

Seductive

ACADEMIC WRITING

AMUSE AND PROVOKE write like a speaking person

care about your reader

tell stories TALK TO YOUR READERS USE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

PLAY MUSIC IN PROSE personify abstractions

project your personality

Danyal Freeman

Seductive Academic Writing

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By

Danyal Freeman

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By Danyal Freeman

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For my parents

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PART I:

WHY WRITING WITHOUT FIGURES OF SPEECH IS LIKE COOKING BLINDFOLDED

CHAPTER ONE

A CORONER INVESTIGATES

But away with these figures of speech: they are troublesome to manage, and have been worn to rags. Unhappily, there is no such thing as speaking—nor even thinking—without such figures.

—Jeremy Bentham

When you hear grammatical terms such as metonymy, metaphor and allegory do they not seem to refer to some rare, exotic tongue? Yet they are categories which apply to the chatter of your chambermaid.

—Montaigne

Dead Academic Writer

Some years ago, a corpse wearing the toe tag D.A.W was trolleyed into a morgue. The coroner investigated. From acquaintances of the deceased, the coroner determined D.A.W was the person they nicknamed Dead Academic Writer. From his doctor, the coroner discovered D.A.W had suffered from the degenerative disease "academese".

"What are its symptoms?" asked the coroner. The doctor motioned toward a solemn shelf of medical handbooks. "The disease has many complications. Eventually patients arrive at hospital displaying no vital signs. The body of a dead academic writer shuffles like a zombie. It's conscious but has no pulse, no rosy cheeks, no warm touch. Its voice makes sounds but speaks no sense. Its limbs move but lack gait, purpose and direction. The dead academic writer's story is like Dorian Gray's. He spent his youth reading and telling beautiful stories, but then he learned academic writing at university. At first imperceptibly, then sedulously in print, he learns and applies the bad moral habits of academese. To behold his portrait in the attic is to see the horrors of academese. Relatives of terminal academese patients often request DNR—do not resuscitate", concluded the doctor.

The coroner summoned many experts to testify at an inquest. Doctors James (1899, 1920), Mencken (2010) and Orwell (2002) agreed the

disease of academes was first diagnosed as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth. Next the coroner questioned Living Academic Writers. She wondered why these L.A.Ws developed immunity to academes. Doctor Howard Becker (2007) attributed his good writer's health to his practice of writing like a speaking person and to pouring into his prose an elixir called "creativity". The coroner couldn't trick him into revealing the potion's mystery ingredients but, in an unguarded moment, he let slip that all good writing campaigns against cliché (Amis, 2002). Mr. William Zinsser (1995) attributed his writer's health to his belief that although writers work in institutions, they resist the bad writing disease by refusing to write like institutions. "You mean L.A.Ws write like living people?" asked the coroner. Zinsser agreed. Orwell agreed. The witnesses all agreed.

"Is it a reasonable conjecture to which you might assent that a writing style that is more, shall we say, 'literary' rather than one to which the name 'academic' is put could, when used appropriately, enable the vaccination of writers against academes?" mused the coroner to the witnesses. This time they disagreed. But only after pausing to translate the question into plain English. Some eminent linguists and like-minds testified they had prescribed a more literary academic writing medicine for years (Carter, 2004, 2014; Carter & Nash, 1990; Lanham, 2007; Wilbers, 2014). But their medicines were mocked by other eminent linguists and like-minds. When pressed, the dissenters conceded *Dorian Gray* was a splendid novel, but they insisted literariness belongs in literature, not in linguistics and certainly not in academic writing (Fowler, 1989; Fowler, 1971; Strunk & White, 2000). They maintained academic writing is about content and not flowery, literary stuff like style. "Facts! Facts! Facts!" contested a cantankerous witness called Mr. Gradgrind (Dickens, 1983).

Experts on academes next took the witness stand. Professors Sword, Pinker and Billig agreed academes was now in epidemic and vouched for the heartiness of the medications they had prescribed for it. Controversially, they claimed academes was not a degenerative disease, but curable. "Is it heretofore the categorical contention of your testimonials that your medications have the efficacy in the fullness of time for the restoration of the patient D.A.W to his former youthful vigour?" enquired the coroner. Would that the professors had only nodded. Instead, cursed by their learning, they dissected the coroner's question. "Legalese. Too many nouns and too few verbs. Too many polysyllabics. Too wordy. Too pompous", they were heard to mumble.

Rallying to rescue her reputation, the coroner challenged their claim that academes was curable. "Did you not write that academic writing

'stinks'?" (2014b) she demanded of Professor Pinker. "Did you not write that stylish academic writing is an 'oxymoron'?" (2012a, p. vii) she demanded of Professor Sword. "Did you not write that the likelihood of social scientists writing stylishly has all the momentum of 'whispers in the wind'?" (2013, p. 211) she demanded of Professor Billig. But before they could reply, the coroner rose and announced the inquest would convene tomorrow.

The final session of an inquest begins with a summing up of evidence, but this coroner began otherwise. The inquest had determined D.A.W died of complications of academese, but every coroner prefers an exact cause of death. The coroner wondered if she had overlooked any causes. So, atypically, she addressed the open court: "If anyone here assembled has the capability to offer testimony for the demonstration of just other cause of explanation for the decease of D.A.W let him or her identify himself or herself to the court at the present moment so that they may produce witness testimony before the judgment of the coroner is to be delivered". Pinker winced at the coroner's grammar gaffes. Sword grimaced at her verbosity. Billig frowned at the jargon, but they held their tongues this time. Silence descended. Then the coroner spotted a raised arm.

A snowy haired gentleman shuffled forward to present himself. Everyone stared. Some snickered. He looked as ancient as a Roman bust and dressed like one, too. Clutching his toga to his chest with a marbled and splintered hand, he hastened on in his leather sandals, making good time for a polycentenarian. Beckoned, at last, into the witness stand, the coroner's clerk asked him to identify himself. "Please call me Doctor Q", he requested in a voice that filled the court with a familiar yet forgotten accent. A stickler for decorum, the clerk insisted the witness state his full name, address and business. "I am Marcus Fabius Quintilianus from Hispania, which I believe you call Spain". He coughed and went on. "And I wish to speak of style". He coughed again. "Would you like us to give you a glass of water?" solicited the coroner. "No, I would like you to listen to a point of rhetoric", riposted Doctor Q, "since I see none of you has read my book" (Quintilian, 1920).

Thinking that the testimony of this superannuated eccentric might lighten the load of the inquest, the coroner consented. "True it is D.A.W suffered from academese", announced Doctor Q. "But he could have lived long and prospered", he added, recalling a catchy phrase from a TV series featuring a wise elder statesman in a blue nylon one-piece with a bad wig, who made weird hand gestures. The coroner asked: "So is it heretofore and moreover the contention of your testimony that..." but broke off, catching the professors rolling their eyes again. "I mean, you believe academese is

curable?" corrected the coroner. "All bad communications are curable", contended Doctor Q. "I show it in my book, but sadly history remembers only those who write things first. We Romans don't much care for the Greeks", he added, "but, boy, that guy Aristotle knew a thing or two about seduction...and logic and philosophy and poetics and biology and linguistics and physics and rhetoric and aesthetics—damn that smartass Aristotle!"

