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The Art and Craft of Editing for Style

All editors would say that they edit for "style," but most probably have different definitions of what that is and how they edit for it. Because these definitions tend to be either too simplistic and narrow-minded or inordinately complex and indefinable, "style" (as a term) has either been shunned from the field of rhetoric or become something ubiquitous and mysterious. Nevertheless, style has not disappeared. Even under a different name, the complexities inherent in writing with style and editing for style are of interest to all good editors. Even stylistic analysis, a method of analysis made popular in the 70s, is still used in any rhetorical analysis of the anatomy of a text. While the term "style" has gone in and out of fashion over the years, editors and writers alike have written about style, trying to determine what style is, how it can be utilized, and what the attributes of the "best" or "clearest" style are.

The editor's role in defining and understanding style impacts all aspects of the process of writing. The editor acts as intermediary between the author that writes the text (whether it is creative, technical, or otherwise) and the audience that reads the text. The purpose of the text and how best to express that purpose is determined by the author's, editor's, and audience's needs and wants, and the style of the text plays a vital role in how "effective" the text is at meeting those needs, wants, and purpose. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for editors to understand what style is in general, what their author(s) individual style is specifically, and what the best way to understand style more fully is in order to be an effective editor and to create an effective text. In order to support this thesis, I will review the current popular definitions of style; determine how these definitions have informed the editing of style; determine why editors need to understand what style is, in general, and what their author's style is, specifically; determine the most effective ways an editor (or anyone) can understand style; and advocate a redefinition of style that assists an editor's understanding of style and covers many of the ways style is defined today.

William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White are the most quoted, studied, and respected voices on the topic of style. *The Elements of Style* has been a guide to “good” style for writers and editors since its inception in 1919. Overall, the book gives easy to follow guidelines to making writing as clear, simple, and graceful as possible in order to communicate information. White insists that although “clarity is not the prize in writing, nor it is always the principal mark of a good style . . . since writing is communication, clarity can only be a virtue” (79).

Joseph M. Williams has a very similar goal in *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. William’s goal with this book is “to integrate research into the way that readers read . . . in order to create a system of principles that would simultaneously diagnose the quality of writing and . . . suggest ways to improve it” (ix). Williams focuses on ways to improve professional writing, in which he has most of his own writing experience.

Martin H. Manser has a similar goal to that of Williams and Strunk and White in *The Facts on File Guide to Style*. He gives the same sort of advice but includes more examples and details. He defines *style* as “a combination of admirable and attractive qualities” and *a style* as “a combination of distinctive and recognizable qualities or features” (6). This emphasis on style as “admirable” and “attractive” qualities is similar to Strunk and White’s understanding of style as “what is distinguished and distinguishing” (66). This is a common aspect of style that is re-asserted in all of the books that emphasize the importance of clarity and grace in writing.

William Zinsser emphasizes the importance of clarity in *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. He asserts that “[c]lutter is the disease of American writing” and the reason why writers “clutter” their writing with adjectives, adverbs, and elaborate word choice is in order to sound more important (7). He also writes that “clear thinking becomes clear writing” (9) and believes that “[a]nybody who can think clearly can write clearly” (x). One of the most interesting

aspects of his position on style is that he does not place a great deal of importance on writing for an audience because he says that writers should write for themselves (25).

Virginia S. Thatcher writes about the editor's role in style in *English Usage and Style for Editors*. She says that the editor's role is as "inspector of the total product," which includes "the arrangement of parts" and "the relationship of the parts to each other" (9). She continues, saying that the editor is a "finisher": "removing blemishes, trimming excesses, repairing defects, and adding missing pieces" (9). Her view of the editor's role is in the final stages of the process, rather than in the creation process of writing. She supports a strict set of guidelines for "good" writing, like the aforementioned writers, and asserts that "[g]rammar is good usage, and it reflects change in what is good usage" (4).

Leslie T Sharpe and Irene Gunther focus on the role of the editor in book editing in *Editing Fact and Fiction: A Concise Guide to Book Editing*. They assert that "editing . . . is an art as well as a craft" and state that editing is "the art and craft of shaping and refining a manuscript into a publishable book" (1). Unlike Thatcher, they see the editor having an important role in more than just the final part of the writing process; they see an editor playing a vital role in the shaping the totality of the text, not just inspecting it.

