, college, and community college classrooms.

Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* not easily situated into Composition's disciplinary discussions.

Compounding this lack of uptake is that Klinkenborg sits outside Composition. He wrote 16 years for the *New York Times*. His non-fiction sells well. And so, when he offers a bit of theory—either *Several Short Sentences about Writing* or the occasional editorial on the teaching of writing—he becomes the "public intellectual" lamented by Paul Butler. Butler points to three as examples: literary and cultural critics Stanley Fish, Louis Menand, and Heather Mac Donald, each of whom respectively has published pieces in the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *Public Interest* addressing writing instruction in American colleges and universities. All three make a back-to-basics call, decrying the loss of current-traditional approaches to grammar instruction. Butler argues Composition has "ceded the discussion" of the teaching of writing to public intellectuals such as these—all of whom are outside Composition—because of Composition's own "neglect of style as a topic of serious scholarly inquiry" (*Out of Style* 122). Butler observes, "the areas that seem to be of chief concern outside the field are literacy, style, and grammar and usage," and these are the issues Fish, Menand, and Mac Donald address in their op-ed pieces for the public (121). [32] Yet these are the issues Composition is less interested in, Butler argues, to the field's own detriment: "In failing to articulate ideas about those language topics in which the public seems most invested, the discipline is left without sufficient credibility to bring up other concerns it considers pressing" (123). There are hints of territorialism in

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[32] Steven Pinker could be added to the list, his 2014 *The Sense of Style* reaching the general public, the dust jacket of that book labeling Pinker as a "public intellectual." See also Pinker's *Why Academic Writing Stinks and How to Fix It*, a pamphlet co-authored with a philosopher (Michael Munger), a literary critic (Helen Sword), a creative writer (Rachel Toor), and a medical anthropologist (Theresa MacPhail). *Why Academic Writing Stinks* collects short essays published on the *Chronicle of Higher Education*'s website. Such pieces on academic writing are regular features at the *Chronicle*, and they are rarely written by those in Composition.

Butler's argument, though Butler does not suggest that Composition ought to be the sole discipline teaching writing. Far from it. But it is Composition's lack of recent work with style, Butler contends, that opens the door for Fish, Menand, Mac Donald, and their ilk to be the most prominent figures in public discussions on the teaching of writing. The consequence: advances in composition theory are disregarded, the field a straw man for the current-traditional rhetorics these public intellectuals promote.

Sean Zwagerman has argued in a recent issue of *College Composition and Communication* that for the sake of its own health, the field needs to find a way to engage public intellectuals and the conversations they provoke concerning the teaching of writing. (He singles out the comment sections appended to Fish's *New York Times* pieces as one such discussion in which Composition is regrettably silent.) Zwagerman and Butler call Composition to enter those discussions. Note the metaphor of place: *enter* those discussions. Zwagerman and Butler ask the field to locate itself in relation to the public, to situate itself in the public square, to orient itself in relation to the arguments advanced by public intellectuals regarding the teaching of writing. In making their calls, Zwagerman and Butler ask the field to do the work Graff and Birkenstein and Klinkenborg describe, create a syntactic self set in relation to the ideas of others. Composition has failed to engage the public on the teaching of writing. The field now needs to locate itself in that space.

I echo that call, and take it further. The field needs not only to engage public discussions on the teaching of writing; Composition needs to learn to read teachers on the margins of and outside the field—teachers like Austin, Fish, and Tufte, teachers like Coles, teachers like Klinkenborg. I do not place these five alongside the public intellectuals Butler faults for resorting to a current-traditional approach to style. The Outsiders I've addressed in this project

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have ways of reading that deliberately resist reductive engagement with the sentence, and I've attempted to teach the field how it might read these teachers and what we might learn from them about reading, writing, teaching, and studying the sentence within a framework of rhetorical delivery.

Through this project, I've attempted to deliver the sentence. In turning to Performance, Display, and Location, I've expanded delivery to the written word, offering terminology to account for what happens when sentences are read and written within the framework of rhetorical delivery. These terms deliver the sentence in that they aid in its rhetorical delivery—but so too, they deliver the sentence in a second sense of the word. Performance, Display, and Location deliver the sentence: they redeem the sentence from the pedagogical and curricular dregs of the writing classroom. They revive the sentence, resurrect it, reclaim it as a site of valuable and consequential instruction. They deliver the sentence from its pejorative associations with current-traditional rhetorics that offer little more than skill-and-drill instruction.

Yet despite this re-theorizing of style and delivery, the question remains why a teacher would want to return to the sentence at all, why a teacher would bother with sentences when there are so many other curricular and social and political concerns weighing on the college-level writing instructor. In Chapter Five, I offer an apology of the sentence.

4.5   INTERCHAPTER: THE SENTENCE, INHABITED

Kathleen Jamie's "The Hvalsalen" records her visit to the Great Whale Hall in Bergen, Norway's Natural History Museum. The Hall houses 22 complete skeletons from 18 different species of whale, the majority suspended from the ceiling, swimming in the air above the Hall's visitors. It

is the largest collection of whale skeletons in the world. The Hvalsalen has countless artifacts of natural history, but it is Jamie's commentary on a killer whale's heart bathed in chemicals, stored in a glass case, that catches my student's attention. The opening paragraph from his essay on Jamie and her whales:

> When visiting the Hvalsalen Museum in Bergen, Norway, Kathleen Jamie observes a "spherical object, two feet across, dense and mean, like a huge swollen black eye" (Jamie 100). The object is the heart of a killer whale. After realizing what she is looking at, Jamie describes the heart as "a deep red and black biological engine" (Jamie 100). Since the components of the cardiovascular system, including the heart, are vital to the function of the whale and human body, it is not surprising that they are written about extensively. I was surprised, however, to read such a functional definition of the heart in a work of literature. In most literature I'm familiar with, the heart and cardiovascular system are incorrectly associated with the complex emotions and emotional connections of the brain. This abstract perspective is very different from the technical details of the cardiovascular system I've been learning about as a bioengineering major. To graduate with a bioengineering degree, at least 35 science, mathematics, and engineering courses must be completed. This curriculum may leave me ill-prepared to analyze literature, but the concepts covered in these classes can be used to explain whale anatomy and physiology. My biomechanics professor, Dr. David Vorp, emphasizes that in the body, "form follows function." Dr. Vorp stressed that the molecular, cellular, and tissue structures of an organism reflect the environment the organism lives in. This suggests to me that a scientific

investigation can be used to describe how the cardiovascular system of whales is specialized to allow these massive animals to live in their harsh ocean environment.