"Why has the inquest not heard from this Aristotle?" asked the coroner of the other experts. Buttocks clenched seats. Mouths became dry. Perspiration trickled itchily down sticky spines. The experts had all heard of Aristotle, but few had read his most persuasive book (1926). And none had read Doctor Q's book. Doctor Q continued: "Academese thrives because academic writers aren't trained in the art of persuasion, the rhetoric of argument, the canon of style—seduction, in a word". "New age quackery!" yelled Mr. Gradgrind. "Charlatan!" shouted a corpus linguist. "Mountebank!" shouted a systemic functional linguist.

"The witness will be heard!" commanded the coroner. Leaning closer to her favourite healing crystal, she invited Doctor Q to say more about seduction. He went on: "Whatever the communicative act—television shows about people boldly going where no man has gone before or academic writing about camel dung consistency—all communicators must seduce. Content and style are not separate, but yin and yang" (Blanshard, 1954)—Doctor Q liked this modern Chinese philosophy. "The patient D.A.W died from lack of yang. He never cared for his readers so he never attended to the art of seduction, perhaps because he never studied it. Or perhaps he did but thought it didn't matter. Or perhaps his teachers told him it was sappy literary stuff. Or perhaps he couldn't be bothered. He neglected his readers and so he died of neglect. I wish I could have cured him—and got to him before Aristotle".

Now the coroner took interest. Moving still closer to her healing crystal, and regretting having left at home her essential oils, she requested Doctor Q demonstrate seductive academic writing. "Consider a topic that bores you but interests its writers", suggested Doctor Q. "Maths!", volunteered the coroner. "Very well", he replied. "Now my task is to make you feel my enthusiasm for maths. I'll start by writing about it as a human being and not as a maths textbook". "Hear! Hear!" shouted Mr. Zinsser. "I'll also write with freshness and creativity". "I concur", shouted Doctor Becker—he, too, was a Trekkie. "But most of all", concluded Doctor Q, stretching a cliff-hanging silence—these classically trained orators knew how to suspend an audience—"I'll use figures of speech to make my prose more seductive, to help you feel what I feel, to help you see what I see, to

help you hear the music of my voice, to please and amuse you, to show I care for and respect you".

Now absorption gripped the coroner. "Demonstration!" she demanded again. "Here's one I prepared earlier", said Doctor Q—he also liked daytime cookery shows. He recited the following (Kasner & Newman, 1949, pp. 27-28).

To grasp the meaning and importance of mathematics, to appreciate its beauty and its value, arithmetic must first be understood, for mostly, since its beginning, mathematics has been arithmetic in simple or elaborate attire. Arithmetic has been the queen and the handmaiden of the sciences from the days of the astrologers of Chaldea and the high priests of Egypt to the present days of relativity, quanta and the adding machine. Historians may dispute the meaning of the ancient papyri, theologians may wrangle over the exegesis of scripture, philosophers may debate over Pythagorean doctrine, but all will concede that the numbers in the papyri, in the scriptures, and in the writings of Pythagoras are the same as the numbers of today. As arithmetic, mathematics has helped man to cast horoscopes, to make calendars, to predict the rising of the Nile, to measure fields and the height of the pyramids, to measure the speed of a stone as it fell from a tower in Pisa, the speed of an apple as it fell from a tree in Woolsthorpe, to weigh the stars and the atoms, to mark the passage of time, to find the curvature of space. And although mathematics is also the calculus, the theory of probability, the matrix algebra, the science of the infinite, it is still the heart of counting.

When his recitation ended, the court roared approval. "It sounds beautiful!" said one. "I can see and feel maths!" said another. "Suddenly I want to read about maths", said the coroner, "but I don't know why". Doctor Q smiled and explained: "It's because the mathematicians took the time to learn to write with figures of speech—I counted at least seven of them. Anyone who takes this trouble can write seductively, too. But sadly, too few academic writers do".

About this Book

This is not another handbook on how to write good academic prose by writing clearly, concisely and coherently. It's a book about how to write seductive academic prose by using figures of speech, because academic writers, particularly those outside of the arts, seldom write with them or understand why they should write with them. The figures rarely enter handbooks on writing, and almost never enter handbooks on good academic writing and yet writing with the figures inoculates prose against

symptoms of academese. Figures of speech alone cannot cure writers of academese, but writers cannot seduce without the figures. The allegory I began with contains figures and schemes like alliteration, analogy, anaphora, apposition, assonance, asyndeton, dialogismus, epiplexis, hypallage, hyperbaton, irony, isocolon, metaphor, paradox, parallelism, parenthesis, ridicule.

It matters little if you don't know or care to know the names of the figures. But it matters much that you write with the figures to show you care for your readers. To write seductively is to write with figures of speech. Strictly speaking, not all the "figures" above are figures. But all matter and I differentiate them only when required.

If you accept that much academic writing stinks, you may wish to skip the next chapter and explore the four chapters showing which figures academic writers can and should use and why. But if you think academese is not a disease, you may wish to read the next chapter first. And if you think academese is necessary or untreatable because the academy is stricken with it, you may wish to read the last chapter first.

This book presents around thirty figures of speech academic writers can use to write more seductively. I group the figures into four sections covering rhetorical imperatives of good writing: Imperatives to write musically, to show similarity and difference, to expand and contract, and to make play and mischief. I chose these figures because seductive academic writers use them. I show how and why academic writers should use them with examples from seductive academic writing.

A website supports this book: <http://www.vernaculardiscourse.com/>. There you can learn more about the figures in this book and also about other figures. I made the website to show why everyone should use the figures where they can. But the website serves the general speaker and writer while this book better serves the academic writer. Whether you're an undergraduate or graduate student, an early or mature career academic or anyone who writes scholarly works, I hope you will discover in these pages the care, benefit and pleasure of putting figures of speech into thinking, speaking and writing.

CHAPTER TWO

WITHER AND WHITHER THE FIGURES?

There is no satisfactory explanation of style, no infallible guide to good writing, no assurance that a person who thinks clearly will be able to write clearly, no key that unlocks the door, no inflexible rule by which the young writer may shape his course. He will often find himself steering by stars that are disturbingly in motion.

—Strunk and White

Three Tales

A Paradox, a Problem and an Oxymoron walk into a bar. If only we could step upon the problems of academese so lightly. Academese is no barroom joke restoring liquids can balm. It's a hangover that throbs in the soles of academic foot soldiers, beats in the batons of their drill instructors and jars through the dead limbs, numb heads, flatline pulses, scholarly journals, and academic tombstones that pullulate with its barely sentient prose. The academese disease presents a nerve jangling, jarring spectrum of toxic symptoms and odour of decay. Let us explore pedagogic reasons why much academic writing stinks through the tales of a Paradox, a Problem and an Oxymoron.

A Paradox

Paradox dreamed of writing seductive academic prose so she studied the style handbooks. She began with Strunk and White, for she admired their style of prose and their definition of style that begins this chapter. She quickly learned and steadily practised their rules and saw her prose become simpler, leaner and clearer, but still not seductive. Paradox asked her English teacher, "Why can I still not write as seductively as Strunk and White?" Miss Proper examined her prose and said, "You write clearly, concisely and coherently. You need do nothing more". But Paradox thought her prose still lacked something. Then one day she realized Strunk and White were centenarians. Inspiration shouted to her: "Read the modern style handbooks!"

