

3 Historical Review II: From the Middle Ages through Nineteenth Century US

It may be easy to see the Middle Ages as an arid period for the study of rhetoric or any of its canons. Although covering several hundred years, from the fall of the Roman Empire through the Renaissance, the medieval era receives only about one hundred pages of treatment in *The Rhetorical Tradition*—about half to one third of the length of other sections. True, there were no public forums for rhetoric as we find in classical Greece or the Roman republic, but rhetoric still occurred in less visible ways. A 2012 article in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* by Shawn Ramsey addresses this covert rhetoric, pointing out that despite appearances,

civic decision making operated in contexts that were obscured to most people; it was often consular in nature and conveyed in writings sent over broad distances, or it was practiced interpersonally at the courts or synods of the elite . . . although descriptions of the rules and the nature of these latter practices are somewhat scant in standard histories and chronicles. (473)¹⁴

Style becomes an indirect issue in the new genres that emerged during this period: sermons, poetic prose, and letters. In *The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric*, Denise Stodola describes three

14. Conley describes the Middle Ages as a period in which numerous trajectories emerged from Ciceronian rhetoric that continued to receive substantial commentary until the early twelfth century, when Boethius's framework rose to prominence (74). Conley describes the "continually shifting and changing circumstances" of this long period as too complex to reduce; therefore, he limits his discussion to the theories and contexts of single authors (74).

major genres of the period: *ars praedicandi* (sermons and preaching), *ars dictaminis* (letter writing), and *ars poetria* (poetry or poetic prose).¹⁵ Preaching was the closest heir to public oratory, and Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* became the most influential preaching manual during this period. Seminaries used it to train priests in interpreting scripture as well as navigating the three tiers of style (plain, middle, grand) while composing sermons modeled on classical, four- and six-part orations. As stated in the section about Augustine in the last chapter, medieval sermons were very similar to ceremonial speeches; the exception is that their goal was the inspiration of divine emotions and acts of religious devotion.

Prose style became more poetic during the medieval period, since "treatises on poetry writing focused on ornaments for written texts, whether verse or prose" (Bizzel and Herzberg 503). The main forms of prose during the medieval period were sermons and letters—both made common use of tropes and figures as well as a particular type of poetic prose called the *cursus*. Medieval grammarians taught poetry and letter writing according to the classical model, explicating figurative language in classical Latin texts for students who then constructed imitations for recitation (Bizzel and Herzberg 504). Carol Dana Lanham stresses the influence of poetry on written prose style. Although classical rhetoricians such as Quintilian drew some distinctions between poetry and prose composition based on "metrical necessity," such differences started "fading rapidly, and many prose texts acquired a poetic coloring" as embellished prose became the means of lending gravity to the topic of a composition (Lanham 102). Moreover, grammar school teachers of the sixth through the twelfth centuries CE became authorities on both rhetoric and poetry, relying on texts such as Latin grammar books, rhetorics, glossaries, and *differentia* (usage books).¹⁶ As such, they taught prose as a highly stylistic endeavor, with attention to figurative language and rhythm.

15. General resources include Murphy's *Medieval Eloquence*, his *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, and George A. Kennedy's *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Traditions from Ancient to Modern Times*. According to Stodola, "Murphy and Kennedy still dominate the field in this particular category, and their texts . . . have become the standard classics" (45).

16. Some of these books were references, while others were used regularly by grammarians to guide their classes through the analysis and imitation of Latin literary works. Lanham indicates *scholia*, or marginal notes, as evi-

The main outlet of such stylistic prose was the letter, used by dukes, barons, princes, and other powerful members of a court to conduct diplomacy and maintain relations with the church. The art of letter writing emerged during the eleventh century as a way of communicating information about laws and commerce; letter writing also became a central mode of education, since training scribes to copy texts and write letters became the primary purpose of literacy instruction. As Bizzell and Herzberg note, in an illiterate culture, “The person who could compose letters . . . had access to considerable political power” (444). The first treatises on the art were composed by the monk Alberic at Monte Cassino, titled *Dictaminum Radii* (or *Flores Rhetorici*) and *Brevarium de Dictamine*. They offer models and formulas for letters based on those of Cicero, and “encouraged the use of rhetorical figures and rhythmic Latin, which would later develop into a form of Latin prose used especially in letters” (Bizzell and Herzberg 444). These original treatises provided the foundation for several more handbooks and instructional materials on letter writing, and the art eventually became a major conduit for the transmission of the rhetorical tradition and the stylistic training of students who were taught to imitate the letters of Cicero. Letter writing served as a kind of *ethopoeia*, one of the *progymnasmata* described in handbooks by Theon (First century CE), Nikolaus the Sophist (Fifth century CE), and Priscian (Sixth century CE). Carol Dana Lanham’s chapter in *A Short History of Writing Instruction* describes exercises in imitation and the *progymnasmata* as taking on an epistolary form, in which scribes learned style by writing letters in the voices of historical and heroic fictional characters.

One of the most important figures during this period is Geoffrey of Vinsauf. His treatises on poetry, prose (including letter writing), and tropes and figures appeared between 1200 and 1216, and remained influential until well into the Renaissance. *Poetria Nova* covers poetry, *Documentum de Modo et Arte Dictandi et Versificandi* covers prose and letter writing, and *Summa de Coloribus Rhetoricis* offers a manual of tropes and figures drawn largely from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Writers, including Chaucer and Erasmus, praised Vinsauf’s theories and used them as models for their own literary and pedagogical works. Vinsauf’s treatises were meant as classroom texts, and they “were widely used as school texts to supplement the lessons

dence of which were used for what purpose. She references secondary sources devoted to their study.

of the grammarian, not only during the period when most were composed, but later on into the early Renaissance” (Bizzell and Herzberg 505). As such, they contain lessons and opinions on types of style. Here, Vinsauf echoes the classical distinction between high, middle, and low styles, though emphasizing social class. The “ornate *difficultas* or *gravitas*” (high style) relies on figurative language and reflects serious subject matter, such as tragedy, while aiming at a noble audience. The “ornate *facilitas* or *levitas*” (low style) concerns comedic matters of interest to lower classes.

Rhetoric did go underground, so to speak, during the Middle Ages. As the next section shows, Boethius understates its importance to philosophical inquiry. His treatises influenced subsequent thinkers that wrote explicitly about philosophy rather than rhetorical discourse. That said, rhetoric did not simply become extinct, and neither did style. Rhetoric survived in the everyday genres of preaching, poetic prose, and letter writing. These emerging genres not only provided a kind of refuge for style, but also opened spaces for its unconventional use by women rhetors that had been largely denied the right to engage in public rhetoric.¹⁷ After describing Boethius’s influence on the trajectory of style during this period, the following sections describe how rhetors such as Christine de Pizan took advantage of the shift away from classical rhetorical speeches as the medium of style, making innovations in the canon that are important for its contemporary study and teaching.