Lynne Truss is a strict believer in the rules of punctuation and focuses on the issues of "bad" punctuation in *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. She argues that punctuation aides clarity, and rules of punctuation must be followed correctly in order to maintain that clarity. She dismisses the argument that strictly adhering to prescriptive rules of punctuation promotes class discrimination because it "belittles the uneducated" (xxv). She argues that the rules of punctuation need to be strictly adhered to in all cases because without punctuation "there is no reliable way of communicating meaning" (20).

Tom Romano takes a more expressive approach to style in *Crafting Authentic Voice*. He is a teacher who encourages his students to break grammar rules when they are writing (77). He argues that this strategy of teaching students how to break grammar rules effectively, helps them develop what he calls “voice” (an *individual’s* style) (77). He states that “[l]earning how to effectively break the rules helps us learn awareness of rules” (85). He continues, “[a]s students learn to forge and manipulate language, their respect for the craft [of writing] increases” (85). He refers to style as a “way of writing” and voice as “qualities of writing that make an accessible, distinctive voice, which in turn makes for good reading” (24). He points out the importance of style and voice when he asserts that style and voice must contribute to the meaning of the text, “when they are just for show—that’s bad writing” (85).

Anne Curzan discusses the way teachers of grammar and students should face the subject of prescriptive versus descriptive grammar in “Says Who? Teaching and Questioning the Rules of Grammar.” She makes the point that many of the rules of grammar are highly debatable, often obscure, and suspect of class bias. She argues that writers, teachers, and students should not be overly concerned with “correctness” in writing because it does not assist in the formation of ideas that is required of good writing. Correctness, while admirable, needs to be the secondary concern of those who are writing. She argues, like Romano, for a descriptive approach to grammar that teaches students about Standard American English in a way that is conducive to creativity in writing.

Ben Yagoda takes a similarly open view of style in *The Sound on the Page: Style and Voice in Writing*. He states that style is “how” the writer writes (xi). He argues that “style in the deepest sense is not a set of techniques” but rather “something essential about [the writer]” (xvii). He takes issue with Strunk and White’s position on style because he argues that their definition of style is reductive (xx). He also argues that style is a form of delivery that needs to be redefined in order to be better understood.

Paul Butler advocates for a new understanding of style in *Out of Style: Reanimating Stylistic Study in Composition and Rhetoric*. He argues that a redefinition of style and “reanimation of stylistic study” will assist in the writing process and analysis of writing (65). He explains how stylistic study has been labeled an archaic tool of current-traditional rhetoric based on a misunderstanding of style as grammar and clarity (65). Butler focuses on the ways style can be seen as an important aspect of invention and stylistic study can be seen as a productive tool in studying the rhetoric in the process of composition.

Paul Simpson’s *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students* serves to help students (as well as writers, editors, or lovers of language) understand what stylistics is and what it can do for writing, reading, and analysis. He explains that stylistic analysis is a “method of interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language,” and that it is a helpful tool in analysis because “the various forms, patterns, and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text” (2). In the section “Style as Choice,” Simpson writes about the many ways stylistic decisions can affect the interpretation of a text.

Defining style

Each writer and editor has their personal views on style: what it is, whom it concerns, and how it manifests itself in a text. The views of style that were presented in the literature review are all from different perspectives: different experiences with writing, concerns with writing, and goals for writing. While some see style as a set of rules that need to be followed in order to communicate clearly, others view style as how the author expresses the text in order to create and affect the interpretation of meaning.

The most prevalent and popular views on style referenced above, Strunk and White, Williams, Truss, among others, state that the goal of writing is to make language as clear and graceful

as possible. They argue, although style is based on the individual, the goal of writing (especially in professional and technical writing) is to use as clear and simple language as possible (Williams xv). They state that clarity, above all else, is the most effective way to communicate through writing (Strunk and White 79). Each view has its own specific examples of what “clarity” means, but all generally agree on a number of pieces of advice: use an economy of words, use active verbs, do not use passive constructions, do not use nominalizations, use “figurative” language sparingly, and correctness is the key to clarity.