Paradox read these all the next week. Strunk and White said she would find no "key that unlocks the door" to seduction, but she hoped at least to enter an unvisited room in the library of style. The handbooks on the linguistics shelves pushed ajar the door to reveal some secrets. But not enough to get inside and practise them—the applied linguists prefer analyzing style to teaching it, which they call "stylistics" or "poetics" (Toolan, 2014). Still, their secrets absorbed her, and she wondered why her academic writing courses said little or nothing about style as choosing to engage readers, using literary techniques, writing vividly, originally and creatively (Carter & Nash, 1990; Leech & Short, 1984; Simpson, 2004).

Next Paradox read style handbooks for broader audiences, which chorused Strunk and White's advice (Casagrande, 2010; Landon, 2008; Lanham, 2007; Williams & Colomb, 2010; Zinsser, 1995). But a handful opened the door to seduction further and in more ways the academic writing handbooks were mute about. Paradox learned seductive writers wrote music and their personality into their prose with familiar instruments like varied sentence lengths and unfamiliar instruments like scheme, trope and figure of speech. These unfamiliar instruments usually concluded the handbooks in sections called "advanced" or "special effects" (for example, Cioffi, 2005; Clark, 2006; Wilbers, 2000, 2014).

Paradox yearned to study these advanced techniques more so she next searched the humanities handbooks. These arty-farty writers would surely teach the figures of speech, she reasoned. But Paradox found just two handbooks (Hayot, 2014; Pyne, 2009) with brief sections recommending the figures. But they covered only familiar figures like metaphor, simile and analogy, and cautioned against overusing such "literary" techniques.

Then Paradox stumbled upon a musty shelf titled "rhetoric" from among whose cobwebbed volumes she found one titled *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Lanham, 1991). Here she discovered the figures numbered in the many dozens and took many syllables and many Greek and Latin names. Examples from exemplary stylists illustrated the figures. They, too, seduced like Strunk and White. At last, paradox saw what her prose lacked: the figures of speech that seduce.

Paradox now understood why Strunk and White's prose seduced: Their "style" definition contained common figures of speech found in only one or two style handbooks but also uncommon and untaught figures like phrase and syllable symmetries and forward repetitions. Paradox realized the figures were no mere literary flourishes or page decorations, because to remove them was to see the sentences lose not only their beauty but also their rhythm, symmetries and fastenings. The figures were more than stylish clothes dressing the sentence mannequins; they were the spine and

the limbs, the stance and the gait, the posture and the personality of the prose.

Open almost all the stylish writing handbooks and you will find—if you look carefully—the tale of the Paradox. Their authors salt and pepper their prose with figures of speech, but their stylish writing recipes omit them. They assume writers know how to use them, or they consider them trifles or special effects (see Fahnestock, 2005) or they caution against them. Strunk and White (2000) caution against them, Williams and Colomb (2010) caution against them, Pyne (2009) cautions against them, but all expertly season their prose with them. Hence the paradox. To write seductively is to write with figures of speech, but how can writers learn to write seductively if style handbooks will not teach the figures of speech that seduce?

We shall return to the tale of the Paradox, but next comes the tale of the Problem. Why do so few *academic* writers salt and pepper their prose with figures of speech? Academese writers use no figures. Writing handbooks for graduate students make almost no mention of the figures. And stylish academic writing handbooks teach no figures. This leads to the tale of the Problem.

A Problem

Problem dreamed of becoming a professor. He scored high grades in high school, wrote engaging essays and edited the school magazine. Later he went to university to study psychology, where his problems began. At school his prose had energy and agency and vividness and personality. But the psychology papers he read lacked personality and vividness and agency and energy. These absences, he learned from his instructors, constitute "the academic style" (Bennett, 2009). So he learned to deenergize his prose with nominalizations and passive and insipid verbs. He learned to bury and hide agency and voice with more nominalizations and more passive and insipid verbs. He learned to put big subordinate clauses at the start of long sentences. He learned to put the big idea at the end of long sentences. He learned to obfuscate with concepts, jargon and abstractions. Sedulously he mastered writing prose that tells no stories and lacks a guiding, interesting and comforting storyteller. Academics wrote like this (Andreski, 1972; Billig, 2013; Blanshard, 1954; Limerick, 1993; Sword, 2012a) therefore he should write like this therefore he could one day sit in a professor's chair and convert the next generation of storytelling highschoolers into zombie graduate writers.

Problem shows us something terrible happens to student writing at university. At high school we write about ourselves, our place in the world, how we relate to the world and vice versa. We write as participants, so we write to interest, to engage, to tell stories. But in university classrooms we shift from writing as participants in the world to observers of the world, where we learn the distanced, objective, abstracted style. The participant—observer thermometer can detect the first foul symptoms of academic writing instruction that, untreated, produces student prose with full-blown academese. Good writing describes vividly and immediately, sounds like people speaking, and tells stories with personalities, dialogue and a storyteller. Academese stinks because its authors have withdrawn from participating in the worlds they write about; stinks because its authors tell no stories like high-schoolers; stinks because its authors write not as personalities with opinions, character and humour.

The stench of a constipated and flatulent academic writing style was detected more than a century ago (James, 1899), but it reeks with an older mustiness, of malodorous and superfatted prose that revolts the senses with its impenetrability—the clever prose of power and institutions designed to awe uninitiates and admit only their own. In fresher but fouler developments, the applied linguists, largely, have smelled the vapours and raised academic writing instruction into teaching the art of the stench (for example, Bailey, 2011; Joyner, 2013; Soles, 2010; Swales & Feak, 2012a). Handbooks like these, and the university writing pedagogies they direct, tend to recommend passives and abstractions and concepts and other academese stinkers. They prescribe an academic style stylish academic writers honour more in the breach than in practice. These handbooks speak not of interesting the reader or of telling stories or of writing creatively and figuratively and musically and with personality and with passion. They circumscribe or prohibit creativity and originality, particularly by reducing style to the singular—the academic style (for example, Hayot, 2014; Joyner, 2013). But stylish academic writing dresses in as many styles as does good fiction, good food and good music.

High-schoolers do not speak or write the language of academese. Ask your teenage daughter what she learned in class today and, barring the hormones being in moody revolt, she might reply, "More boring civics. The teacher told us some boring stuff about our duties and how we talk about them. So boring!" This passes not the prescriptions of precise academic prose, but it passes for energy, agency and understandability. Here's Professor Academese struggling to say something similar but passing not the tests for energy, agency and understandability.

The postulate or common understanding involved in speech is certainly co-extensive, in the obligation it carries, with the social organism of which language is the instrument, and the ends of which it is an effort to subserve (Martineau, 1891).

Why is it so hard to grab the meaning of so much academic prose as it comes off the bat? Do you not keep company with legions—from high-schoolers to pedagogues—who carol, "What the hell are you talking about?" when you read clever prose like this that lacks the cleverness and humanity to communicate clearly and engagingly? Universities create academese writers by design in undergraduate education (Hayot, 2014; Starfield, 2004) and by neglect in graduate education (Billig, 2013; Kamler & Thompson, 2006; Mullen, 2001; Sword, 2017).