17 As Ramsey’s 2012 *RSQ* essay explores, letter writing was also a domain of considerable rhetorical power for women, who often composed letters to powerful figures, including kings, advisors, and popes, persuading them on political matters. He analyses a number of letters by Ermengarde of Narbonne, Matilda of Bolougne, and Eleanor of Aquitaine that were digitized and made publically available in Joan Ferrante’s database *Epistolae: Letters of Medieval Women*. Ramsey’s analysis reveals women using the genre of letter writing to exercise a kind of political persuasion that they had previously been precluded from. Their discourse is persuasive not through the use of masculine rhetorical style, but rather through the use of implication, innuendo, humility, flattery, and indirectness that was often more appropriate to the message and situation.

BOETHIUS (FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES CE)

Boethius focuses almost exclusively on invention and the topics, and his work is interpreted by the histories of George Kennedy and Conley as contributing to the subordination of rhetoric to philosophy. According to Conley, central differences exist between Boethius and Augustine on the role of stylistic eloquence in discourse. For Augustine, rhetoric commanded dialectic, because the “argument of a speech is to be found not in any underlying scheme but precisely in the development of loci, their amplification, and the graceful connections made in it among the particulars of the case” (Conley 81). This same idea of rhetoric as the graceful expression of knowledge is why Cicero positioned it as the most important discipline, stating in *De Oratore* that it should conclude a student’s education.

Boethius, whose commentary on Cicero became widely influential on medieval thinkers, emphasized the reverse (dialectic over rhetoric) and made rhetoric “an appendage of dialectic” so that stylistic effectiveness no longer determined “whether a given rhetorical argument [was] a good one or not” (Conley 80). In *Classical Rhetoric and Rhetoricians*, Beth S. Bennett confirms this view, stating that, inevitably, as Boethius overtook Cicero in influence during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, “Not only did rhetoric become reduced to a subcategory of logical argumentation, but also it was removed from its classical foundations as a public practice” (91). Bennett sees Boethius as elevating logic while ignoring the practical necessity of appealing to an audience.¹⁸

Boethius addresses the role of rhetoric in philosophy in Book IV of his treatise, *Topica Boetii*—which was the original Medieval title for *De Topicis Differentiis*. Bizzell and Herzberg describe the treatise as a common text in medieval schools. Here, Boethius describes rhetoric in the classical, Aristotelian tradition as the persuasion of an audience in civic matters, and a counterpart to dialectic. Unlike Aristotle, Boethius discusses invention strategies without much in-depth exploration of the other four canons—memory, style, arrangement, and delivery.

18 In a 1998 issue of *RSQ*, Richard McNabb challenges this standard view, reading Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* through Ernesto Grassi to highlight the use of metaphorical language and rhetorical devices, suggesting that Boethius saw rhetoric as epistemic, and thus “a mode of investigating truth even in medieval discourse” (84).

What Boethius does *not* say about style is perhaps more important than what he *does* say. The fact that he treats rhetoric as an obligatory but peripheral matter to philosophical inquiry indicates that style—and even rhetoric itself—was the ornamentation of thought and, therefore, not a central concern.

CHRISTINE DE PIZAN

Studies of style in the European tradition, much like histories of rhetoric in general, have overlooked the contributions of women. They were often precluded from political arenas, denied the right to vote, or even forbidden to speak publically in Athens and Greece. In Medieval Europe, women were also often denied access to many rhetorical venues, unable to own property, unable to preach; in most cases, women were only given control domestic spheres. Domains of Medieval rhetoric primarily involved sermons, legal letters, trade, and poetry—all of which excluded women as primary agents. (A woman could help run a business, such as a shop or a tavern, but she could not own it or make business decisions about it by herself.) Consequently, the feminist historians explored in the last chapter explained the need to look in less conspicuous places for information about women's use of rhetoric. Understanding style requires that we also examine recently recovered figures, such as Christine de Pizan.

Regarded as the first professional female writer in the Western tradition, Christine published in a range of genres, including poems, histories, and philosophical books on women's political education. Her works most studied by rhetoricians include two books, defined as conduct books, titled *The Book of the City of Ladies* and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, in which Christine advises noble women on courtly conduct and political strategy. Bizzell and Herzberg historicize her work as evidence of the importance placed on eloquence in the late medieval period. Christine's conduct books were written for women in political situations who "had to use language effectively to be queens and courtiers, heads of religious houses, partners in family businesses and trades, and guides for the young" (de Pizan 540). Because they did not usually have direct authority over these institutions, women had to be especially persuasive and resourceful in their use of language.

In *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, Christine does not directly engage in theories of style articulated by Aristotle, Cicero, Hermo-

genes, or Quintilian. We have to read between the lines, as it were, to understand her in terms of style. Above all, she advocates a peaceful or non-provocative style. As she says, the princess serves a rhetorical role by acting as a “mediator between the prince her husband . . . and her people” (Bizzel and Herzberg 546). Christine often describes women of the court as mediators and negotiators, or “the means of peace” (547), advising them to act humbly or with humility when speaking to anyone. In her view, the ideal style of speaking and writing is “gentle speech” that “softens and breaks its [bone’s] hardness just as the water by its moisture and coldness extinguishes the heat of the fire” (547). We might understand this style in terms of the difference between Attic and Asiatic styles discussed by Cicero and Quintilian. A more forceful, Attic style may provoke resistance rather than persuade, whereas the “gentle speech” Christine describes can be extremely effective. Such a view of style is not far from the tendency of academics to use qualifying adverbs like “perhaps” and “likely,” in addition to hedging, to soften the impact of their arguments and dissolve resistance.

Christine also advocates silence as a stylistic resource. Although Glenn does not address Christine directly in her book *Unspoken*, she does situate her earlier historical work on such figures as part of the motivation to treat silence as a rhetorical move. As such, Christine recognizes that women in medieval courts have a limited number of options when they are the subject of gossip or slander. While it may seem trivial today, a woman relied almost completely on her own honor; being seen as promiscuous or immature could have devastating consequences, especially for women in positions of some power, as the wife of a baron, count, prince, or a member of the court.¹⁹ Consistent with the need to display humility, wisdom, and charity at all times, Christine carefully explains how nothing can be done in response to slander. By countering slander, or spreading it herself, a lady only becomes implicated in her own dishonor. Likewise, a woman who witnesses improprieties by members of any court should “pretend that you did not see the least thing and that you notice nothing, since it is not within

19. Other secondary work on Christine de Pizan includes Scott D. Tryoyan’s *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook*, Julia Simms Holderness’s “*Compilatio, Commentary, and Conversation in Christine de Pizan*” (*Medieval Studies* 20 (2003): 47–55.) A wealth of resources on medieval women’s rhetoric is compiled in Denise Stodola’s contribution to *The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric*.

your ability to remedy it” (550). In both instances, Christine makes silence a position of agency; indeed, silence is more strategic than any use of words.