Strunk’s and White’s *The Elements of Style* is the most prevalent of these style books. They are the most famous for giving advice that is easy to follow in the form of commands: “Do not break sentences in two” (7), “Use the proper case of pronoun” (11), “Put statements in positive form” (19). Most of the advice in this book is simple grammatical correctness that no one would disagree with. However, each section includes pieces of advice that are simply matters of stylistic choice. As Ben Yagoda says in *The Sound on the Page*, “[referring to Strunk and White] [t]hey purport to be talking about ‘style,’ but they are really advocating a particular style” (xix). The same goes for Joseph M. Williams in *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. He focuses on the needs of an audience, and he is mostly concerned with an audience that is reading for information. He advocates a focus on the audience and how their knowledge affects “clarity”—how the writer can anticipate this knowledge and write accordingly (xv). Williams, however, makes it clear in the beginning that his experience and primary concern is in professional and technical writing. Both of these style guides have a specific style in mind that they label “good style”—not style in general.

Martin H. Manser in *The Facts on File Guide to Style* has a similar purpose of clarity: “the qualities that constitute good writing and style for the purposes of this book are clarity, simplicity, elegance, vigor, and variety” (8). He purports that “[t]here are certain qualities common to all good style . . .,” and those are the aforementioned qualities. William Zinsser in *On Writing Well* has a more

open view of style when he says that “style is organic to the person doing the writing . . .” (19) and recommends being yourself in the writing process (25). But he also states that “clutter is the disease of American writing” (7) and that the principles of good writing are in verb choice, syntax, and clarity (19). These style guides emphasize the importance of clarity in writing more than anything else. Neither deal with the rhetorical situations that could necessitate other stylistic choices. In effect, this turns the editor’s role into editing for clarity, not style.

Virginia S. Thatcher in *English Usage and Style for Editors* takes on style from the editor’s perspective when she writes about “faulty usage” versus “good usage” (4). Her position is one of an editor whose role is to assess the final product and remove “blemishes,” trim “excess,” and repair “defects” (9). Both Zinsser and Thatcher see the editor’s role as correcting grammar, not necessarily participating in style; it is the author’s job to create a consistent style, the editor is simply there to make it consistent. These definitions force the editor into the role of “corrector.” Lynne Truss’s *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* also states that correctness is the key to clarity because punctuation aids clarity, and that punctuation is “a courtesy designed to help readers to understand a story without stumbling” (7). Even though she admits that “in some matters of punctuation there are simply right and wrongs; in others, one must apply a good ear to good sense,” this is problematic because it implies that there is a “good sense” and a “bad sense.” It forces editors to ask, what is “good sense” and who determines it?

Although all of the language theorists, writers, and editors mentioned above would agree that style is more than ornamental and is connected to meaning, invention, and knowledge production, they are overly concerned with clarity. That is, while they define style in terms that allow the author a voice, the author’s voice must follow certain rules in order to be considered a “good” or “clear” voice. They advise writers and editors to follow a long and sometimes conflicting list of DOs and DON’Ts, but make sure to tell them that they can break these rules *every once and a*

while, for the sake of art in writing. But this little bit of leeway is not enough to allow for all complex rhetorical situations. If style is part of invention, it can create knowledge and meaning and expresses the individual. It is simply not enough to say break the rules every once in a while when style is meant to express the unique rhetorical purpose of the text and individual writing the text.

Leslie T Sharpe and Irene Gunther in *Editing Fact and Fiction* view the editor's job in a different way. They assert that book editing "is the art and craft of shaping and refining a manuscript into a publishable book" (1). Even in nonfiction they state that "the editor works to clarify an author's words and strengthen the organ of his ideas . . ." (43). They also advocate "thinking like a writer" and knowing the writer's style inside and out in order to best edit for style. Sharpe and Gunther help the editor to be seen as part of the writing process, not just someone who comes in at the end and corrects grammar. The editor is an important part of the process of forming a consistent style that engages the author's audience, and it is important to acknowledge the many ways editors can affect style through their editing.