Lest one think academics write much better today than a distant century ago, consider another example, from a 2016 book I reviewed for a journal. I withhold the author's name because I know them personally and know they *speak* clearly and persuasively. But when the voice travels down the arms, into the fingers and through the keyboard that speaks it in print, something terrible so often happens to so many academic voices in prose.

While what makes particular actions possible at different sites of engagement is more a matter contextualization, the way these actions get linked with other actions in historical trajectories is more a matter of entextualization (Bauman and Briggs, 1990). It is the affordances that language and other technologies of talk make available for transforming actions into discourse so that they can be recontextualized into other sites of engagement that create historical trajectories.

The only comprehension trajectory these sentences make possible is to churl readers' minds into slow, spinning, sickening roundabouts of jargon off which they stagger back to earth with nausea. Only cheering irony can comfort us. In this book that views discourse as action, why did the author put to sleep the actions of speaking and doing with comatose abstractions and replace the speaking voice with the monotone moan of academese? Something terrible happens to writers and writing at university.

The irony here is that the quality of scholarly writing is widely bemoaned, both outside and inside the academy (e.g. Limerick, 1993; Rankin, 1998), yet we seem to do little to address the quality of writing in a systematic way at the very point where scholarly style and identity is being shaped (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, p. 27).

University students do not want to write academese. They do it to please their writing instructors and graduate advisers. "My professor says I must use passive". "I must use abstractions and nominalizations". "Rhetorical questions are disallowed". "I may not use *I*". "Metaphors and similes and analogies and alliteration belong in literature". "I'm writing academic prose, so storytelling and creativity and creating interest are irrelevant". Graduate students speak half-truths and whole myths like these (see Sword, 2012a, pp. 26-27) when they take stylish academic writing workshops at my university. Something terrible happens to writers and writing at university. Its name is academese teaching.

Fresh from the dunghill of academese teaching and practice, hopeful green shoots have lately sprung forth. Three academics—all writers or researchers of language—wrote three books alerting professors to the stench coming off their prose. First came Helen Sword's (2012a) *Stylish Academic Writing*, then Michael Billig's (2013) problem-defining *Learn to write badly: How to succeed in the social sciences*, and then Steven Pinker's (2014a) *The Sense of Style*. But like most style books by most linguists, these tend to research, define and analyze academese more than teach its remedies. What recommendations they offer tend toward the general. They say: write creatively, borrow literary techniques, emulate good writers, make jokes, tell stories—good advice all, but academic writers like graduate students need more specific "how to" handbooks. The pedagogy of academic writing instruction needs remaking to address the unhappy endings in the tales of the Problem and the Paradox.

When she was searching the shelves of the style library, Paradox found no academic writing handbook with a pedagogy of storytelling (but see Thody, 2006); no academic writing handbook teaching how to write music into prose even though we know good prose sings songs (Blanshard, 1954; Quintilian, 1920; Wilbers, 2014); no academic writing handbook teaching creative writing techniques and why these matter; no academic writing handbook teaching how and why to use the figures of speech. Seductive academic writers apparently learn these things for themselves since academic writing pedagogies overlook or reject them. As Sword (2012a, p. 167) observes, academic training teaches critical thinking, not its creative expression.

Paradox had found just one lay handbook with a chapter on the figures (Cioffi, 2005), so she looked for them in the recent stylish academic writing handbooks. Disappointment followed again. Pinker and Sword sometimes notice common figures in the stylish prose they examine, but nowhere do they teach or champion the figures. And yet any rhetorician will tell you:

The absence or scarcity of figurative language can have a deadening effect on style (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 367).

The general disinterest linguistics pays to the figures matches its general disinterest in and disrespect for the discipline that began the comprehensive study and teaching of language and persuasion: rhetoric. Characteristically, Pinker (p. 11) and Sword (p. 81) mislabel the "tricks" rhetoric plays. I applaud linguists for alerting us to the stench the house of academe gives off and for campaigning for sweeter prose. But this cannot happen until the pedagogy of academic writing invites the figures into the classroom to lecture on their special subject of seduction. The figures belong to the canon of style in the lonely castle of rhetoric that few linguists ever visit because their discipline thinks it haunted only by Greek and Roman ghosts. As rhetorician Brian Vickers (1988) observes, when linguists speak of "rhetoric", they often debase, winnow or hijack it, but seldom explore or advance it. Now we shall pass on the argument baton to another, in the final tale.

An Oxymoron

The tale of the Oxymoron explains why "stylish" and "academic" sit as incompanionably in prose as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford on a movie set. The academy majors in academesse teaching and writing thus "stylish academic writing" seems an oxymoron (Sword, 2012a, p. vii). When I told a colleague I was writing about seductive academic writing, she guffawed and riposted, "You mean there is such a thing?" Yes, but not much of it. Yes, "seductive academic writing" seems oxymoronic, but only by its scarcity. Another scarcity testifies to this scarcity. Consider what the dust jackets say about the academic books they dress. All praise the content, but few praise the author's style. Those that do, praise the author not for writing clear, coherent and concise prose but for unusually and sedulously caring enough to write to please their readers.

The dust jacket test offers only a yardstick on style—one publishers bend with their blurbs—but a reliable yardstick, nevertheless. The dust jackets of books excerpted often in this book (Dawkins, 1987, 2009; Kasner & Newman, 1949; Lin, 1936, 1937) praise the wit, charm, humour, passion, storytelling, enthusiasm of the authors. They praise their prose styles for being wry, beguiling, beautiful, fascinating, easily readable, like quicksilver. They sometimes even praise the figures of speech which serve these ideals and which this book teaches. Reviewers praise the analogies, metaphors and anecdotes of Richard Dawkins because they help tell the story, make it clearer, more immediate, more engaging.

We know from the tales of the Paradox and the Problem that this aesthetic sense of "style" the dust jackets praise remains an estranged cousin or stranger or enemy to the academic style the academic writing pedagogies teach. Stylish academic writing will thus remain rare and seem oxymoronic unless we reform those pedagogies. This endeavour exceeds the effort this book can exert, but one thing we must do is to teach the figures that seduce. Seductive academic writers season every page of their prose with the figures. And yet we have seen that the spice cupboards in the academic writing handbooks and the stylish academic writing handbooks and the university course book recipes for successful academic writing are bereft of the spice the figures season into seductive prose. Writing without the figures is like cooking blindfolded (Forsyth, 2013).

The figures have so withered by neglect in education you might ask, "Whither the figures?" Shakespeare, P.G. Wodehouse, Lin Yutang, Kasner & Newman and Richard Dawkins stand as great stylists because they season their prose with the figures. Alone among these stylists, Shakespeare studied the figures in an age when schools formally taught them. But then the scientific age elbowed rhetoric and the figures out of the classroom (Vickers, 1988). Those who write figures into their prose today most likely self-studied them or took creative writing courses that most academics will never take. We need not invade the land of literature to learn to write seductively. We need not storm the lonely castle of rhetoric and bother the ghosts of Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero to memorize the figures. We need not fear the figures, for they are simple things only with complex names. To write seductively we need only enter the borderlands of literature and rhetoric, conduct raiding parties and plunder and press into service their most seductive weapons, the figures of speech and literary techniques.