The student begins with Jamie's words, quoting her description of the killer whale's heart. He then gives his own description of that heart, and his nouns are telling—components, cardiovascular system, heart, function. They have a medical tone, a precision about them. The student assembles these nouns into his first claim, a claim set against (and prompted by) Jamie's description of the whale's heart: "it is not surprising they are written about extensively." His I then appears—"I was surprised, however, to read such a functional definition of the heart in a work of literature"—this the first of three I statements. This I is taken back that a "functional definition of the heart" would appear in something written by a poet, an idea continued in the student's next sentence: "In most literature I'm familiar with, the heart and cardiovascular system are incorrectly associated with the complex emotions and emotional connections of the brain." The paragraph begins with Jamie, and midway through introduces a tension between the "functional definition of the heart" and the student's experiences with how literature "incorrectly" handles the heart.

These opening sentences of the paragraph serve two purposes: introduce Jamie and express the student's surprise. With another I statement, the student situates Literature's characteristic handling of the heart against his own work in the sciences: "This abstract perspective is very different from the technical details of the cardiovascular system I've been learning about as a bioengineering major." This sentence leads into the central problem of the student's project: how to reconcile the work of a scientist with that of the poet. That is, how to situate one's self within a discourse community. The student is on his way to becoming an

expert in one field—he will take "at least 35 science, mathematics, and engineering courses"—but he undercuts his burgeoning knowledge: "This curriculum may leave me ill-prepared to analyze literature." I read this as a subtle critique of the divide between the Humanities and the Sciences, and the student tries to bridge that gap: "but the concepts covered in these classes can be used to explain whale anatomy and physiology." That "but" signals a change of direction, and it is what makes this student's project possible. The student, discounting his ability to engage the literary arts, finds a way in through science, "but" acting as a turning point in his project.

The remainder of the paragraph explains how a student of the sciences could locate himself, even make a place for himself, within the poetic. He points to the teaching of his biomechanics professor, a teaching that shapes the rest of the student's essay: "form follows function." The final sentence puts a capstone on the student's finding a place to inhabit within this English course, within Jamie's text, within bioengineering: "This suggests to me that a scientific investigation can be used to describe how the cardiovascular system of whales is specialized to allow these massive animals to live in their harsh ocean environment." The "This" opening the sentence is loaded. It could refer to Dr. Vorp's teaching regarding the adaptive mechanisms of an organism to the environment around it, as that is the closest antecedent to the pronoun. But I read "This" as referring not to Dr. Vorp's teaching alone, but to the progression of thought outlined in the entire opening paragraph of the student's essay. "This"—the student's initial interest about Jamie's characterization of the heart, his naming of it as "a functional definition," its divergence from "[incorrect associations] with the complex emotions and emotional connections of the brain," its alignment with his studies as a bioengineering student, the tension between that curriculum and the analysis of literature, Dr. Vorp's teaching that "form

follows function"—all these things, the progression from an initial interest to the student's expertise in bioengineering, all *this* propels the student to bring bioengineering to bear upon Jamie's work.

What is remarkable about this paragraph is the student's movement from his own disorientation in the poetic to a place of familiarity within the sciences. The question is how. At first glace, the student appears to locate himself in the poetic by way of what Christoph calls "identity statements" (670). The student simply says, more or less, "I am a scientist," and that declaration—perhaps a revelation in itself for the student—allows him to begin working his way into the literary and its treatment of the heart. But I also see this locative work happening in the student's very sentences, in particular, in his predicates.

In *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*, Joseph Williams offers "two complementary principles of cohesion":

> Put at the beginning of a sentence those ideas that you have already mentioned, referred to, or implied, or concepts that you can reasonably assume your reader is already familiar with, and will readily recognize.

> The other principle is this:

> Put at the end of your sentence the newest, the most surprising, the most significant information: information that you want to stress—perhaps the information that you will expand on in your next sentence. (48)[33]

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[33] Virginia Tufte recognizes this same pattern: "The opening words of a sentence glance both backward and forward, establishing a relationship with what precedes and then brining into view the new information. Perhaps two-thirds of English sentences open with the subject, and then move from what is known to what is unknown" (*Artful Sentences* 155). See also Steven Pinker, with another version of the known-new contract: "*Topic, then comment. Given, then new*" (131-37). Paul Butler, in *Out of Style*, also speaks to the known-new contract, claiming it was a key component of sentence-level pedagogy during the Golden Age of Style (8-9). Louise Wetherbee

Each sentence draws upon the previous; the new information ending one sentence becomes the known information opening the next, and so on, and so on. In *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, Kolln and Gray call this the known-new contract; it is a tacit agreement between readers and writers (86-90). Because this progression from known to new makes for readable prose, readers expect and prefer writing to be delivered in this way, and writers ought to oblige, as Kolln and Gray and Williams teach.

Framing the known-new contract as a matter of concern for the wellbeing of the reader is not unlike how Graff and Birkenstein frame metatext—a locative device for readers, ushering them through prose while simultaneously locating the writer within the prose—and the known-new contract governs this student's paragraph. The first sentence opens with Jamie, something known to readers of this paper as we—his classroom of peers and I—have all also read Jamie. The student puts Jamie as his subject, and then gives readers the new information that he will be focusing on her reading of the whale's heart. The opening move of the paper, then, is one of narrowing.

KNOWN	NEW
When visiting the Hvalsalen Museum in Bergen, Norway, Kathleen Jamie	observes a "spherical object, two feet across, dense and mean, like a huge swollen black eye" (Jamie 100).

The next sentence points back to that "huge swollen black eye" and then provides new information that clarifies what it is.