From our reading of Christine, we see the seed of an alternative approach to style that is not explored by male rhetoricians of the period. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian’s version of rhetoric deals mainly with addressing large, public audiences. Although it is unfortunate that, historically, women were denied access to these outlets, women rhetors nonetheless provide valuable accounts of persuasion that are not articulated in conventional treatises. From these alternative rhetorics, we can build a more complete set of stylistic resources, perhaps adding to the limited idea of three styles the notion of a “benevolent style” that are characterized by a different set of figures, tropes, and schemes that are meant to defuse, rather than to inform, delight, or persuade. Imagine a silent style employing a range of tactics meant to circumvent or subvert power relations in certain rhetorical situations—such a framework for non-masculine styles arises at least partly from the study of Christine de Pizan.

RENAISSANCE STYLE

Classical rhetoric had faded during the middle and medieval eras, partly due to the unavailability of manuscripts and the fragmentation of public outlets for oratory. As the last sections explained, the primary modes of discourse were letter writing, preaching, and poetry—not the deliberative and epideictic forms of rhetoric for which classical treatises were written. Classical rhetoric returned to prominence during the Renaissance, as intellectuals re-discovered their value for more contemporary forms of discourse. Trevor McNeely argues that rhetoric “is *the* integrating principle behind the Renaissance revolution in both Italy and England” (9). The study of rhetoric deeply influenced poets ranging from Shakespeare to Milton, letter writing, and on public discourse. Style was once again seen as an essential component of virtuous discourse. According to Sir Philip Sydney’s 1583 treatise *In Defense of Poesy*, poets were more moral than philosophers, and stood a greater chance of moving audiences to virtue.

The revival of style began with George of Trebizond’s *Rhetoricorum Libri Quinque* and Aldo Manuzio’s translations of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and Hermogenes’s works, all of which re-introduce classical Greek

rhetoric to Western Europe. (As Shane Borrowman points out, such works survived largely thanks to Arabic and Byzantine philosophers.) During the early sixteenth century, scholars also began traveling beyond Christendom and bringing back large numbers of treatises on style from the classical era; due to the advent of printing technologies, such treatises quickly spread throughout European centers of education (Conley 120). During this period, Ciceronian rhetoric re-emerged, and eloquence became central to discourse and deliberation.

According to Annabel Patterson, in *Hermogenes and the Renaissance*, the sheer volume of editions, translations, and commentaries on Hermogenes's work shows that his approach to style was favored over those of Cicero and Quintilian (17). According to Patterson, the reason for Hermogenes's influence lay in the preference of seven types of style to the three-part division of classical rhetoricians into high, middle, and low. As a wealth of new literary genres emerged during the sixteenth century, the classical division offered little guidance about how to adapt styles to different contexts beyond forensic, deliberative, and epideictic oratory or epic, tragic, and comedic verse. The classical division also provided a limited account of how to blend styles and, at times, even discouraged rhetors from doing so (29). Hermogenes's seven ideas of style enabled a system where "Any genre may admit a mixture of styles, and the greater the genre, the more styles it will admit; while the rigid matching of style to genre . . . is no longer desirable or possible" (34).

Peter Mack's *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380–1620* highlights the still-potent influence of Cicero and Quintilian on Renaissance treatises covering tropes and figures, letter writing, and preaching. Mack describes nine separate manuals of tropes and figures used by grammar school teachers, all of them based on the classical treatises by Cicero, Quintilian, and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. These manuals differed mainly in their divisions and classifications of stylistic devices,²⁰ but the substance of their definitions and illustra-

20. For a brief example, Antonio Mancinelli's 1489 manual *Carmen de Figuris*, written in the form of a poem to aid students' memorization, lists ninety-eight different figures divided into faults (vices), schemes, and tropes. Johannes Despauterius's 1512 manual *De Figuris*, also in the form of a poem, omits figures of thought and lists seventy-seven total stylistic devices divided into fourteen figures of expression, eighteen schemes, twenty-seven tropes, and eighteen other miscellaneous figures.

tions through classical literature is relatively consistent. Omer Talon's 1548 *Rhetorica* may be the most significant of the manuals described by Mack, given Talon's simplified catalog of figures and its popularity—going through at least a hundred editions by 1620 (Mack 221). Talon condenses a large list of tropes to the four most prominent and commonly used—metonymy, irony, metaphor, and synecdoche (Mack 221). Talon's reasoning lay in simplification to ease the burden of so many devices on teachers and students and, according to Mack, "Later writers . . . were happy to focus their attention on these four essential tropes" (221). Today, many writing teachers are more likely to be familiar with these four.

The art of letter writing, having emerged during the middle ages, continued to thrive as a domain of rhetoric during the Renaissance, a period that saw "about 900 editions of individual works" devoted exclusively or in part to letter writing—some works went through a hundred editions (Mack 228). During this period, letter writing transitioned from a rigidly defined genre with a set form to a more dynamic and fluid art, due mainly to the revival of classical rhetoric, the discovery of Cicero's letters, and their influence on Erasmus, who was a key figure in the evolution of the genre. Letter writing manuals constituted a major form of communication between nobles, clergy, and the commercial classes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, instruction in grammar and letter writing constituted the primary modes of education.

Style itself was a point of emphasis in letter writing manuals. According to Mack, "Most manuals include some advice on appropriate style or useful formula phrases" (228). The manuals typically contain separate chapters or sections on sentence composition and variety, grammar, prose rhythm, and gatherings of proverbs and eloquent phrases useful for different occasions (Mack 231). One of the earliest and most influential of these manuals was Niccolo Perotti's 1468 *Rudimenta Grammatices*, a comprehensive grammar that included a long treatise on letters that advised the low or plain style (in most cases), but also recommended variation according to the addressee. These manuals evolved from their medieval counterparts to list as many as twenty different types of letters, as in the case of Francesco Negro's 1487 manual, *Modus Epistolandi*, that provides instructions and examples of forms such as commendation letters, requests, love letters, lamentations, and consolations. Mack especially attributes Erasmus's 1521

Manual De Conscribendis Epistolis with an orientation toward “thinking about the addressee, and the writer’s relationship to the addressee, as . . . the chief factors in determining the approach and style to be adopted in a letter” (246). Erasmus’s organic, classical approach to letter writing would become the most influential.

A number of preaching manuals appeared during the Renaissance, almost all of them importing classical approaches to style wholesale. Peter Mack devotes a brief chapter to them. Erasmus’s 1535 manual *Ecclesiastes* was a more popular manual—printed ten times—that defined figures and tropes as useful for interpreting scripture as well as inciting divine emotions—love of God, hatred of sin, fear of divine justice. St. Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christina* remained influential as a preaching manual. Most manuals either list tropes and figures copied directly from treatises like the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, or insist on plain and modest language as the most appropriate for sermons. As Mack concludes, the key difference between rhetorical treatises and preaching manuals is that the latter were designed specifically for ordained priests who had already received classical training in grammar school and university.