Seductive Academic Writing

The tales of the Paradox, the Problem and the Oxymoron deliver the conclusion that to write seductively is to write with figures of speech. Should you still think otherwise, consider another conclusion, the final paragraph from Kasner & Newman's *Mathematics and the Imagination*, where we find, depending on your counting method, nine figures, some repeated: tricolon, analogy, anaphora, parallelism, isocolon, personification, metaphor, paradox, alliteration.

Mathematics is an activity governed by the same rules imposed upon the symphonies of Beethoven, the paintings of Da Vinci, and the poetry of Homer. Just as scales, as the laws of perspective, as the rules of metre

seem to lack fire, the formal rules of mathematics may appear to be without lustre. Yet ultimately, mathematics reaches pinnacles as high as those attained by the imagination in its most daring reconnoiters. And this conceals, perhaps, the ultimate paradox of science. For in their prosaic plodding both logic and mathematics often outstrip their advance guard and show that the world of pure reason is stranger than the world of pure fancy (1949, p. 362).

Seductive academic writing bustles with abundant figures. I shall define "seductive" no further since the style bookshelves are stacked enough already with style handbooks and style definitions and because rhetoricians understand seduction is what the figures do. The space this book makes for itself on the bookshelves is not to restore the figures to prominence in formal education, though this book wishes that, because the figures have their own popularizers and champions (Corbett & Connors, 1999; Forsyth, 2013; Harris, 2003; Leith, 2012; Romm, 2012). The space this book makes for itself is to reveal figures of speech academic writers use that mark them out as seductive writers. But this is not a stylistics book because the style bookshelves are also stacked enough with analyses of the figures in poetry and prose and even science (Fahnestock, 1999). This book instead offers a rhetorical stylistics approach to the figures (Fahnestock, 2005), a why and a how-to academic writer's guide to writing with the figures, illustrated with examples from seductive academic writing.

Another distinguished mathematician, and philosopher of education, Alfred North Whitehead, called style "the last acquirement of the educated mind" and its "ultimate morality" (1929, p. 12). He was bang on the numbers. Good style *is* the last thing academic writers acquire, but many acquire only academese style. Others rise higher but their style seldom ascends above the blue skies of clarity and concision for reasons our tales have told. To write seductively is to soar still higher and touch the angels of seduction, to write with figures of speech. Style *is* the writer's ultimate morality because writing begins with the moral practice of choosing to care or not to care about your readers (Lanham, 2007). Seductive writers care enough to interest, engage and amuse their readers, imperatives the figures can serve.

The following chapters teach and illustrate around thirty figures I found often in seductive academic writing. The slippery figures wriggle through the classifier's net so I group them into four rhetorical imperatives often advocated by the style handbooks that paradoxically ignore the figures. First come figures of music and repetition because good writing sounds like music and the human voice. Next come figures of similarity

and difference because academic texts define, describe and classify, and avoiding academese means doing these vividly, immediately and familiarly. Then come figures of expansion and contraction because seductive writers tell stories, talk to their readers and write as personalities. Finally come figures of play and mischief because seductive academic writers know even serious prose readers like, need and deserve to laugh now and then.

PART II:

FIGURES OF SPEECH FOR SEDUCTIVE ACADEMIC WRITING

CHAPTER THREE

FIGURES OF MUSIC AND REPETITION

Generally speaking, that which is written should be easy to read or easy to utter, which is the same thing.

—Aristotle

Rhythm is one of the subtlest of all instruments in the delicate work of conveying thought.

—Brand Blanshard

To edit is to listen, above all.

—Susan Bell

Introduction

"Edit by ear" carols a chorus of style editors and stylish writers (Becker, 2007; Bell, 2007; Cioffi, 2005; Dawkins, 1996; Zinsser, 1995). William Hazlitt scorned any writing style "not calculated to be read out, or that is not allied to spirited conversation" (1826, p. 7). The more prose vibrates with the beats and rhythms of music and the speaking voice, the more alive writers sound to their readers. I recall hearing Richard Dawkins relate how he reads aloud his drafts for feedback on the sound of his prose. Prose, like music, lives in performance.

Seductive prose gives up secrets when analyzed musically. Ancients like Quintilian recognized oratory and even Latin grammar could, like music, seduce souls. Some consider music the most important yet most ignored quality of stylish prose (Wilbers, 2014, p. 67). Consider the academic book as music. As symphonies have movements, books have chapters. The first movement sounds a symphony's theme like a first chapter heralds an academic book's thesis. The last movement of a symphony and the last chapter of a book restate, reunite, and resolve the major themes. As music has chords and leitmotifs, books have arguments and characters. With one hand the conductor beats time while the other

crafts expression. With headings and paragraphs and chapters the good writer keeps time, while engaging with seductive prose.

This chapter explores ten figures of speech that seduce by writing music into prose. Compare a sentence from a philosophy and an anthropology abstract.

It follows that if we want to understand our morality, and perhaps improve it, we must put behavioral science before theological speculation and economic analysis before utopian dreaming (Hocutt, 2010).

Analysis shows the fraught footings available and the sheer delicacy through which speaker and collective voices are presented and aligned to audience and issue, as speakers speak both as and for Indigenous people within the terms of podium talk (Peters, 2016).

One need not read aloud these contributions to hear the difference: The philosophy prose has the rhythm of music, but the anthropology prose has the monotone of academese. A composer writes into the score chords and beats and rhythms and patterns and expansions and contractions and much more. Writing music into prose is simpler. Write for the rhythm section of the prose orchestra—the musical figures of speech—and your prose will play music.

To write musical prose is above all to appreciate that humans love finding patterns—faces in clouds or pictures on pebble beaches. We are pattern seeking mammals so indulge yourself and your readers by writing musical patterns into prose. And the longer the sentence, the more music it must make to make sense. Unless a long sentence marches in file to its destination, it arrives on the battlefield in disarray, leaderless, without a drummer boy, like the anthropologist's disarranged prose.

The musical and martial figures playing in this chapter shape the sound and the structure of the music of prose. They play not as precocious soloists like the piano and violin but as the drums and double basses that sustain the orchestra's tempo. Very few drum or double bass concertos exist, but few orchestras exist without drums or double basses. The unflashy but essential musical instruments of prose mostly belong to the family of parallelism. They lurk invisibly everywhere in seductive prose, becoming visible only when absent or faulty. They are the most important figures academic writers should master so we begin with parallelism and her family.

Parallelism and her Family

An army marches on its stomach, but sated soldiers march more sharply to the beat of drums. Parallelism—from the Greek "parallelos", meaning side-by-side—beats the drum that marshals prose into pleasing symmetries.

Learning to compare is learning to count.

Perhaps pure science begins where common sense ends.

We shall be in a better purpose to understand its purpose without being compelled to master its difficulties.

Symmetries please mathematicians like Kasner and Newman (1949) and all members of our pattern-seeking human family. Express yourself in parallel patterns and readers will enjoy finding your symmetries. Academics seek respect for orderly, logical thinking, and no figure of speech trumpets this louder than parallelism, because symmetrical prose implies logical thought and the compassion to pattern thoughts musically.

The balance of a prose symmetry implies the balance of a rational mind that yet remains "irrational" enough to seduce with the music of parallel patterns. From the soft comfort of proverbs to the hard logic of mathematics, parallelism seduces.