Tom Romano's descriptive grammar approach in *Crafting Authentic Voice* encourages the use of incorrect grammar, structure, and other stylistic choices in order to assist in all rhetorical possibilities. He even suggests that writers use figurative language, rather than suggesting using less figurative language, like almost all of the advice towards the goal of clarity suggests (Romano 176). In *The Sound on the Page* Ben Yagoda also advocates a style that is more about creating a strong voice than it is about communicating clear information. He suggests, among other advice, that the "simple" word is not always the best word because a more complex word could "convey a nuance" that the simple word could not (Yagoda 37). Also, it is not as easy as the style guides make it seem to identify the "simple" words over the "formal" words (whose definition of these terms are we using?). And, the words the author chooses depend on the rhetorical situation of the text. If the writer only wants to convey how to operate a machine, "simple" words are the most appropriate,

but when the writer wants to convey complex emotion, thoughts, or ideas, the simplest words are not always the most appropriate.

To counteract Truss's prescriptive approach to grammar, Anne Curzan's article "Says Who?" points out the countless disagreements about what is considered "ungrammatical." Her position is one of a teacher who is interested in discussing the ways issues of grammar are often classists and are used to undercut the uneducated and underprivileged (873). It is important here that while she admits that there are many rules that grammarians and teachers agree on strongly, there are countless more that they do not agree on (873). These issues are not the most important aspect of the writing process: although grammar should be taught, it should be taught descriptively and open to change. The importance to any editor of style is in how they treat the writing given to them: whether they "correct" it scrupulously according to a specific style guideline, no matter the context, or they discuss these choices with the writer to determine their rhetorical possibilities.

In *Out of Style*, Paul Butler advocates style as invention. He states that "style is intentional" because it is inseparable from meaning: any change in word, tone, or audience will affect the text's meaning and the way the text is remembered (56). The style of a text affects and is affected by the readers' and the writers' knowledge; writers invents new knowledge beyond the literal meaning of the text with their style. The style, tone, and word choice of a text evoke emotions which affect the meaning of the text and how the reader remembers that meaning. An author creates more than just a story by the stylistic choices she makes; she creates a way of remembering the text through an evocation of emotions. Inventional style allows for the many rhetorical purposes of a text and emphasizes the ways in which language can be manipulated in infinite ways to evoke emotion, memory, and meaning: "[s]tyle, then, is important because it conveys emotion, enriching meaning beyond denotation to include connotation and nuance" (Butler 146).

Editing for style

These definitions of style have greatly affected the way editors have edited for style. The more popular and narrow views of style that focus almost exclusively on clarity, while being very easy tools for beginning writers and writers who have issues with clarity, have had an adverse effect on style that is focused on the author's voice, the rhetorical situation, and style as invention. Why, then, is there such an emphasis on clarity in the attributes of "good writing"? And, what impact does this have on editors, all of whom edit for style?

Strunk and White have been praised by writers, editors, and teachers for their straightforward and easy to follow guide to style. They define style as "concerned with what is correct and acceptable" and "what is distinguished and distinguishing" (66). With this definition, and with their advice for authors to keep themselves in the background (84), they are actually defining a specific kind of style, one which privileges the information in the text rather than a play with language, deeper meaning, or other rhetorical possibilities: "the writing exists solely to serve the meaning, and no trace of the author . . ." (Yagoda xx). As Yagoda points out, "[t]hey define [style] almost completely in negative terms, as an absence of faults . . ." (xx). Their goal is "transparent prose" (Yagoda xx). There are, however, good reasons for this: they deal with the common mistakes of poor writing; style is a very difficult subject to teach and define; and it is hard to separate content from style, and therefore difficult to analyze (Yagoda xxiii). Their style guide is an attempt to rename style in a specific way in order to make it easily defined and analyzed. A solid definition of style is beneficial to any editor who is concerned with editing for style.

The issues with defining style this way are that it makes "editing for style" a narrow pursuit. If all an editor does is correct according to the advice in Strunk and White's style guide, the editor does not have an influential role in the writing process. They are also not allowed to assist the writer in the forming of their own style, because this is unimportant and irrelevant: authors are supposed to

be “in the background,” and their style is spelled out in black in white in a book. Butler tries to fight against this definition of style as nothing more than correct grammar and an economy of words. He argues that “clarity” is too vague of a term to be an attribute of so-called good writing and that a transparent language is a misnomer because no language is transparent (51). That some words and ways of structuring a sentence are clearer than others may be generally true, but this terminology becomes problematic when an editor must consider the specifics of the audience. The perception of a clear language depends on the audience, situation, and writer. The “clearest” language depends on the purpose of the text and the purpose for reading the text.