RENAISSANCE CURRICULUM

Writing did not become a major focus in Renaissance grammar schools until the 1570s, when made possible by the spread of printing technology and the production of paper. William Harrison Woodward describes the rhetorical curriculum at several European schools, most based on the classical tradition in which students copied, imitated, and translated works from Latin and Greek. Renaissance humanist schools closely followed the classical curriculum, including instruction in criticism of classical poets and orators, declamations on historical and contemporary topics, and letter writing. Students submitted writings to their instructor, and received written feedback for rewriting. These schools also stressed mastery in classical languages as a foundation for cultivating vernacular style in European languages. Woodward states,

There can be no doubt that the great majority of humanist teachers in France or England, hardly less than in Italy (excepting the purists, like Erasmus), were concerned with rhetoric not as training in Latin only, but as an essential instrument

for the acquisition of a sound and cultivated vernacular style.
(75)

The Renaissance curriculum saw “Roman oratory as the needful preparation for civic eloquence” (Woodward 75), given their primary purpose in training future public servants and leaders in the spheres of religion, politics, and commerce.

For Woodward, medieval and Renaissance teachers saw style as “a province of grammar” (200), rather than the reverse. Grammar school teachers taught style for everyday purposes, and rhetoric teachers introduced pupils to figures of thought and speech, used for special rhetorical occasions. The aim of education was to give students the ability to adapt style for purpose, occasion, and audience. The curriculum saw value in grammar, but not for its own sake. Woodward observes that grammatical and rhetorical instruction during the Renaissance “takes from grammar the laws of syntax, and adds to them the principles of logical and tasteful exposition, so producing prose writing both accurate and persuasive” (173–174). Pupils only learned the principles of grammar in so far as they applied to a specific piece of writing they were analyzing or imitating.

Other works consider the Renaissance curriculum with attention to instruction in imitation, translation, and analysis as they pertained to eloquence. These include Don Paul Abbot’s chapter in *A Short History of Writing Instruction*, Donald Lemen Clark’s *Milton at St. Paul’s School*, Paul Grendler’s *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, and the edited collection by Winifred Bryan Horner and Michael Leff, titled *Rhetoric and Pedagogy: Its History, Philosophy, and Practice*. These works describe a curriculum in which students learned Latin grammar and underwent a rigorous, ten-hour school day consisting of exercises in letter writing, verse composition, themes, and oral declamations. Roger Ascham’s 1570 treatise *The Scholemaster* highly recommends exercises in imitation and translation between Latin and English, methods seen as vital to any Renaissance curriculum in the development of eloquence. The conventional curriculum excluded women, but special historical consideration of women’s rhetorical education includes Barbara Whitehead’s *Women’s Education in Early Modern Europe*. This collection includes essays that recover ways in which young women learned eloquence, voice, and agency despite being excluded from grammar schools and colleges. Admittedly, women’s education in the Renaissance is a frontier for future study.

ERASMUS

The curriculum of English grammar schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rested largely on a proposal by Erasmus in *De Ratione Studii*, in which he advances a classical education based on grammar, literary criticism, and imitation of great works. In the Ciceronian tradition, Erasmus equates eloquence with civic virtue. His model became the standard for St. Paul's school (where Milton attended) and most others. Erasmus produced three major works of relevance to rhetoricians and grammarians, all of them directly relevant to stylistic studies: *On Letter-Writing*, *On the Best Kind of Style*, and *De Copia*.

Although Erasmus was deeply influenced by Cicero and Quintilian, he criticized Renaissance humanists for failing to fully appreciate the point of decorum (Conley 121), and thus only parrot the views of Cicero and Quintilian on style, rather than apply them to contemporary discourse practices. *De Copia* was "designed to inculcate linguistic sensitivity and fluency" (Conley 120) that would develop what Quintilian referred to as *facilitas*, but adapted for a new age. Erasmus made a pointed argument against misappropriation of Cicero in his 1527 treatise *On the best Kind of Style*, elevating decorum over simplistic imitation. According to Peter Mack, the treatise maintained that the "key to style is always appropriateness to the situation," and that "[i]mitation must be critical, not slavish" (97). Students in Erasmus's curriculum were encouraged to read widely and synthesize a range of classical and contemporary styles, as Cicero himself advised.

First printed in 1519, *De Copia* became widely used in grammar schools throughout Europe. Erasmus focuses on style in Book I, with Book II devoted largely to matters of invention and dialectic. For Erasmus, style derived mainly from abundance of phrase, or copiousness, that employed a large vocabulary as much or more than tropes, figures, and prose rhythm. For Don Paul Abbott in *A Short History of Writing Instruction*, "*Copia* . . . is the very foundation of style" (163). An often-paraphrased example is Erasmus's variation on the simple phrase "Your letter pleased me greatly":

Your letter mightily pleased me.
 To a wonderful degree did your letter please me.
 I was exceedingly pleased by your letter.
 The greatest joy was brought to me by your letter.
 Your epistle afforded me no small delight.

The first fourteen of his methods for varying the style of sentences describe alterations of diction and substituting one phrase with another to achieve a different tone, one appropriate to different circumstances (Mack 83). Book I also devotes some attention to the tropes and figures, drawing largely on Quintilian. Erasmus outlines six methods of variation based on Quintilian's treatment of metaphor, amplification, and figures of expression that include asyntedon, polysyntedon, epianalepsis, interrogation, dubitation, exclamation, occupation, and subiectio (Mack 84).

Erasmus's *De Copia* may have been so popular in grammar schools because it stressed the practical aspects of style and eloquence, introducing figures and exercises without exhaustive meditations on history and theory. His importance to contemporary writing teachers lies in his definition of style via copia, stressing the knowledge not only of tropes and figures, but also of words themselves. Although classical treatises acknowledged diction as one component of style, Erasmus was the first to devote so much detail to its impact on prose. Toward this end, Erasmus offered a range of advice to students, recommending extensive practice in variation of expression, transcription of poetry to prose, development of lists of metaphors for aid in composition, and imitation exercises rooted in the *progymnasmata*. Book I also contains lists of synonymous expressions and advice for varying sentences through different grammatical constructions.

THE RAMIST WATERSHED

The revival of classical rhetoric during the Renaissance ultimately encountered resistance from philosophers who saw invention and dialectic as their domain. Most histories of rhetoric concur on the marginalization of rhetoric, as a consequence of Peter Ramus's 1547 treatise *Brutus's Problems*, and his 1549 follow-up, *Arguments in Rhetoric Against Quintilian* (see Murphy's translations.) In these works, Ramus rejects Ciceronian civic rhetoric as well as Quintilian's emphatic stance on the moral component of discourse. Ramus also argues that any classical treatise, including Aristotle's, only distracts from the innate capabilities of reasoning in all humans, who should develop their intellects through other pursuits. Cicero may be a model of style, when not too Asiatic, but the parts of the *Orator* and the *Orator's Education*

that treat invention and arrangement are redundant to philosophical dialectic.

Ramus endeavors to correct Quintilian's classification of tropes and figures, as well as the division of style into four virtues. *Latinitas* (purity of language) belongs to grammar, not to rhetoric. Likewise, *decorum* (appropriateness) is better left to dialectic because it involves reasoning rather than the application of ornament to ready-made ideas. (Anticipation of audience does not appear as a major concern here.) Classifications in Ramus's rhetorical system hinge on length rather than on rhetorical purpose or effect, as in Cicero and Quintilian; therefore, Rasmus defines tropes as devices consisting of single words and figures as devices of multiple words. Ramus also pairs down the number of tropes to four—metonymy, irony, metaphor, and synecdoche. By contrast, Quintilian defined tropes and figures somewhat synonymously, and he used them interchangeably to describe figurative language in single words as well as phrases, figures of thought and expression, and in devices such as *onomatopoeia*, *catachresis*, *epitheton*, and *allegory*.