Easy come, easy go.

Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.—Dale Carnegie

Let us to the task, to the battle, to the toil.—Winston Churchill

Evolution is within us, around us, between us (Dawkins, 2009, p. 18).

The second book is yours. Not your adviser's, not your committee's (Garber, 2005, p. 131).

Reasonable nations live in peace and reasonable husbands and wives live in happiness (Lin, 1937, pp. 421-422).

Parallelism is a scheme of symmetrical expression more than a figure of speech. It matters because parallel symmetries structure all the figures in this chapter and because it provides the base pair in the DNA of musical prose. Slide any musical prose beneath the microscope of seduction and

you will observe genes for parallelism. See how these genes coil throughout the abstract partially excerpted earlier.

Half a century ago, Elizabeth Anscombe reminded us that we of the West think of morality as a kind of law—viz., a moral law. As originally conceived, this law consisted of heavenly commands delivered to a favored clan and known only by the privileged few who could read sacred scripture. However, the history of philosophy has been largely a tale of attempts to show that a law-like morality is binding on all men everywhere and known, like the truths of arithmetic and logic, by an exercise of a priori reason. Yet, morality as everywhere practiced is neither divine commands nor universal principles of thought. Instead, it is variable customs worked out by the members of diverse groups to help them get along with each other while they serve their biologically based needs. These customs are taught using rewards and punishment, they are revealed by observing behavior, and they are evaluated by measuring how they contribute to group welfare and individual flourishing. It follows that if we want to understand our morality, and perhaps improve it, we must put behavioral science before theological speculation and economic analysis before utopian dreaming. In short, we must return to Earth (Hocutt, 2010).

Read silently or aloud, the family members of parallelism sing pleasing musical patterns throughout this text. As in all singing families—from the Bee Gees to the von Trapps—each family figure sounds a distinct voice, identity and performance. But they all sing, and sing more beautifully together. The singers we just heard include anaphora, isocolon and tricolon—fancy names for fancy figures—but fancy how flat the text would sound without them.

The philosopher crafted parallelisms into his prose because he knows musical prose creates seductive prose. And he knows music matters in academic prose like it matters in poems, speeches and advertising. Read any offending text from any of the genres that serially offend in the court of good writing style—legalese (Benson, 1985), businessese or academese—and you can trace their crimes not least to unmusical prose. Let us now hear from the most symmetrical member of this singing family.

Isocolon

Isocolon is so symmetrical we might think it the most beautiful figure, since symmetries shape the aesthetics of beauty. Meaning from the Greek, "equal member", isocolon crafts visual and aural beauty through

symmetries of sound, length and structure. Consider again the singing bulldog.

Let us to the task, to the battle, to the toil.

Isocolon's symmetry shows here in three patterns of three words. Churchill then continues his battle cry with isocolon.

each to our part, each to our station. Fill the armies, rule the air, pour out the munitions, strangle the U-boats, sweep the mines, plough the land, build the ships, guard the streets, succour the wounded, uplift the downcast, and honour the brave

Each item bar one stirs the musical ear and the logical mind with equivalent phrase symmetries. Isocolon pleases still more when it crafts syllable symmetries. It takes time and effort but pays off. See how Churchill crafts them: *build the ships*, *guard the streets* (1-1-1, 1-1-1); *succour the wounded*, *uplift the downcast* (2-1-2, 2-1-2). Replace these with *build the warships*, *patrol the major thoroughfares* and ask your ear which it prefers.

Like the best writers, Churchill writes music into prose. Don't think a comparison invalid because Churchill wrote texts to speak in parliament and to record on radio, while academics write texts for academic readers. The inner ear hears the written text—the billboard ad, the protest placard, the seminar title—and hears it the more the more music it makes. Hear it in some management theory, mathematics, history, philosophy and biology.

Our gods are flawed gods, then. Ostensibly worshipped but substantively patronised (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 445).

An equally ludicrous example is to be found in the Muslim apologist Harun Yahya's enormous, lavishly produced, glossily illustrated and fatuously ignorant book *Atlas of Creation* (Dawkins, 2009, p. 154).

Mathematics is the science which uses easy words for hard ideas (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 4).

Among other things, we need to query the historical model that sorts ideas and authors by periods and centuries (Garber, 2005, p. 131).

We know that it can perfectly well withstand a little more heat or cold, dampness or dryness, for elsewhere it ranges into slightly hotter or colder, dampier or drier districts (Darwin, 1861, p. 75).

The tradition developed that no rice-eating southerners could mount the dragon throne, and only noodle-eating northerners could (Lin, 1936, p. 18).

On the whole, our life is too complex, our scholarship too serious, our philosophy too sombre, and our thoughts too involved (Lin, 1937, p. 79).

The result is a confusion of values, a weird mixing up of politics with anthropology, art with propaganda, patriotism with science, government with religion, and above all an entire upset of the proper relationship between the claims of the state and the claims of the individual (p. 425).

Music for Cohesion

Sentence lengths average differently in different genres, but conjecture numbers academic ones in the low to medium 20s (Hayot, 2014, p. 199). That's already a higher average than for a business email or serious newspaper article. And the curse of learning and desire for esteem encourages academics to overstuff sentences with still more words (Clark, 2002, p. 124). Fortunately, parallelism conducts prose so rhythmically that you can write very long but very clear sentences providing you keep sentence time by pounding steady beats with musical figures.

In these casual writings, letters, diaries, literary notes and regular essays, one finds here a brief comment on the vicissitudes of fortune, there a record of some woman who committed suicide in a neighbouring village, or of an enjoyable spring party, or a feast in snow, or boating on a moonlit night, or an evening spent in a temple with a thunderstorm raging outside, generally including the remarks made during the conversation that made the occasion memorable (Lin, 1937, p. 412). (77 words)

Readers never enter a cul-de-sac, stumble in darkness or lose direction when journeying through Lin Yutang's prose no matter how many words they pass by because his prose pounds guiding beats. He pounds a beat with "here" answered by "there" followed by repeated "or..." phrases. Now try reading a similarly additive but shorter academese sentence from a psychology journal.

The characteristic features of chat—scrolling text, a large number of interactants in a common space, multiple simultaneous conversations interpolated with each other, and overlapping participants among these simultaneous conversations—do not map well onto the usual strategies used to achieve conversational coherence in either oral or written communications (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2003, p. 717). (49 words)

You cannot read aloud this sentence. You cannot beat musical sense into its insensible prose with stress, pauses and intonation because it lacks a structuring rhythm. The words crash to the floor like the bones of a skeleton because the anatomist forgot to first assemble the spine. But write in some musical figures and the sentence makes sense and music—the skeleton dances.

When we chat online we meet texts that scroll up screens, people in shared spaces and chats that weft and warp, so we must measure coherency in online settings differently from how we measure it in speech and in writing. (40 words)

Write some symmetries into your prose and it will start to sing. Your readers will take note, enjoy the show and perhaps join in.