KNOWN	NEW
The object	is the heart of a killer whale.

Again, the student's next sentence points back to the heart and to Jamie's observation of it before giving readers a description of that heart.

Phelps links the known-new contract to work in linguistics and developmental pragmatics (52-53).

KNOWN	NEW
After realizing what she is looking at, Jamie	describes the heart as "a deep red and black biological engine" (Jamie 100).

After these opening sentences, the student pauses for a moment to offer some common knowledge: "Since the components of the cardiovascular system, including the heart, are vital to the function of the whale and human body"—this is all information readers already know—"it is not surprising that they are written about extensively." That, too, is known information; it is common sense. This sentence provides nothing new; rather, it is laying groundwork for the student's project. He continues: "I was surprised, however, to read such a functional definition of the heart in a work of literature." These two sentences together follow the known-new contract: the student states a commonplace that the heart is written about often, and then gives readers the new information concerning his reaction to Jamie's use of it.

The known-new contract now kicks in full force. The student points back to how literature handles the heart, known information coming from his previous sentences.

KNOWN	NEW
In most literature I'm familiar with, the heart and cardiovascular system	are incorrectly associated with the complex emotions and emotional connections of the brain.

Literature's misuse of the heart becomes the known information for his next sentence.

KNOWN	NEW
This abstract perspective	is very different from the technical details of the cardiovascular system I've been learning about as a bioengineering major.

He then clarifies what it means to be a bioengineering major.

KNOWN	NEW
To graduate with a bioengineering degree, at least 35 science, mathematics, and engineering courses	must be completed.

But there is a consequence to this course of study, the student explains, "This curriculum" pointing back to his coursework described in the previous sentence.

KNOWN	NEW
This curriculum	may leave me ill-prepared to analyze literature, but the concepts covered in these classes can be used to explain whale anatomy and physiology.

A curriculum and the concepts covered in this student's 35 courses in the sciences suggest that there would be a teacher involved, which becomes the known information of the next sentence.

KNOWN	NEW
My biomechanics professor, Dr. David Vorp,	emphasizes that in the body, "form follows function."

In the next sentence, the student explains what "form follows function" means. Dr. Vorp again appears as known information, but this time, his name becomes shorthand for his teaching articulated in the previous sentence.

KNOWN	NEW
Dr. Vorp	stressed that the molecular, cellular, and tissue structures of an organism reflect the environment the organism lives in.

The final sentence of the paragraph begins with the aforementioned loaded "This," a this pointing back not only to Dr. Vorp's teaching, but more so to the progression of thought that enabled the student to reach this point.

KNOWN	NEW
This	suggests to me that a scientific investigation can be used to describe how the cardiovascular system of whales is specialized to allow these massive mammals to live in their harsh ocean environment.

If measured by its use of the known-new contract, this last sentence is a syntactic feat. There are multiple known-new relationships in the many clauses of its predicate, each one building upon the previous so as to end with a declaration of what the student will attempt in his paper: using his scientific expertise to make sense of Jamie, literature, and the hearts of whales.

From the student's opening sentence quoting Jamie to the final sentence articulating his project, there is a progression from something shared with the class—something common, something known, that is, Jamie's essay on whales—to something novel: the student's work with that essay in light of his coursework as a student of the sciences. It is a progression, for the

reader, from the known to the new. Yet at the same time, for the writer the movement is the inverse. The student begins in unfamiliar territory. When reading Jamie's essay, the student—a scientist—is out of sorts. He admits as much, saying he is "ill-prepared to analyze literature." Disoriented, he tries to find something to grasp on to, some way to steady himself. That something is the comfort, the familiarity of science. From the perspective of the writer, the paragraph moves not from the known to the new, but from the new to the known. And by this movement the student locates himself in relation to Jamie, his other coursework, the literary arts, Dr. Vorp, and the whale's heart.

This act of positioning is made possible by sentences, by the contract enacted and upheld by the very syntax of the student's prose. The subject of each provides known information for the reader yet new to the writer, and the predicate transforms that information into something new for the reader and something known for the writer. The movement from subject to predicate, repeated sentence after sentence, is a metamorphosis, one whereby the writer manipulates the words and ideas of others into something familiar for him and something novel for his readers. This is the magic of syntax. It transforms Jamie from something unfamiliar and inaccessible into a text the writer can work with.

William Robinson claims, "[W]riters must make their most important decisions before they get to the verb, when they decide what to put in the topic portion of the sentence, which is where the subject is, and, by implication, what they will reserve for the comment part, which is where the verb is" (442). Robinson's characterization of the verb—which I read as the predicate, that is, as the "new" part of the sentence—is apt; it is in that syntactic space that the writer comments upon, and thereby transforms, the subject. That is how this student's paragraph operates. Each predicate comments upon its attendant subject, that predicate then becoming the

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subject of the next sentence, the pattern repeating itself roughly a dozen times in the paragraph. With each enactment of the known-new contract, sentences locate the writer in his text, each syntactic transformation of the known into the new building a habitation for the writer.

This is all well and good, but I pause to think about what this writer could learn through revising his paper. This student has not written a stock response in the sense of resorting to commonplace phrasings, the trite and banal, to find an avenue into Jamie's text. He has, though, written a schooled response, one that is tidy, exemplary in its use of the known-new contract, a model essay of academic argumentation. And as I think about my role as a writing teacher, I wonder what I have to offer this student who has already learned the trappings of academic discourse. One approach would recommend the student reinforce those lessons, return to Graff and Birkenstein, find more ways to engage in the dialogic reading and writing practice taught by the moves that matter in academic writing. But this is the student Graff and Birkenstein write about when they say, "Once you get used to using [the templates], you can even dispense with them altogether, for the rhetorical moves they model will be at your fingertips in an unconscious, instinctive way" (11). This student makes the "they say / I say" move by using Jamie as a starting point for his project before speaking himself; he makes the "yes, but" move when he writes that it is no surprise to find the heart addressed in literature but that he is shocked to find a "functional definition of the heart" in Jamie's essay; he makes the "yes, and" move when he builds upon Dr. Vorp's teaching; and so on through the course of his essay. This student already knows the moves that matter in academic writing, and to ask him to revise along those lines would be treading trodden trails.