Ramus's supposed correction of Quintilian serves his purpose to further limit the capabilities of rhetoric, rather than lend any actual clarity to theories of style. If rhetorical style no longer helps determine correctness, appropriateness, or any but four types of tropes, then it indeed becomes a matter of ornament. Doing so, the Ramist split pours a foundation for Enlightenment thought and scientific writing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that was contested by few, with the important exception of Giambattista Vico in the Italian Humanist tradition. Vico's treatise in 1725, titled *The New Science*, proposed four domains of knowledge production, with poetic knowledge as the first, and metaphor as a means of generating ideas through understanding and conveying them through one another. Vico's philosophical-rhetorical system elevates figurative language—a key element of style—from a minor role in ornamenting thought to a central stage of invention. From this position, Vico asserts the democratizing effect of eloquence, defined as “wisdom, ornately and copiously delivered in words appropriate to the common opinion of mankind” (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 877). Because humans are rooted in language, learning by it and persuaded by it, skilled use of language (style) is possible for anyone to learn; style can persuade anyone, regardless of his or her status or power.

Despite such alternate epistemologies, the Ramist tradition remained dominant in models of scientific prose, as advanced by Bacon, Locke, and prominent members of the Royal Society during the seventeenth century. As the next section shows, although Enlightenment rhetorics reconstructed Ciceronian ideals, the prominence of scientific writing marginalized it altogether in favor of a plain, non-rhetorical style meant as a vehicle to transmit scientific discoveries.

STYLE IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE STANDARDIZATION OF ENGLISH

The Ramist relegation of rhetoric to style and delivery ultimately “became moot” during the seventeenth century, as science overshadowed logic in the production of knowledge (Bizzell and Herzberg 792). In other words, scientific methods and empiricism pushed logic and reasoning back into rhetoric, and repositioned both philosophy and rhetoric as more appropriate to ethical, social, and political issues, where decisions relied not only on knowledge, but also persuasion. As a result, “The Ciceronian conception of rhetoric, which included all five classical canons . . . became once again the foundation of rhetorical study and remained so through the seventeenth and well into the eighteenth century” (Bizzell and Herzberg 792). Of course, the revitalization of Ciceronian rhetoric did not necessarily mean the return of rhetoric itself to public status. The return was accompanied by debates about the appropriateness of Ciceronian style for different types of discourse. Francis Bacon saw a plainer style more suited to most types of discourse. Bizzell and Herzberg describe this plainer, Senecan style:

The so-called Senecan style had arisen as an alternative to the Ciceronian and became popular during the seventeenth century. But the Senecan style is plain because it avoids stylistic display for its own sake, not because it rejects all verbal ornament and ingenuity. It favors long sentences, less symmetrical than the Ciceronian periods but still carefully structured; it resists Latin borrowings but does not avoid them altogether; and it certainly employs tropes, although it leans toward the less flamboyant of them. Bacon had reservations about this style, too, warning that it often strained after wit and weight that was not earned by the thought expressed. (794)

Debates about style recall earlier disagreements during Cicero's own time, between the proponents of Attic (plain), Asiatic (florid), and Rhodian (middle) styles. The evolution of the sciences also led to a strong desire for transparent language, a main goal of the British Royal Society, founded in 1660. Thomas Sprat, a prominent member of the society, associated stylistic language with confusion and obfuscation. In *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (1667), Sprat declares the society's intention to "reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in an equal number of words" (113).

The emerging scientists were unhappy with language as a mediator between the mind and reality, but seeing no alternative, they sought to strip language down so that it interfered as little as possible. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke directly acknowledges the problem of language, that "sounds have no natural connection with our ideas, but have all their signification from the arbitrary imposition of men" (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 817). This fundamental reality of language leads Locke and other advocates of scientific prose not in the direction of the sophists, who embraced contingencies between words and meanings, but toward a more Aristotelian ideal. Ultimately, Locke condemns "all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented" because they "are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats" (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 827). Scientific writing needed to be as devoid of artifice as possible, while endeavoring to cement the relationship between words and ideas.

Following Locke, Francis Bacon hoped to reform English based on his understanding of Chinese as "Characters Real, which express neither letters nor words . . . but things or notions; in insomuch as countries and provinces, which understand not one another's language, can nevertheless read one another's writing" (742). One of the most extreme positions during this era appears in Bishop Wilkins's 1668 *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophic Language*. Here, Wilkins outlines a symbolic language that directly represents reality completely and without metaphor, a project ultimately abandoned and later satirized in Jonathon Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

In the 1776 multi-volume treatise, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, George Campbell parts ways with classical rhetoric on many issues; he also formulates a three-part theory of usage that rejects the emerging prescriptivism and correctness.²¹ The second volume, “The Foundations and Essential Properties of Elocution,” turns to the emergent science of linguistics and descriptive grammar for this theory. He lays out three components of usage: reputability, nationality, and presentness. In other words, writers find a guide to crafting their style in what esteemed speakers and writers concur is appropriate (i.e., the speaking habits of the majority population of the nation) and what habits are actually present at a given time and place. Such a method as Campbell’s has no place for strict rules:

It is not the business of grammar, as some critics seem preposterously to imagine, to give law to the fashions which regulate our speech. On the contrary, from its conformity to these, and from that alone, it derives all its authority and value. For, what is the grammar of any language? It is no other than a collection of general observations methodically digested, and comprising all the modes previously and independently established, by which the significations, derivations, and combinations of words in that language are ascertained. (139–40)

Throughout Book II, Campbell urges against steadfast rules and judgments regarding all aspects of style, including issues of grammar, usage, and diction. Regarding figurative language, Campbell even anticipates twentieth century discussions of dead metaphors, advancing a line of thought that concludes in Book III, as he declares that

critics ought to show more reserve and modesty . . . in pronouncing either on the fitness or on the beauty of such as occur in ancient authors . . . [since] many words which appear as tropical to a learner of a distance age . . . may, through the imperceptible influence of use, have totally lost that appear-

21. Campbell’s theories on language fit into a larger reworking of rhetoric. Moving away from the five canons altogether, Campbell proposes a rhetorical method in two phases. In the first phase, a speaker should “excite some desire or passion in the hearers” and, in the second, “satisfy their judgment that there is a connexion between the action to which he would persuade them” and conclude with “the gratification of [that] desire” (927).

ance to the natives [everyday speakers], who consider them purely as proper terms. (299)

Hugh Blair valued style, but did not adopt a classical approach—even if his theories and pedagogies aim toward the same goal as Cicero and Quintilian—the moral rhetor. Although Bizzell and Herzberg refer to Blair as “the Quintilian of his time” (947), in terms of his stature and ethical approach to rhetoric, they acknowledge that Blair himself found *The Orator’s Education* overly systematic and “too concerned with . . . topics, arrangement, and figures” (Bizzell and Herzberg 948). For Blair, moral excellence was a prerequisite for eloquence, and these were achieved through education and exposure to “polite literature” (948). The insistence on polite literature and taste received criticism from Gregory Clark and Michael Halloran, in their essay in *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, for elevating poetry above the three domains of classical rhetoric: forensic, deliberative, and epideictic. Bizzell and Herzberg add to this perspective that Blair “may support excessively conservative aesthetic, moral, and political values” (948).²² Blair gave numerous lectures on figures of speech and kinds of style, as well as a handful on the history of eloquence. These are all collected in *The Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, appearing in 1783, the year Blair retired from teaching at the University of Edinburgh.