One principle of good composition says put parallel patterns into prose, and yet the principle behind this principle is underlearned or overlooked. Open a venerable composition handbook like the *Prentice Hall Handbook for Writers* (Kramer, Leggett, & Mead, 1995) and you will find it includes parallelism but no more of the musical figures included here. And you won't find there the musical principle established here. *Prentice Hall* says make the stuff of sentences parallel because parallelism clarifies relationships, improves coherency and economy. These purposes matter, but no more than the musical principle of composition. Little wonder so much student and professorial prose enervates texts and dispirits readers when the fundamental principle of musical composition is missing from academic writing pedagogies.

In *Prentice Hall* and most academic writing handbooks, you will likely not find "figures of speech" at all. Thus you will likely not find the musical figures found here and in the best writing because academic writing pedagogies are deaf to the principle of musical composition. To speak well and to write well is to play music (Elbow, 2012). But how can we do either if we do not first learn the principle of musical prose and do not write musical figures into prose?

Parallelism, your Conductor

Principles of academic writing often reduce to the three Cs: write clearly, coherently and concisely. We like things that come in threes—the three wise men, the three little pigs or the three laws of motion. Let us hold to the principles of the three good Cs. But they must make space for another principle: to write well is to write musically. We will only hear this musical principle if composition guides sing its praises: We should

compose musically (Quintilian, 1920; Wilbers, 2000), edit by ear (Becker, 2007; Bell, 2007; Cioffi, 2005; Zinsser, 1995) and write like a speaking person to speak our voice and our identity (Sword, 2012a; Turley, 2000; Wilbers, 2000; Zinsser, 1995). But these musical guidelines go unheard and untaught in most academic writing pedagogies.

Parallelism creates musical patterns. Patterns improve coherency. Coherency improves clarity. Parallelism also fastens concision because symmetries cull clutter by ordering phrases, clauses and sentences (Evans, 2017). And parallelism can sing alone, sing with others, conduct the choir and compose the score. Let's hear some examples from the mathematicians.

If we compose to parallel patterns, we can sing a solo with a figure like isocolon.

Yet that does not seem like a waste of time as compared with the billions of hours spent by millions of people on crossword puzzles and contract bridge, to say nothing of political debates (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 79).

We can sing in a group by combining figures like isocolon, tricolon, alliteration and paradox.

All of these worthies are dead, most of them forgotten, while imaginary numbers flourish wickedly and wantonly over the whole field of mathematics (pp. 91-92).

Nevertheless, even within the realm of chance we sense a certain regularity, a certain symmetry—an order within disorder—and so even about events which we ascribe to chance we form various degrees of rational belief (p. 226).

And we can only hit the high or the low notes of figures like chiasmus and anaphora if we compose to parallel patterns.

We know neither the laws they obey, nor indeed, whether they obey any laws (p. 226).

Yet, because mathematics builds on the old but does not discard it, because it is the most conservative of the sciences, because its theorems are deduced from postulates by the methods of logic, in spite of its having undergone revolutionary changes we do not suspect it of being a discipline capable of engendering paradoxes (p. 193).

These examples prove parallelism is the essential musical figure. It sings alone and with others. It composes pleasing patterns to structure

content logically. It is visible and invisible. It lives in every age and in every genre. It matters so much, in fact, that one style guide awards it its own chapter to pin its academic credentials to its chest. Clark (2002) shows how writing in parallel patterns reveals an intellectual who first observes things, then sets them out in patterns to broadcast his intellect and satisfy the reader's appetite for seductive patterns. Like other parallel figures, it is the effort put into patterning complexities that satisfies comprehension and seduces souls. After all, "much of what is interesting about the world is interpretation rather than fact" (p. 84).

Seductive writers know you can compose even more clearly, coherently and concisely if you conduct your prose to parallel beats. And they know parallel figures synergize with other figures—musical or unmusical. Academese prose is zombie prose, numbing prose because it forms no patterns and plays no music. More than any other figure, parallelism can resuscitate zombie prose and broadcast an academic writer's clever mind and care for their readers. With parallelism we begin to write as individuals in institutions not as institutions in individuals.

Tricolon

Everyone knows the tricolon even if they cannot name it. It means "three members" and goes by the other names of list of three and triad—that's three list items not three Chinese gangsters. It beats in "eat, drink and be merry" and in "lies, damned lies and statistics". It sings in advertising in "A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play". It speaks in oratory in "I came, I saw, I conquered". It lives everywhere except where it should: in academic writing pedagogies. It is simple, elegant and musical. Hear it in the stirring and parallel growl of a prime minister's first address to parliament in 1940.

Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be.

No survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages.

Threes sounds natural. Once the intonation rises on the first colon we know it will rise again on the second and then fall on the third, signaling completeness. So imprinted is this musical pattern in the score sheet of our minds that we reject patterns that transgress it. Public memory partially misremembers Churchill's victory injunction as "I have nothing to offer but blood, sweat and tears" because it sounds more natural—and more

liquid—than what he really bemoaned: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat" (Leith, 2012, p. 277).

A list of three has economy. You could list four, fourteen or forty items, but three reaches the minimum number from which to serry a list. Lists of three sound natural, but not if you package your threes willy-nilly. Hear the music skip a beat if we reorder Churchill's tricolon.

Victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be, victory at all costs.

Churchill's original flowers from bud to bloom, unfolding in size and foliage. The rewrite stunts this evolution. Structure matters in tricolon and some other figures, too, and the same good tailoring rules fortunately dress several stylish figures.

Rules for Lists

One tailoring rule says put the longest element last, where "longest" can mean more words or more syllables. My Churchill rewrite plays haltingly because it breaks that rule. This rule comes familiarly to academics, who know you write from the general to the specific. And more specificity needs more words so write in musical patterns or risk flatulent verbosity. Here's philosopher Daniel Dennett with a single-sentence abstract that flowers to fullness through parallelism and tricolon.

There is much good work for philosophers to do in cognitive science if they adopt the constructive attitude that prevails in science, work toward testable hypotheses, and take on the task of clarifying the relationship between the scientific concepts and the everyday concepts with which we conduct our moral lives (2009, p. 231).

Another rule says make list items parallel or isocola where possible. In other words, write rhythms *within* the rhythm of tricola, like Dennett does, and your sentence will pipe still more music. Here a philosopher and the mathematicians combine isocola and tricola.

For the Chinese are a hard boiled lot. [...] They just want to order this life on earth, which they know to be full of pain and sorrow, so that they may work peaceably, endure nobly, and live happily (Lin, 1936, p. 55).

Many well-meaning, self-appointed and self-anointed mathematicians, and a motley assortment of lunatics and cranks, knowing neither history nor

mathematics, supply an abundant crop of "solutions" of these insoluble problems each year (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 12).

A third structuring rule says, well, structure your tricola. You could structure elements from general to specific, from concrete to abstract, from simple to complex, from first to last, from oldest to newest, or with any logic fit for your subject. Just remember not to violate the first rule of putting the longest element last. Remember also that no figure stamps logic and structure into prose more than parallelism and her progeny. Thus no figures more recommend themselves for imposing order on chaos in academic prose. Here come more tricola that obey some or all three of these structuring rules.

Indeed, that is all there is to the art of counting as practiced by primitive people's, by us or by Einstein (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 29).

The Chinese distrust of logic begins with the distrust of words, proceeds with the abhorrence of definitions and ends with instructive hatred for all systems and theories (Lin, 1937, p. 417).