Another response would rely on Klinkenborg's desire to have his students in a "constant state of creative turmoil" ("RE: Teaching the Sentence"). What if the student revised this paper

away from clarity, away from the thesis statement, away from the topic sentence, and toward implicit argumentation? Asking this student to lessen the presence of his thesis-driven argument, to perhaps not rely as heavily on the known-new contract, to build an argument by implication, would ask the student to rethink his relationship with the reader. This student writes prose that holds the reader's hand and ushers the reader through its analysis. There is certainly a use for such writing, but it also has its limits, making certain assumptions about what it means to teach the reader, what can be taught to the reader, how linguistic performance plays a role in that teaching, and what the writer's responsibility is to the reader. The student has settled into a value system concerning writing that does not trust the reader; it is a value system taught by Williams, by Graff and Birkenstein, by Kolln and Gray, a value system very much at the center of writing instruction in most college-level composition classrooms.

I am not suggesting clarity is necessarily a bad thing, nor am I suggesting a well-organized piece of writing is necessarily problematic. I do claim, though, that it assumes a particular relationship between reader and writer, one that this student has perhaps never questioned, and one that a revision predicated on the idea of trusting the reader to follow an implicit thought—a revision that valued nuance and subtlety and muted argumentation—could challenge. Klinkenborg asks that his students revise "toward brevity … directness … simplicity … clarity … rhythm … [and] literalness" (148). But so too, he pushes his students toward "implication—the silent utterance of your sentences" and "silence—leave some" as well as "presence—the quiet authority of your prose" (148-49). Through implication, through silence, through presence, through a quiet authority, this student could still locate himself within his sentences but do so while crafting a stylistic self that stands in tension with the directness of his first draft. The student already knows how to make the moves that matter in academic writing; I

want him to think through what those moves assume about his relationship to the reader, how those moves locate both reader and writer, and what it means to inhabit such sentences.

5.0   DELIVERING THE SENTENCE

> For me, nothing happens, or could happen, until I imagine myself within a discourse—a kind of textual conversation / confrontation with people whose work matters to me and whose work, then, makes my own possible.
>
> David Bartholomae
> "Against the Grain" (21)

The sentence is out of style, rarely part of most college-level writing courses, and it sits at the margins of the curriculum for a number of reasons: There is the disdain for current-traditional rhetorics and the sentence's assumed connection to those pedagogies (see Butler *Out of Style*; Connors "Erasure"). There are the memories of failed attempts to teach the sentence 30 years ago and its subsequent demise, leaving the field with the sense that we've exhausted the pedagogical potential of the sentence. There is the inadequacy of previous theories of teaching, reading, and writing sentences. There is the association of the sentence with elementary instruction, the notion that it is the job of the grammar schools, of the primary and secondary schools—surely not the job of a university professor—to teach the sentence. There is the notion that the sentence is child's play in comparison to the weight of Marxism or Feminism or Post-Structuralism, etc. There is, too, the intimidation of the sentence, the pressure to get it right, the unease students (and their teachers) feel toward questions of usage and convention. There are

the pressing concerns of content-driven courses, such that the sentence is viewed as extraneous or tangential to the intellectual work of the curriculum. And there is a tension between the sentence and thesis-driven discourse, a tension between sentences and invention, the sentence seen as window dressing against the higher-order concerns of thesis, organization, evidence, rebuttal, introductions and conclusions, transitions, and the litany of matters addressed in the composition classroom.

Such concerns push the sentence aside, and they are what prompt the continual calls for Composition to take up the sentence once again. The calls are regular: Daiker et al. in 1985, Rankin also in 1985, Kolln in 1991, Horner in 1992, Lu in 1994, Johnson in 2003, Micciche in 2004, Johnson and Pace in 2005, Butler in 2008, Fish in 2011, Klinkenborg in 2012, Elbow too in 2012—and these are just the writers I find compelling in the past 30 years; there are dozens more calling the field back to the sentence. These scholars value the sentence for its ability to teach critical thinking, its enactment of rhetorical practice, its manifestation of political and social and cultural tensions, its importance to the public, its vital connection to Composition's reputation as a field.

In calling Composition back to the sentence, Paul Butler writes that he is "not suggesting that the discipline simply return to looking at style in the way scholars did in the 1970s and 1980s, or thoughtlessly adopt, for instance, the use of classical tropes and schemes in the classroom" (*Out of Style* 157). Butler has no use for such nostalgia or for the rote memorization of classical figures. Instead, he desires for "Compositionists [to] redefine style in a way that is meaningful to the field and that makes the study of style consonant with our disciplinary vision" (157). In the teachers I've cited above I see efforts along these lines. And in what I've written, I hope to have offered not a nostalgic return to the pedagogies of the Golden Age of Style but a

redefinition of style that is meaningful in its appropriation of and conflation with delivery. In working toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery, I've attempted to frame the sentence in light of Composition's interdisciplinary identity, drawing upon Classical Rhetoric, Speech-Act Theory, Literary Criticism, Composition Theory, and Linguistics to enrich Composition's teaching and reading and writing of the sentence. I've attempted to make the sentence meaningful for a field that has set it aside for the past 30 years. I've attempted to show that the sentence can be theorized, and taught, and read, and written in ways informed by the performativity of prose. I've attempted to reframe sentence-level instruction as inventive, as generative, as a site of possibility and one that has consequence for the classroom. I've done so with the hope of reframing the teaching of the sentence as an inquiry into the relationship between language and Performance, between language and Displays of the shared values of a community, between language and where one is Located within that community.