Linda Ferreira-Buckley and S. Michael Halloran’s introduction to the most recent edition of Blair’s lectures describes the immense popularity and influence on higher education in Europe and the US of these lectures. As they state, the lectures were “a powerful vehicle for introducing many eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century teachers, students, readers, and textbook writers to classical rhetoric” (xvi). The lectures influenced almost every textbook on rhetoric and writing published in the English-speaking world for the next century, including the first and second generation of college composition textbooks in the 1810s, and then again in the 1860s. The editors cite Winifred Bryan Horner’s assessment of Blair’s lectures as the “missing link” between classical rhetoric and “contemporary language studies,” including “North American composition” (qtd. in Buckley and Halloran

22. H. Lewis Ulman elaborates on this in his 1994 book *Things, Thoughts, Words, and Actions: The Problems of Language in Late Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory*.

xix). In essence, Blair applies precepts from the classical tradition to contemporary forms of English prose, such as letters and essays.

Blair may dismiss the classical tradition for its tendency to catalogue every single figure of thought and expression, but he borrows heavily from Cicero and Quintilian in his lectures. Teachers who have not read Blair will still recognize many of his prescriptions for style. His first lecture on style explains the importance of clarity, as it entails proper diction and usage, as well as purity. Much like Quintilian, Blair warns against borrowing words from other languages as well as coining new ones, maintaining that “such innovations are more hazardous, and have a worse effect” than their use in poetry, where he still advises sparing use (101). His lectures about sentence structure in style briefly touch on periodic and cut-off sentences, advising writers to alternate them for effect. The remaining chapters march through a list of rules about the appropriate use of pronouns, sentence cohesion and unity, superfluous and redundant language, parallel structure, and, of course, ending sentences with adverbs and prepositions. Blair’s subsequent lectures on style closely follow Quintilian in their definitions and illustrations of metaphor, and about figures such as hyperbole, personification, and antithesis. He then uses these as tools to analyze the styles of contemporary British authors that largely appeared in *The Spectator*, and classifies authors according to styles he identifies as simple, timid, vehement, verbose, concise, plain, flowery, and affected. If readers cannot already guess based on Blair’s principles described above, his preferences veer toward plain, elegant, and simple styles.²³

Richard Whatley does not make an especially unique contribution to style, though he is an important historical figure who discusses style. Bizzell and Herzberg describe Part III of his 1828 book, *Elements of Rhetoric* as “providing standard textbook advice on perspicuity and

23. The editors of Blair’s lectures make a curious argument about Blair’s position on pedagogical imitation, citing a nineteenth lecture in which he promotes the classical practice of imitation, and warns writers against the “servile imitation” of a single author (xliv-xlv). The editors distinguish Blair from Quintilian on the practice of imitation by citing a single line in *The Orator’s Education*, in which Quintilian remarks that he would be happy if he could imitate Cicero (10.2.25). Their reading of this passage goes against most scholarship on imitation that reads Quintilian as advising writers away from servile imitation, just as Blair does. The editors even concede this reading and, perhaps in their zeal for Blair, insist on what I have to see as a willful misinterpretation.

correctness” (1002). Whatley’s approach to style rejects Blair’s model of rhetoric and education based on literary style and taste, but follows Campbell in developing moral reasoning and evidence as a major component of rhetoric, meanwhile splitting from Campbell by resuscitating Aristotelian rhetoric (as a counterpart to logic and dialectic).

For Whatley, scientific inquiry discovered truth, and rhetoric sought the available means of persuasion while also deriving a different, but not antithetical, kind of truth from testimony (i.e., personal and religious experience). Thus, *Elements of Rhetoric* addresses working class students and those preparing for divinity school, situating religious texts as their own sources of truth that have little or no need for invention derived from the scientific inquiry that was becoming more integrated into school and college curricula in Europe, and eventually the US, during the nineteenth century.

Competing views on language as meaning itself or as merely a conveyer of meaning should be familiar by now, and this period represents a turn toward language as the transmission of ideas. Likewise, style became a matter of conformity for scientists as well as humanists such as Blair. These developments, especially Blair’s position on rhetoric and style, would shape the emergence of college composition in the US. This section’s discussion of Blair has already noted his influence on American college composition, and the next section explains exactly what happened to style and rhetoric in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

GUTTING THE CLASSICAL CANON: HARVARD AND THE NEW CURRICULUM, 1875–1940

The current status of style in public discourse, as well as in rhetoric and composition, has roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The theories and pedagogies developed during these decades had a formative effect on writing instruction for the next one hundred years, especially on the relationship of style to invention and grammar. Developments at elite universities such as Harvard did more than simply reduce rhetoric to a matter of ornamentation, as Ramus had done. Rhetorical education itself was replaced with a new emphasis on writing clear, grammatical prose. Although mechanical correctness had always been a part of the canon of style, it became the only component of style (and rhetoric) to survive this gutting of the classi-

cal curriculum. Alongside this shift to grammar, equally prescriptive instructional models emerged during this period on appropriate paragraph construction.

This period witnessed a dramatic shift away from classical rhetoric and style, and toward an emphasis on grammar and correctness, the influences of which are still tangible. These historical views are described in Albert Kitzhaber's *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850–1900*, as well as work by James Berlin, Sharon Crowley, and Robert Connors. Primary documents from this period are collected in John Brereton's *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875–1925*. The four key rhetoricians in the US during the late nineteenth century were John Genung, Adams Sherman Hill, Fred Newton Scott, and Barrett Wendell. Kitzhaber refers to these as the “Big Four.” Their views on theory and pedagogy were still partly classical: Connors points out that Genung “refused” to discuss punctuation in his rhetoric handbooks (17). Ultimately, all of them came to argue for the importance of instruction in clear, correct English over a classical curriculum based on oral declamations and education in Greek and Latin. One of the Big Four, Adams Sherman Hill, made reforms at Harvard that paved the way for the later, hyper-mechanization of writing during the 1920s and 1930s.