Clarity gains emphasis because it is a seemingly simple solution to the complex problem of communicating ideas. Clarity seems like an easy concept: write as few common words as possible using active verbs and the meaning of your sentences should be clear. Strunk and White express this simplicity in less than one hundred pages. The purpose of this style of writing is to convey the information in the sentence without confusing the audience. If the sentence is clear, the audience will understand the sentence. It is necessary for the editor to know who this audience is and what it is it finds clear. If the project is a manual or users’ guide, the audience is easily identifiable, the users of the product; their needs are also relatively easy to find out with user testing of the product and its guide. However, what if the audience is not as easy to identify? Even in the cases of a manual or user guide, language can never be clear enough to please everyone. Everyone has different perceptions of clear and unclear. Some may not understand basic manual instructions due to language or cultural differences; some may not be able to decipher poetry for the same reason.

From the most informational to the most creative forms of writing, there is no way to identify one clear style because style is context specific. Creative writers may follow some of the basic principle of clarity and correctness (determining and throwing out needless words, rephrasing sentences so that the verb is active, and correcting grammar errors that were not on purpose)

because these principles work for their particular rhetorical situation. Here, the editor is in the position of helping the author understand their rhetorical situation; they must help the writer identify their audience and decide what style would be most appropriate, depending on audience, purpose, context, and other rhetorical issues: “[c]rucial in any writing circumstance is audience awareness . . .” (Romano 85). If the writer’s purpose is to tell a story that is straightforward and has a clear purpose, the advice on clarity is very relevant. Some of the rules given for clarity’s sake, however, do not apply to the writer or their audience. If a writer’s purpose is to be less “clear” and more “complex” or has the rhetorical aim of saying more than what is said (beyond literal meaning), clarity is not the most important issue. They can certainly still use some of the advice on clarity, but, like Romano advocates, breaking these rules often has a greater impact than stringently following them (85).

For example, Manser, Strunk, and White give the advice to “use figurative language sparingly” (Manser 160). This advice is confusing not only because all language is figurative, but because it shouldn’t concern writers who use figurative language as the basis of their writing. For example, if a writer wants to express an idea that is problematic, making that idea more complex through the use of literary devices and figurative language is the most appropriate tool to use. Also, it is important to question whether or not figurative language truly complicates a text. Figurative language (or figures of speech: metaphor, simile, irony, etc.) has the misnomer of being more confusing (less easily understood) than literal language. When an idea is complex, as the themes, lessons, and purposes of creative writing often are, sometimes simple words, active verbs, and literal use of language will not express the idea fully. Some theorists argue that metaphors are the closest way to the vivid complexity of an idea: “[m]etaphorical language bridges that gap between fact and emotion, between vivid detail and abstract idea” (Romano 176). Our brains make sense of ideas that are not easily understood through the use of figurative language; metaphors compare that which we

do not understand to concrete objects that are more easily understood. Therefore, figurative language is perfectly appropriate in a context where an idea is bigger than any literal words and needs to go beyond them into a more complex meaning.

Creativity, however, is not simply a product of fiction and poetry. Professional and technical writing has more elements of creativity than most realize. Although it is always recommended that writers with the rhetorical purpose of informing and instructing should mainly follow these rules, often the rhetorical purpose of a technical or professional text goes beyond simple and clear communication to inform. There will be ideas that need to be clearly communicated, but there are not always *just* direct and clear ideas to be communicated. The issues that technical and professional writers and editors address are often more complex, and they need more complex modes of language to express them. Here, editors must help the writers determine the most appropriate style for the rhetorical situation because professional and technical writers have just as wide a variety of rhetorical situations as any other kind of writer.

The advice about clarity is not easily disputed because it can apply to all genres of writing. Many of the common problems beginning and even experienced writers have are in the areas of correctness, usage, and structure; *Elements of Style*, along with most other books on the subject, gives advice in those areas. To anyone looking to improve those areas of their writing, these books are invaluable. For any editor looking to assist a writer in these areas, the value is incalculable. Nevertheless, clarity is only a small aspect of the rhetorical choices an editor and writer must make in order to express the purpose of a text in the most effective way possible. The most effective means to do this does not always necessitate and emphasis on clarity.