*

And yet, I find myself returning, often, to a question Richard Miller asks in *Writing at the End of the World*: "Aside from gathering and organizing information, aside from generating critiques and analyses that forever fall on deaf ears, what might the literate arts be said to be good for? How—and in what limited ways—might reading and writing be made to matter in the new world that is evolving before our eyes?" (6). Miller ends his book with the story of Dwight Conquergood. Conquergood worked with the relief agency International Rescue Committee in the Thai refugee camp Ban Vinai. Conquergood was to deal with a rabies outbreak. The camp staff had tried a "mass dog-vaccination campaign," but, Miller tells readers, "this had been a

complete failure, because not one refugee responded and no dogs received inoculations" (197). Conquergood—"who had an abiding interest in shamanism and performance art and who, unlike the other volunteers, actually lived in the camp with the refugees" (197)—tried another approach. He organized a "Rabies Parade" where Hmong folktale characters marched through the streets telling of the causes and dangers of rabies. The response was overwhelming; "the vaccination stations were … besieged by dogs" (Fadiman 36, qtd. in Miller 197). In response to the story, Miller writes, "If the goal is healing, what is the solution? In this case, the answer is found in art and performance, in learning how to speak in ways that others can hear, in finding a way to move and be in more than one world at once" (197-98). Miller sees Conquergood's efforts as representative of the "primary function of the humanities" which "is not about admiration or greatness or appreciation or depth of knowledge or scholarly achievement; it's about the movement between worlds, arms out, balancing; it's about making connections" (198).

I pause over Miller's reading of Conquergood for three reasons. First, Miller uses Conquergood as exemplary of what the humanities can accomplish; indeed, it is through performance and art that Conquergood is able to address the medical needs of the village. Performance becomes a means of medicine, such that this view of the humanities is a big one, one that encompasses the Arts and the Sciences. Second, Miller distinguishes admiration, greatness, appreciation, and depth of knowledge and scholarly achievement from what he sees as the purpose of the humanities. This is a humanities set against the pedagogy of Fish, who argues, "*Sentence craft equals sentence comprehension equals sentence appreciation*" (*How to Write* 11, emphasis Fish's). The humanities Fish promotes is one of aesthetic appreciation; the humanities Miller promotes is one of healing, of action in the world. Miller searches for, and imagines, a

humanities that has something to offer, something more than museum pieces. Miller seeks a humanities that does something.

And third, I pause for how Miller uses Conquergood's story. It comes in the final pages of *Writing at the End of the World*. Miller frames Conquergood's story as an example of the "making connections" he believes the humanities can do, but the story is not offered as the definitive answer to the initial question Miller asked concerning the value of the literate arts. Miller is too careful a writer to leave a tidy answer to a complicated question. I see the story as provocative. In its demonstration of a humanities of action, it poses the question of what it means to make connections, what it means to move, as Miller writes, between worlds, arms out, balancing. Set within the village community, the story again asks what good the literate arts are, literate arts so often housed within the classroom.

I think of Miller's question in early May 2015, as I stand in a newsstand in the Seattle airport, beneath a television, neck tilted upward, watching intently. The State's Attorney for Baltimore, Maryland has just announced six officers will be charged in the death of Freddie Gray. The newsstand is empty save for three employees and me. A woman in a hijab cries as she stares at the television. Two African American employees stand near me. We glance at each other and up at the television as all four of us, silent, take in the press conference. A month prior, I sat in the pews of a multi-racial church in downtown Pittsburgh for a panel titled "Race, Police, and the Community." There were five speakers: an active duty white cop, a retired African American cop, an African American University of Pittsburgh student who grew up in Ferguson, Missouri, an African American pastor, and a white pastor. As I read the headlines, as I watch the news, as I attend these community forums, I return again and again to a version of Miller's question: why

study sentences when people are dying in the streets? In the face of all this, why bother with writing?

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

A teacher once told me the way toward good writing was to gather a few things—books, passages, artifacts—place them on my desk, and find a way to put them together. In bringing those ideas together, something new emerges, something worth writing (and reading) about. I noted in Chapter Four the etymology of composition—a "placing together"—and my teacher's advice turns that definition of writing into a material and textual practice. The writer places together the ideas that she can't get away from, the ideas that linger, the ideas that need to be reconciled. I see this sense of composing when Miller writes of his father's love of John Donne, that his father "was infinitely amused and deeply moved by the way Donne violently yoked together the most heterogeneous of ideas" (180). Miller then quotes from T. S. Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets":

> When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes. (Eliot 64, qtd. in Miller 180-81)

This composing practice describes not only Donne's violent yoking of the flea and the bed, but also Miller's own writing practice. Within the first chapter of *Writing at the End of the World*,

for example, Miller composes Christ McCandless alongside René Descartes alongside Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, looking at the reading practice of each—Miller's project a demonstration of composition predicated upon the placing together of disparate experience, his writing forming new wholes.

James Seitz offers another perspective, suggesting placing items together is the province of metaphor: "While literalism responds to difference by putting things in their 'proper' places, metaphor responds to difference by putting things together, not by merely juxtaposing them but by *equating* them despite, or even because of, their disparities" (194, emphasis Seitz's). Seitz describes this "metaphorical impulse" as "dialogic, novelistic, carnivalesque," claiming that by putting items together, the writer enters into a "fictive space generated by the metaphor, where dialogue about equivalence and difference can begin" (194-95). Seitz, like Miller, like Donne, like Eliot, understands composition to be a generative space, one wherein ideas, institutions, ideologies are placed among, amidst, and against each other.

The yoking, the amalgamation, the dialogic, the novelistic, the carnivalesque happens at the level of the sentence, where the writer wrestles with this act of composition in a real, tangible, material, textual way. The writer has a topic, which determines the subject of the sentence, and then the writer starts to worry about where this sentence is going and what it is saying, about where it is coming from and what the speaker is beginning to sound like. The selection of a verb colors the subject, describing it by what it does. Once the writer has a sense of what this subject does, then questions of objects, of prepositional phrases, of appositives, of absolutes, of subordinated and coordinated clauses, of adjectives and adverbs, arise. With each, ideas are set in relation to each other, complicating, adding to, nuancing that initial relationship of subject and verb. Walter Beale points out that "Function words such as 'a,' 'an,' 'the,' 'this,' 'that,' 'some,'

'any,' 'in,' and 'to' never occur alone" (*Learning* 178). He claims they "can never stand alone," and I add that neither does any word. All words occur in relation to others, held in relation by grammar. In the midst of composing a sentence, a writer feels the weight of this action.