Historical work by Robert J. Connors describes this period as a “transition from emphasis on style and communicative effectiveness to primary emphasis on rule-governed mechanical correctness” (“Rhetoric of Mechanical Correctness” 13). While the study and teaching of style before the twentieth century usually included grammar and correctness, it had almost never been *only* concerned with these two aspects. Under Hill, Harvard manufactured a “literacy crisis” based on the mechanical mistakes in admission essays, and then created a full-year writing course that became a standard first-year requirement in 1885. As David Fleming notes in his 2011 book, *From Form to Meaning*, almost every major university had implemented a version of the required course by the turn of the twentieth century. Even institutions in the Midwest, such as the University of Wisconsin, created a course devoted to instruction in written English (Fleming 31). This type of college writing course remains so dominant, stylisticians assert, that it preempts most attempts to discuss style as anything other than mechanical correctness.

Teaching materials reflect this larger preoccupation with correctness that came to comprise all that college writing courses did. By 1910, students wrote themes, and the themes were almost exclusively corrected for grammar, clarity, spelling, and punctuation. In the essay “Handbooks: History of a Genre,” Connors traces the development of such materials as college composition handbooks—now a staple of contemporary writing classes—from the 1870s through the 1970s, and identifies the emergence of pedagogies that combine style and grammar in the early years of the twentieth century. According to Connors, precursors existed to the modern composition handbook, but handbooks did not begin appearing in a recognizable form, with their emphasis on rules and rote exercises, until Edwin C. Woolley’s 1907 *Handbook of Composition: A Compendium of Rules*, a text that listed more than three hundred precepts on grammar and style. In 1918, a revised edition appeared with simplified rules (one hundred, not three hundred) and more exercises.

Woolley’s book had a profound influence on writing instruction; not only was the book popular, but Woolley directed the first-year English course at the University of Wisconsin from 1909 to 1916 (Fleming 36), where he shaped the curriculum around weekly, 500-word themes, based largely on personal experiences, that underwent scrutiny for grammatical correctness and logical paragraph organization. Woolley’s handbook gave rise to competitors, the most significant being Garland Greever and Easley S. Jones’s 1918 *The Century Handbook of Writing*. Even after Woolley stepped down in 1916, the theme model “would appear at intervals over the next fifty years in UW’s Freshman English” (Fleming 36). Emphasis on the most prescriptive elements of style only strengthened over subsequent decades.

During the 1920s and 1930s, handbooks included only an impoverished version of rhetoric to accompany lists of mechanical rules and writing exercises. This trend culminated in John C. Hodge’s 1941 *Harbrace Handbook of English*, the handbook that served as “the model for all handbooks after it” (Connors 21). As Connors describes this period, “It was the point at which books that had essentially been tools for home reference became complete classroom texts, filled with lessons and exercises . . . a tradition that still continues today” (20). The first edition of the *Harbrace Handbook* contained thirty-four chapters, two thirds of which are devoted to mechanical issues such as sentence fragments, comma splices, proper use of semicolons, and proper use of

apostrophes. Each chapter contained a series of exercises asking students to identify and correct errors. Consider the second chapter, on sentence fragments:

Identify each fragment as a phrase, a subordinate clause, or a group of phrases and subordinate clauses. Correct the error (1) by including the fragment with the main clause, (2) by making the fragment into a sentence, or (3) by providing a main clause for the group of phrases and subordinate clauses. Use your judgment to determine the most suitable method of correction. Identify the two sentences that are complete and need no revision.

1. A fitting epitaph for John Brown, one of the most radical abolitionists before the Civil War, who was so obsessed by his one idea that he died fighting valiantly for it.
2. The success of an individual depends to a great extent upon mental capacity. The key to success being the brain.
3. Advertising serves two purposes. A means of displaying merchandise and an opportunity to add to the appearance of the building. (28–29)

This single exercise gives students thirty such fragments to correct. Other exercises in the chapter underscore the importance of verbs in complete sentences, directing students to fill in blanks in sentences with the appropriate verbs, identify and underline verbs in sentences, and do the same with nouns. These basic types of exercises span the entire book, underscoring Connors's point regarding what early composition textbooks taught as writing. More than fifty years later, it is not hard to find writing textbooks and manuals like the early *Harbrace Handbook* that use similar exercises, with a similar approach to writing as correctness.

Such historical considerations show at least one of the origin points of contemporary pedagogies that set up a somewhat exclusionary attitude toward style, dismissing or ignoring alternatives to the correctness model. Historical work may help teachers today understand that most of what is taught as style is rooted in early twentieth-century notions of what was important about writing instruction—not voice per se, but correctness and propriety. Therefore, contemporary college writing instructors may realize that they do not have to perpetuate ideas about style and writing now a hundred years old, nor must they

rely on textbooks that look new on the outside and yet subscribe to antiquated views, rather than keep up with advances in research on writing.

Connors's 1986 essay, "The Rhetoric of Mechanical Correctness" elaborates on how handbooks and textbooks led to the skill-and-drill culture of freshmen English in the 1930s, what James Berlin describes in *Rhetoric and Reality* as current-traditional. Speaking to the larger contexts and material conditions of the freshmen composition course, Connors portrays the changes occurring in the late nineteenth century as ones that "transmogrified the noble discipline of Aristotle, Cicero, Campbell, into a stultifying error hunt" (72). As the last two chapters have shown, classical rhetoricians did discuss correctness and clarity as requisites for style; however, style was not defined solely by these concerns, as it would be at the turn of the twentieth century in the US. As Connors states,

From the classical period up through 1860 or so, the teaching of rhetoric concentrated on theoretical concerns and contained no mechanical material at all. Usage and style were, of course, major areas of rhetorical consideration, but the traditional prescriptive advice in these areas assumed a student able to handle grammatical construction and to produce an acceptable manuscript with complete facility. . . . Such elementary skills as handwriting, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling might be critiqued by the professor of rhetoric, but officially they had no place in rhetoric throughout most of history. (79)

According to Connors, several things changed, resulting in the devaluing of the classical curriculum and the rise of correctness. One of the most important changes occurred on a cultural level: through the establishment of an American class system in the mid-1800s that led to renewed interest in grammar and pronunciation, one that contradicted earlier egalitarianism.

This preoccupation with correctness accompanied a larger "linguistic insecurity" (Connors 72) within US intellectual culture, an insight by Connors that is explored further by Bruce Horner, John Trimbur, and Paul Matsuda. This insecurity merged with movements in higher education to reform college writing instruction, an effort spear-headed by Adams Sherman Hill in the wake of unsettling stu-

dent performances on Harvard's entrance exams. In the 1870s, Hill redesigned the freshmen composition course to focus on writing themes, rather on than studying rhetoric and reciting classical texts. Composition teachers were subsequently inundated with papers to grade, so they turned even further away from the fusion of style and invention in rhetoric, and graded for correctness. Connors explains the methods and practices of writing instructors that grew out of these material conditions, such as the "Correction Card" or "Theme Card," and the notation systems that relied on symbols and abbreviations—all meant to compensate for teachers' workloads.

Brereton's history in *The Origins of Composition in The American College* places the first modern composition course at Harvard, as Connors does, arising from students' poor performance on the university's entrance examination. Brereton points out that the exam itself "did not reveal some long hidden weakness so much as supply Harvard with new, objective evidence to use in the effort to improve the secondary schools" that had been established largely to supply elite colleges with students, helping them meet their enrollment quotas (27). Among the historic documents gathered, Brereton includes an address by Hill to secondary teachers, urging instruction in mechanical correctness, and citing it as a primary reason for entrance exam failures.