Certainly, all of those editors and writers giving advice on clarity, grace, and correctness in writing contest that there are “appropriate moments” in which a writer can break with convention and correctness. However, they make it clear that breaking away from conventional style should

only happen in fleeting moments, or, as Martin Manser states in *Guide to Style*, referring to figurative language, “it is usually best to reserve an image for a point in your argument or story where it can act as a kind of clincher, expressing something . . . decisively” (160). He continues, “[t]reat it as something that temporarily stops the show” (160). Then, of course, he recommends that the writer moves on to “plain and literal” language (163). When clarity of style becomes the sole purpose of a text, there are copious rhetorical possibilities that are ignored that need to be brought back in order for an editor to understand style in all its rhetorical complexities. These rhetorical possibilities need to be acknowledged if an editor hopes to understand their author’s individual style.

Finding style

An editor needs to understand what style is in order to be able to edit for style. The editor is part of the *process* of writing, not just part of the production phase of a text. If the job of an editor is throughout the process of writing, and they are meant to assist their author in identifying the rhetorical situation, they must understand their author’s style and the style that is most appropriate for that rhetorical situation. If an editor can identify these elements, they can assist the author in making the text more effective for their audience.

Whatever the author’s purpose for writing a text, the stylistic choices that are made in the process are of vital importance to whether or not a reader will find it effective. An “effective” text is one that serves the purpose of the text and/or the reader, whether the purpose is to inform, instruct, provoke thought, move, confuse, horrify, or simply entertain. The style of the text is of vital importance to engaging the audience and fulfilling its purpose. To editors who want their author’s text to sell or, at least, be effective, editing for style is the most important part of their job. If an editor does not understand these elements of the writing process and ultimate product, they will not be an effective editor.

So, how does an editor go about determining their author's style and the appropriate style for the rhetorical situation? Sharpe and Gunther advocate that editors think like writers when they are editing a text (43). This means that the editor must get to know how their author thinks about and approaches their writing in order to determine the author's style inside and out. Yagoda states that effective style can be learned through writing and "active reading": "reading widely and slowly, and aloud if possible" (228). He suggests that the reader "[i]solate some paragraphs, sentences or words where your writers sounded least like themselves and most like themselves" (228). This process would help an editor to understand an author's style, and understand how best to keep that style consistent and purposeful: "[t]he heart of a good style is consistency . . . [w]ithout consistency, there is no style" (Thatcher 103). The process by which an author writes and the purpose for which they write is something that their editor needs to understand to be able to decipher their author's style.

Butler argues that reanimating stylistic study can create better writers and more effective editors:

First, it would offer composition scholars, teachers, and students access to and facility with a rich array of language resources that would allow them to gain expressive ability, eloquence, clarity, precision, and other valued "writerly" qualities. Secondly, a recuperation and reconsideration of style studies could aid writers with the invention of ideas. (65)

Often referred to as or renamed "rhetorical analysis," stylistic analysis is the rhetorical analysis of sentence level choices of the author(s). It analyzes the word choices, usage, structural choices, and other choices the author(s) makes (consciously and unconsciously) for the rhetorical effectiveness of a text. Butler argues that stylistic analysis of others' writing helps a writer/editor understand the rhetorical possibilities of a text because making rhetorical choices is important in the process of writing (65). The study of the sentence level rhetorical choices made by writers can help writers and

editors to understand the ways they can use stylistic choices for the rhetorical purposes of a text.

The ability to perform stylistic analysis is vital to the role an editor plays in the creation and improvement of a text because stylistics is an “inherently illuminating method of analytic inquiry . . .” (Simpson 3).