Composing, this placing together of ideas into a grammatical sentence, manifests, at the most basic level, a writer's attempts to bring ideas into relation with each other. And so Stanley Fish can claim sentences "promise nothing more than lessons and practice in the organization of the world. That is what language does: organize the world into manageable, and in some sense artificial, units that can then be inhabited and manipulated" (*How to Write* 7). But while Fish sees this act of composing as one of organization, inhabitation, and manipulation—and I agree that it is—I suggest too that the act of composing is one of reconciliation. Granted, the ideas a student writes about may be far removed from the crises in the day's headlines, but the subject is inconsequential. What the student is enacting—regardless of the topic—is reconciliation through composition, through placing things together in hopes of creating something new. Because of the requirements of a grammar that necessarily places ideas into relation one to another—verbs demand subjects and (sometimes) objects, prepositions demand nouns, adjectives demand nouns, adverbs demand verbs, and so on—writing sentences is a generative act, the writer searching for the words to satisfy grammar, placing these words in relation, composition an act of promise and potential.

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Because I believe this, most of my teaching addresses how students work with sources and how that work happens at the sentence level. This pedagogical concern runs through the Interchapters,

from the student placing Porchia and Minaj together, to reading Frost via a blogger from Yahoo, to working with Queneau, to reading Freire, to bringing science to bear upon Jamie's poetry. When the student gives another person space to speak within her own writing, engagement and reconciliation become possible. The conventions of working with sources foster it. Grammar encourages it.

The following comes from a student writing in response to Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style*. The *Exercises* retell the same story of a scuffle on a Paris bus 99 ways in 99 different styles, ranging from "Litotes" to "Animism" to "Homeoptotes" to "Awkward" to "Olfactory." (See Interchapter, "The Sentence, Performed," for more on Queneau). In her essay, the student sets the direct, outspoken pedagogy of Klinkenborg against the roundabout, subtle claims on style made in Queneau's *Exercises*. Her project attempts to reconcile two competing pedagogies through placing them together. Here, midway through her paper, the student considers what the point of Queneau's retellings might be:

> Barbara Wright, the translator of *Exercises in Style*, states:
>
>> And the point about the original story having *no* point, is one of *the* points of the book. So much knowledge and comment on life is put into this pointless story. It's also important that it should be the same story all the time. Anybody can—and automatically does—describe things in different ways. (Wright "Preface" 15, emphasis Wright's)
>
> This take on Queneau gives me mixed feelings, because I both agree and disagree with what she says. I do agree that everybody describes things differently, as evidenced by the narrators of "Nobel" and "Cockney." I also agree that the point of such a pointless story is that it has no point. The banality of the original story

gives way to change. Yet, when I read each exercise, I noticed subtle changes and

additions because I was not paying attention to the story itself; I was paying

attention to the language in which it was written. This is why I disagree with

Wright when she says that it is important that the story remain the same very time.

I would revise her statement to say that the importance lies in where the story

changes. These changes in the story are where it is most evident that Queneau is

manipulating language.

There are two critical moves in the paragraph, that is, moves a critic would make to engage

Wright and Queneau. First, the student introduces Wright's words: "Barbara Wright, the

translator of *Exercises in Style*, states:" The colon is the most important piece of punctuation in

the paragraph because it—as one of the conventions of quoting—invites a text-based

engagement. The colon signals that the student is about to step back and invite Wright to speak

within her essay. Wright then takes the stage. Her words are set off by convention as well, the

indentation signaling these are someone else's words and not the student's. Here the student and

Wright stand apart from each other; the formatting of the page delineates who speaks and when.

(A comma and a pair of quotation marks accomplish the same for shorter quotations.) In the

sentences that follow, the student engages Wright. The student identifies her ambivalence

toward her—"I both agree and disagree with what she says"—and then the student specifies what

she agrees with: that "everybody describes things differently" and that "the point of such a

pointless story is that it has no point." With those two phrases—phrases that echo Wright's

prose—the student glosses Wright's reading of Queneau and appropriates Wright's words into

her own.

The second critical moment of the paragraph comes with the student's "Yet, when I read each exercise." Through that "Yet," the student locates herself in relation to Wright. "Yet" demands a balancing claim, one in tension with what preceded. The student could have stopped at this point—and many do (and did)—having offered Wright's reading of Queneau followed by her own combative argumentation. But saying no more than "I agree" or "I disagree" accomplishes little more than drawing a line in the sand. The student knows this, so she engages Wright further, continuing with "I would revise." The success of the paragraph rests in the verb "revise." It marks the moment the student begins creating something new with Wright and Queneau. "Revise" demands an object, and given the student's discussion of her unease with Wright, "revise" sets readers up to expect Wright to appear once again. She does, now as the object of the sentence, Wright's ideas grist for the student, the student using the words of others to create a revised reading of Queneau, a reading not possible had the student not engaged Wright.

Many students will not quote unless I ask. When I do, they often drop the passage into their paper with no additional commentary or analysis. When I push for analysis, students will either agree or disagree with the passage they quote. When I introduce them to "Yes, but," "No, but," "Yes, and," "No, and," and other moves that foster critical engagement with a text, students respond with something akin to the passage I presented above. In this progression, students move away from solipsism toward engaging the words of others. It is an engagement made possible through the sentence, through a grammar that demands subjects and objects be placed in relation to each other. It is an engagement the conventions of quoting encourage, the comma prefacing a quotation giving space for the writer to pause, the quotation marks setting off the words of another, the space following the quotation inviting the writer to elaborate. This is a

composition, placing together someone else's words with the writer's. By wrestling with other ideas, striving to reconcile them with her own, attempting to find a way to hold competing claims together within a paper, the writer composes a sentence while enacting a syntactic, textual, grammar-based reconciliation.

This act of reconciliation becomes the more complicated—and beneficial—when additional voices are added to the discussion, the writer's syntax now straining to hold together the poly-vocal discussion. Consider the following sentence, from the student writing on Wright and Queneau. I present it so as to highlight its multiple layers:

> This is why
>> I disagree with Wright when
>>> she says that
>>>> it is important that
>>>>> the story remain the same every time.