The "New Curriculum" by Hill became dominant, as other colleges adopted Harvard's composition model. However, the curriculum did not become the model at *all* schools. If style came to represent complete adherence to rules under Hill at Harvard, other perspectives emerged that defined style beyond the correct sentence, as Fred Newton Scott did in emphasizing paragraphs as units of composition in the 1893 book, *Paragraph Writing*, used at the University of Michigan. Even more radical, John Genung at Amherst College conceived of style as the *liberation* from conventions that constrained the discoveries of truth and self. Brereton describes Genung's *The Study of Rhetoric in the College Course* (1877) as "the most thorough contemporary description of the changes that had overtaken rhetoric in the late nineteenth century by one of the most prominent thinkers about composition" (134). Genung states,

He [the college student] needs to know that writing is not juggling with words, not making ideas show off, but expressing the truth, plainly, directly, completely We cannot hope, indeed, to make finished authors: time fails for requisite prac-

tice A carefully written, conscientious college essay is stiff and self-conscious; the thought is meager and commonplace, the style is wooden . . . I believe there must be a more or less wooden period in all earnest authorship. (144–146)

To get through this wooden stage, Genung advises teachers to inspire literary spontaneity in students, to “deprecate anything that shows for intentional good writing, and, making a kind of ‘rattlin’ and roarin’ Willie’ of the student, to keep him slashing ahead, always fluent, if not always so cunning, until he happens to write something eminently racy and individual” (147). According to Genung, this method has little use for the classical tradition—from Aristotle through Blair and Whately. While Hill’s model ignores classical rhetoric to focus solely on mechanical correctness in English, here Genung dismisses the classical tradition because its taxonomical, technical descriptions of stylistic devices hampered the very spontaneity he wished to induce. In many ways, what Genung describes parallels what process theorists such as Elbow might say decades later, when touting the benefits of voice and freewriting. In short, both Genung and Elbow stress the importance of keeping students “slashing ahead” to avoid the stiff, wooden, and self-conscious style of student papers that try too hard to imitate academic prose.

The New Curriculum also treats style at other levels of discourse, namely the paragraph. Barrett Wendell, who became a professor at Harvard shortly after Adams Sherman Hill, delivered a lecture in 1890 on paragraphs, one of eight collected in a volume titled *English Composition*, in which he divides effective paragraphing into unity, mass, and coherence. Essentially, a paragraph should have a beginning, middle, and end in order to write with precision and force. The idea of coherence stems from Alexander Bain’s popular 1866 book, *English Composition and Rhetoric*, a book that was used to drill students in constructing orderly, deductive paragraphs with clear topic sentences, and to then proceed according to patterns of narration, description, or exposition.

Mike Duncan’s 2007 *College English* article, “Whatever Happened to the Paragraph?,” describes and analyzes a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century handbooks for their promotion of clear, simple, orderly paragraphs that must possess an internal consistency. These textbooks and guides define paragraphs as self-contained units that, almost by themselves, pile up into essays. To write well, then,

students had to write correct sentences that must be ordered into correct paragraphs. According to Duncan, even John Genung at Amherst College hands down a series of rules about topic sentences and proper ordering of sentences. As Duncan puts it, Wendell and Genung “were perhaps the greatest advocates of Bain’s prescriptive approach” (475).

A number of secondary sources provide alternative accounts of this period, with an emphasis on other sites of education and other disciplinary perspectives. These sources consider the mid-to-late nineteenth century with more attention to writing instruction outside the sphere of universities like Harvard, Yale, Amherst College, and Princeton. Not all of these histories provide an exact account of how issues of style were taught in relation to the other canons, but they create a space for future research about the dynamic between style and invention at non-elite institutions. Jessica Enoch’s 2008 *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* describes the civic roles women teachers claimed when educating freed slaves, Native Americans, and Mexican border-town citizens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. David Gold’s 2008 book, *Rhetoric at the Margins*, describes rhetorical education at a normal school, a women’s university, and a private black college, where the classical curriculum survived in spite of its displacement from large research universities. One professor described in Gold’s book, Melvin Tolson, was a fiery orator in the vein of Cicero who instilled the same love of words in his students; yet, he also made his students diagram sentences. The educators described in Enoch’s books often inhabit contact zones in which they negotiated multiple rhetorical conventions, languages, and grammars. If we are interested in an expansive understanding of style, these are important sources to consider, even if style is not an explicit topic in the historical work that currently exists.

A 2012 essay by David Gold on revisionist historiography describes many other projects, including: Thomas Miller’s *The Formation of College English* (1997) and *The Evolution of College English* (2011), a history of schools outside the purview of the Big Four schools; Jacqueline Jones Royster’s *Traces of a Stream* (2000), an account of African-American rhetorical education beyond higher education; Charles Paine’s *The Resistant Writer* (1999), a redemptive look at Adams Sherman Hill; and Patricia Donahue and Flesher Moon’s edited volume, *Local Histories* (2007), descriptions of other institutions that did not follow the Harvard model. Finally, Gold points readers to Jean Fergu-

son Carr, Stephen Carr, and Lucille M. Schultz's *Archives of Instruction* (2005), a study of composition handbooks from the nineteenth century that, as I see it, is a useful complement to Connors's work on these materials.

These developments during the late nineteenth century may have had the most direct impact on the current status of style in scholarship, textbooks, and instructional methods—not merely because it is the closest chronologically. This period in the history of style signals a shift to a climate of absolute rules contained in books that teachers still use, often unknowingly or even reluctantly, to regulate students rather than help them develop their own sense of style through experimentation with language.

This is not usually mean-spirited on the part of educators themselves, since writing in the “correct” style is viewed as a necessary step to a college degree and employment. In many colleges, writing instruction is a task taken on by graduate students, adjuncts, and other untenured faculty who often see the simple, straightforward guidelines and rules of style guides as a life-saver rather than as a straightjacket. No doubt, teaching style any other way requires a considerable deal of thought, planning, and individual time with students. It is even common for students to seek out easy-to-follow prescriptions on sentence and paragraph construction, and ignore the potential of images, sounds, and textures they can create through a wider toolbox of stylistic strategies.

The next three chapters give cause for optimism regarding the role of style in writing instruction by exploring a number of theories and pedagogies that are either gaining traction or renewed attention since the 1960s and 1970s—a period seen by contemporary scholars of style as a brief golden era in which rhetoric and composition shirked the burden of prescriptivism. By the mid-twentieth century, a number of pedagogies emerged as relevant to understanding style as decisions made at the local level that ultimately contribute to the overall tone or voice of a writer. These movements include generative rhetoric, alternate style, sentence-combining pedagogies, and rhetorical grammar. As the next chapter shows, contemporary scholars discuss the study and teaching of style as a series of choices made within sentences, paragraphs, and passages that culminate in distinctive prose.