Readers, writers, and editors can use stylistic analysis to understand what a text means as well as improve their own or others’ writing. Among other things, figures of speech that are often used for rhetorical purposes (e.g. metaphor, irony, simile, etc.) are primarily stylistic devices, and they can be studied for their rhetorical purposes and effects. Stylistic analysis is a valuable tool when an editor is interested in finding out more about style in general as well as an author’s individual style. Although it is not necessary for an editor to be completely practiced in stylistic analysis, it is important that they are aware of the rhetorical reasons for using figures of speech, breaking with conventional rules of grammar, and other stylistic choices in a text. One of the ways an editor can identify their author’s style, however, is by being well-versed in stylistic analysis. This skill will help an editor who has to work with many authors on the same project and needs to create a cohesive style among them or while working with multiple authors where they do not have a great deal of time to have detailed discussions with the author about their process and style.

Redefining style

In order for stylistic analysis to be performed, an easily analyzable definition of style needs to be created. This redefinition of style is also important in order to incorporate multiple style guides and be able to identify guides that are concerned with specific styles rather than styles in general. But, one must ask if this easily analyzable definition is even possible, considering the wide variety of views on style.

Due to the many style guides that focus almost exclusively on clarity of style, style has been removed from the area of rhetoric in order to facilitate a simple, easy definition of style: “one popular myth in particular—that of clarity—has controlled the discussion of and shaped the conversation about style in the field for many years” (Butler 21). Style as clarity and correctness is focused on a transparent language that only communicates information. The style guides that emphasize clarity and correctness above all else do so at the detriment of a definition of style that is more than these qualities. What they are advocating is, as Yagoda pointed out, a particular kind of style that is meant for particular rhetorical situations, not a definition of style as a whole.

Butler makes an attempt to explicitly redefine style as “the deployment of rhetorical resources, in written discourse, to create and express meaning” (3). He continues, “style involves the use of written language features as habitual patterns, rhetorical options, and conscious choices at the sentence and word level” (3). This definition opens up many possibilities for the study and implications of style. It turns style from strict rules about correctness, clarity, and grace into a large breadth of rhetorical possibilities that can be studied, used, and manipulated for the rhetorical purposes of the author and the editor. Butler focuses style in the sentence level rhetorical decisions because this allows him put his definition in concrete terms. When style became more ubiquitous, it is more difficult to pin it down and study for rhetorical purposes. Especially for the benefits of editors, it is helpful for style to be easy to analyze. When style is strictly defined as sentence level rhetorical decisions, that is where an editor can focus her attention in a text.

Nevertheless, this definition is also problematic. Style can also refer to larger rhetorical decisions about structure and organization, and even define all rhetorical decisions as the manifestation of style. What about the issues of structure, organization, and theme? If style only exists at the sentence level, is it important to use the same term when referring to the larger rhetorical decisions? No, it is certainly not vital for the definition of style to include these aspects of

writing; but, it is important to ask what makes these larger decisions different. When editors review a text, there is always a rhetorical position that must be considered. Whether it is the position of simply wanting to inform the audience about a subject, to instruct an audience how to use a product, or to tell the audience a story, there must always be a purpose; whether or not the writer is aware of that rhetorical purpose or the reader gives it purpose, the editor must be aware of all possibilities. The rhetorical decisions made in the text, from the overall structure of the text down to the tiniest word, need to be considered from this position. If the sentence and word level rhetorical decisions are considered style, why are the overall theme and structure rhetorical decisions not? It is an arbitrary distinction that only causes confusion when editors and writers must make rhetorical decisions about structure that affect and determine the rhetorical decisions made about each word and sentence. If both are made from the same rhetorical position, they should be made under the term of style.

The goal is to create a definition of style that satisfies as many rhetorical situations as possible. If one were to simply adjust Butler's definition of style slightly, it may be easier for an editor to define style as widely as possible but still be able to use it in the process of analysis. In order to keep the definition of style in a realm of analysis that will concern editing for style, Butler's definition could be changed to that which "involves the use of written language features as habitual patterns, rhetorical options, and conscious choices at the *structural*, sentence and word level" (3). The addition of that one word makes a big difference to the possibilities of editing for style. An editor can define style, define her author(s) style(s), and effectively edit for style with this definition without having to subscribe to an excessive list of DOs, DON'Ts, and SHOULDN'Ts. With this definition of style the creative, innovative, and intentional possibilities of style are infinite and all-encompassing. With this style, editors can feel confident that they have an important role in the

process of writing when they edit for style because the *art* and *craft* of editing for style will be recognized.

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