I see two ways to read this sentence. Beginning on the right, "This" points back to the student's interaction with Wright, moving next to a restatement of her position in relation to Wright (level 2) and then clarifying that disagreement: the student doesn't always disagree with Wright, only "when / she says that" (level 3). Next, the student paraphrases Wright's reading of Queneau (levels 4-5). An alternative reading of this sentence would begin with "the story remain the same every time" and add layers to it as a left-branching sentence. Each addition lengthens the sentence while revising its meaning. Levels 4 and 5 stand alone as a sentence. Add another layer, and levels 3, 4, and 5 become a sentence. Add another layer, and levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 become a sentence. Add the final opening phrase, and all five levels become a sentence. Whether read from the right or from the left, this sentence places the student, Wright, and

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Queneau in relation to each other. Levels 4 and 5 paraphrase Wright on Queneau; level 3 invites Wright to speak and nuances the student's uneasy relationship with Wright; level 2 is where the student stakes a position in relation to Wright, a position that is clarified in levels 3, 4, and 5; and level 1 sets the sentence in relation to the discourse preceding and following, locating the sentence within the larger composition.

Sentences, then, are intrinsically responsive in (at least) two ways. First, grammar enables words to act upon words held in relation by syntax, the pieces of a sentence responding to each other within the relationships fostered by grammar and convention. Second, through the placement of a sentence within a larger piece of discourse, each individual sentence transforms ideas from the known into the new by way of the transformative abilities of a predicate acting upon a subject, the new part of any sentence a direct response to the known. Without an already-known subject, the predicate would have nothing to do, nothing to transform, nothing to be set in relation to, nothing to respond to.

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I teach the sentence out of this belief that it manifests the moves society as a whole needs to make, moves of bringing ideas together and composing something new. The sentence is an inventive space, its grammar pushing writers toward completing a phrase, connecting a dependent clause with an independent one, using a conjunction to coordinate or subordinate ideas, using an absolute or a parenthetical aside or any number of syntactic moves to nuance meaning. Through these acts of composition, through placing together ideas, students might learn patterns of thought and deed that can carry into their lives outside the writing classroom.

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It is for these reasons that I also teach the sentence through revision. Working toward a grammar of engagement and reconciliation, the writer must refine her ideas, recognizing that with each rewritten sentence, those syntactic relationships change. Klinkenborg advises that writers continually ask, "Why is the sentence this way and not another way?" (34). If the sentence is a set of relationships held together by grammar, and if those relationships are representative of the relationships the student holds in the world outside and informing the written page, Klinkenborg's question becomes a space to imagine other possibilities for those relationships. And if the student is to ever rewrite those relations, the student must rewrite her sentences, for in the act of revision, the writer not only revises sentences but also—and more importantly—she revises her relationship to those sentences and the stakeholders implicated in their composition. Herein is the cultural, political, social, rhetorical, and pedagogical potential of the writing classroom: we can revise sentences, and in that revision, we can work toward reconciliation, either within our sentences or within our communities.

My standard assignment is for students to write an essay in response to a reading, and then, in revision, bring a second source to bear upon the discussion, at least half of the revised essay new material, the student now reconciling her view, the first source, and the second source, composing the three. The revision asks for the engagement and reconciliation that attention to the sentence makes possible. I also give weekly Sentence Exercises, short assignments asking students to experiment with language through revising sentences. I have them write a 100-word sentence, rewrite the prose of others, cut a paragraph from 300 words to 150 to 75 to 30, combine sentences, write 15 versions of the same sentence, imitate the prose of others, break a 100-word sentence into short sentences, display a paragraph of their own as Klinkenborg does and write about what they notice in their newly formatted prose. None of these exercises has a

Correct Answer, but each asks that the student engage the work of the sentence and play within that space through rewriting sentences. The goal in these exercises is not to become Stylish or write Clear prose but that students come to see the ways sentences can be manipulated and what those manipulations do to meaning. In each exercise, I ask students why the sentence is written as it is, what it says and what it doesn't say and what it might say, how it could have been written differently, and what the consequences of such a rewrite would be. These are questions of revision, questions that ask the student to think through how subjects interact with objects through verbs.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Last year, in response to her Sentence Exercises and my insistence on revision, a student wrote a paper defining revision. Drawing on Klinkenborg's claim that "Composing a sentence always involves revision / Unless you write down the words of a sentence exactly as they pop into your head. / And why would you do that?" (86), she arrives at the following:

> This is revision, the act of composing a sentence. This is composition, the act of revising a sentence. Just because it isn't written down on paper doesn't mean it can't be revised. And just because you revised the sentence in your head doesn't mean it can't be revised again when it's written on paper.

Just as the first student I quoted used Wright to write her own reading of Queneau, here, this student builds upon Klinkenborg to come to her own understanding of revision. Klinkenborg argues revision and composition are entwined. The student goes one step further, demonstrating that relationship through her syntax. She utilizes a chiasm to do so. Chiasms are a rhetorical

figure of speech wherein what happens at the beginning mirrors what happens at the end, following an ABC…C'B'A' pattern.[1] Consider the student's definition of revision a second time, presented so as to show forth the chiastic structure of each sentence:

A   This is revision,

    B   the act of composing a sentence.

    B'   This is composition,

A'   the act of revising a sentence.

C   Just because it isn't written down on paper

    D   doesn't mean it can't be revised.

    D'   And just because you revised the sentence in your head

C'   doesn't mean it can't be revised again when it's written on paper.

In the first sentence, the A-level concerns revision; the B-level concerns composition. In the second sentence, the C-level concerns composition, the student repeating variations of "written on paper"; the D-level concerns revision. This student places composition and revision against each other, the chiasm holding the two in tension, the repetition of each inflecting the meaning of the other. As the student repeats her key terms of revision and composition, their definitions muddy, each now depending—syntactically and theoretically—upon the other for its meaning. The recursive chiasm brings this interdependence to the fore. Her chiasm demonstrates how meaning is created through syntax and how a word is meaningless until it is set into a grammatical relationship with other words. And through her chiasm, the student builds upon Klinkenborg, the student's own writing setting herself in relation to his work. Just as the words

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[1] I've written elsewhere on chiasms. See "Of Chiasms and Composition, or, The Whale, Part II" and "Of Tombs and Wombs, or, The Whale, Part III."

she works to define come to carry signification when they are set against each other, so too Klinkenborg's claims come to carry signification when they are set against the student's own work with them.

In these sentences, the student is able to say something about revision that she could not have said prior to reading Klinkenborg, prior to practicing regular revision of her writing. Her ideas are the synthesis of Klinkenborg, my teaching, and her own ideas. Through this bringing together, her writing shows a limitation of the phrasing "They say / I say." Perhaps it is the presence of the /, or perhaps it is the opposition between "They" and "I," but the phrasing "They say / I say" suggests that at a certain point, "They" step back and "I" speak. However, it is more often the case (as this student's writing shows) that "They" still speak when "I" speak, for what "I" say is necessarily and unavoidably said in response to and influenced by "They," grammar holding the two together.

*

Though I teach revision, though I teach a sentence that necessarily—by the demands of grammar—sets ideas in relation, engaging them and working toward reconciliation, and though I push students to resist the pressures of canned discourse, habit persists. Students return, again and again, to Habit, to Themewriting, to Volunteer Sentences. From the student trying to make sense of her relation to Queneau and Wright, the student who even revised Wright's reading of Queneau—a moment holding so much potential for her now nuanced reading of Queneau—this, the paragraph following that moment of rewriting Wright's prose:

As deduced from the above passage, I disagree with Wright on a particular interpretation of Queneau. This does not mean that one of us is wrong; in fact, both claims could be made and backed up with reasoning from the text. However, both are still different interpretations of a text. Queneau is ambiguous, and to say that there is an ultimate truth to the text and not accept any other reasoning would be ludicrous.

The commonplaces abound. "As deduced from the above passage": Reading is no longer a matter of engaging ideas—as it was when the student wrestled with Wright's reading of Queneau—but a matter of deduction, my job reading this paper one of merely following an argument, deducing its conclusions. Because reading is only a matter of deduction, the reader can only agree or disagree; accordingly, the student restates her disagreement with Wright and chooses not to explore the implications of her revision of Wright's claims. And because any claim can be "backed up with reasoning from the text," the text is no longer material from which to create something new, no longer something to wrestle with, but instead a place to cherry pick quotations to support a claim. The student then resorts to perhaps the largest commonplace of the whole paragraph: because every reading can be "backed up," no one can have an authoritative reading of Queneau (or, for that matter, any text).

What bothers me most about this paragraph is that it comes on the heels of one holding so much promise. The student had quoted from Wright, used "yet" to situate herself against Wright, and rewrote Wright's claim, all these moves modeling the engagement that makes possible reconciliation of disparate ideas. But following that, the student retreats to the stock responses of the writing classroom: that reading is a matter of deduction alone, that a text is only good for backing up claims, that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and that no opinion is better

than any other. It is a moment not unlike when Coles's students, stymied by a new writing assignment, revert back to Themewriting. The student has made progress with Wright, but does not seem to know what to do next, and she reverts back to sentences that are comfortable, easy, prepared, convenient. These are sentences written out of Habit; they are Themetalk; they are Volunteer Sentences. I do not think this student labored over these sentences. The paragraph is too easy, its ideas too pat, its language too common, its phrasings too familiar. The student has been written by these sentences, and the sentences undo the work of the previous paragraph. After a moment of triumph, she returns to the rhetoric of cant.

This student's paper on Queneau exemplifies the success all writers can have—moments when we rewrite our own sentences with the sentences of others in order to make something new—amid the weight of Habit, of the Theme, of Volunteer Sentences. It exemplifies, too, that such successes are never easy, never themselves the product of a habituated style, but instead something the writer revises toward as she works against the discourse that comes so easily.

I could respond to this student by pointing out the stock responses of her paragraph. I could ask her why she abandoned the provocative rewriting of Wright in favor of commonplaces. I could circle the sentence where she revises Wright and ask that the student begin a new draft with that sentence as its starting point. But this paper was her final paper of the term—further revision is not possible—which means something must be different within the course itself so as to teach the student to read her own work with an eye toward its Performance, toward the Displays of the shared values of a community it shows forth and hopefully challenges, toward how it Locates her in relation to the figures she writes about. That something is what I've offered in this dissertation, a project exploring how we might work with the delivered sentence.

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What, then, do I hope readers take from this project? As for the day-to-day work of the classroom, a lesson on the sentence? A revision assignment that attends to the delivery of written prose? Perhaps part of the syllabus calendar devoted to delivery and style? Maybe even an entire course devoted to reading and writing and re-writing sentences? For our scholarship, a refined understanding of the relationship between delivery and style, or, for our teaching, a renewed vigor for stylistics and sentence-level pedagogies that recognizes the work of the sentence as intellectual and rigorous?

If anything, I hope for this: a revision of how we—readers and writers, teachers and students—read, write, teach, and study the sentence. The sentence is a consequential site of instruction with great pedagogical possibility, long neglected and misunderstood and under-theorized. Delivery is one means to deliver—that is, recoup—the sentence. The sentence has the potential not only to reshape college-level writing courses through teaching the care, attention, and discernment needed when placing ideas in relation to each other—composing—but so too the sentence has the potential to reshape how we interact with those ideas, each revision of the sentence revising the writer's position in relation to the individuals, ideas, ideologies, and institutions written about. Many times in my teaching and in this project I turn to Klinkenborg's claim that "Your job as a writer is making sentences" (13). I return to it once more, and I rewrite it. Our job as writers and readers, as teachers and students, is revising sentences. And if we can revise our sentences, we can not only deliver the sentence from the pedagogical doldrums, but more importantly, we can write in ways meaningful, consequential, generative, and reconciliatory as we work toward a rhetoric of syntactic delivery.

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