Imagine you are a teacher of more recent history, and your lessons on twentieth-century Europe are boycotted, heckled or otherwise disrupted by well-organized, well-financed and politically muscular groups of holocaust deniers (Dawkins, 2009, p. 4).

Some tricola patterns get special names. See how Dawkins marches his second tricolon to climax? That's "tricolon crescens". And if you want a funny tricolon, violate the structure rule by confounding expectations of the last item.

An Englishman, an Irishman and a Rabbi walk into a bar. The Rabbi stops and says, "Wait a minute! I'm in the wrong joke here!"

Asyndeton

Suppose you want to list more than three items or to imply a list expanding in time, number or significance. The figure asyndeton achieves this by omitting conjunctions between elements, particularly before the last one. Here's Churchill calling his nation to arms.

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be.

His audience knew they would fight "whatever the cost may be" because Churchill anticipated their whatevers by omitting "and" before the last item. A conjunction before the final element completes a list like falling intonation completes a spoken tricolon. But omitting that conjunction impels the list forward and invites readers to continue it.

The sociable figures of speech—especially the songsters—love to hang out in groups. Churchill combines asyndeton with anaphora, parallel forward repetitions. And like all figures that list, asyndeton needs a structuring logic. Churchill's list marches victoriously from the specific to the abstract and seduces with repetition and symmetry: [We shall fight whatever.] [We shall fight for things and for ideals.] [We shall fight whatever.] Here come some more asyndeton examples with sound structuring logics.

They deserve to be taken seriously, learned about, used (Dennett, 1991, p. 29).

The infinite appears both strange and familiar, at times beyond our grasp, at times natural and easy to understand (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 35).

Whether this new geometry will be fruitful, whether it will prove as useful in surveying or navigation as Euclidean geometry, whether its fundamental ideas measure up to any standard of truth other than self-consistency, doesn't concern the mathematician a jot (p. 115).

Asyndeton can march items to arresting conclusions. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* recommends and illustrates perorations containing no connecting particles: "I have spoken; you have heard; you know the facts; now give your decision" (1926, p. 471). Churchill and Dawkins similarly combine asyndeton with anaphora to draw up sentences in marching order to battle with Nazis above and evolution-deniers below.

...if we survey every continent and every island, every lake and every river, every mountaintop and every Alpine valley, every forest and every desert, the only way to make sense of this distribution of animals and plants is, yet again, to follow Darwin's insight about the Galapagos finches (2009, p. 270).

Asyndeton's simplicity masks its complexity. It surprises that omitting a conjunction produces complex effects. But you cannot *just* drop the conjunction. You must structure list items so they march to the tune you want to play. A normal list, with a final conjunction, is unremarkable. Imagine a parent grumbling to their spouse as they journey home.

I have been working all day. And still when I get home I have to prepare the dinner, put the kids to bed, walk and feed the dog, and take out the trash.

So what? It's just a list. But restructure the list, add asyndeton and another figure or two and the spouse stirs into sympathy.

I have been working all day. And when I get home I have to prepare dinner, then put the kids to bed, then walk and feed the dog, then take out the trash, then do this, then do that, do everything that needs doing.

Dropping the final conjunction makes lists more creative, arresting, emotive because they spurn the clichéd and predictable: Readers anticipate a musical tricolon or a longer list with a final conjunction or an etcetera or the anticlimactic "and so on and so forth".

Asyndeton serves an academic writer's ethos twofold. Academics want us to think they are clever; asyndeton advertises their cleverness through the logics of their lists. Academics want us to think they tackle pressing and unwieldy problems; asyndeton advertises the magnitude and significance of their endeavours.

But who is the wolf? The wolf might be unsympathetic promotions committees, performance assessments, impatient Deans who themselves feel "got at" from every direction, from Boards, from University councils, from funding bureaucrats (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 449).

Good writing is suggestive and pungent, it evokes feelings—relief, recognition, drama, disdain, horror—and bodily responses—the flush of recognition and the sharp intake of breath, the tingle as we feel that this might be showing us something we hadn't thought or experienced before (p. 452).

Plucky Red Riding Hoods who omit final conjunctions from their sentence paths might find a wolf lurking there: martinet language instructors who demand final conjunctions because they cannot tell asyndeton's subtlety from their discipline's rigidity. To daringly split an infinitive is another practice these grammar sergeants forbid, but dare one ask: "Does the adverb work anywhere better than inside the infinitive it dares to split?" Seductive writers bend rules, break rules and make rules (Clark, 2002, p. 65), and should dress down the grammar sergeants like a *Strand Magazine* contributor famously did when disciplined for ending a sentence with a preposition: "offensive impertinence, up with which I will not put" (Shapiro, 2006).

Polysyndeton

Asyndeton makes music, but polysyndeton sings and dances. It performs a sprightly yet sure-footed Highland jig with breathless and ineluctable vigour. Meaning "many" and "bound together with", polysyndeton ties together list items with conjunctions like couplings tie together railway carriages. Richard Dawkins conveys his enthusiasm for biology with polysyndeton.

Chimps and dogs and bats and cockroaches and people and worms and dandelions and bacteria and galactic aliens are the stuff of biology (1987, p. 1).

The academic style the handbooks teach abhors such giddy excitement. It commands an objective, distanced style. Let's rewrite Dawkins like that.

The discipline of biology is centrally concerned with the examination of life forms, species and their families such as chimps, dogs, bats, cockroaches, humans, worms, dandelions and bacteria, and may perhaps one day further include the study of life forms beyond planet Earth.

Is your breathless ear still dancing? Or have you sat down, kicked off your ghillies and nodded off? This biologist's infectious enthusiasm and adolescent vocabulary—the vernacular "*stuff* of biology"—no doubt seems too subjective, too imprecise for some. Dawkins commits heresy in the religion of contemporary academic writing instruction because he blasphemes the doctrines of the faith. He follows instead the faith of the many Martin Luthers on these pages who commit apostasy in the church of the contemporary academic writing style, because its precepts produce academese.

Seductive academic writers bend or break the commandment of absolute objectivity because the neutral style comes as unnaturally to humans as forgiveness comes to traffic wardens. Readers and writers are breathing, feeling, living subjects. How will you enthuse readers to care for your subject if you will not write your enthusiasm into it? Seductive academic writers bend or break the commandment of absolute precision because it begets jargon, abstractions and nominalizations. Seductive academics know when to artfully write in the common tongue—as Dawkins studies the stuff of biology, Pinker studies the stuff of thought (2007)—because expert and non-expert readers will not value your work if you will not value them enough to explain it simply. Seductive academic writers bend or break the commandment of distance because it stillbirths agency without agents, opinions without authors and prose authored by

institutions, not people. How can you tell the story of your research or your discipline if you bury or banish its actors and thinkers and your humanity?

Here come more polysyndeton from philosophers and mathematicians who bend and break contemporary academic writing rules.

The most powerful telescopes can reveal only a meagre bit of the distant stars and nebulae and the cold far corners of space (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 27).

And what makes the mind-body problem unique, and unlike the water-H₂O problem or the Turing machine-IBM problem or the lightning-electrical discharge problem or the gene-DNA problem or the oak tree-hydrocarbon problem, is ignored (Nagel, 1974, p. 435).

We find writers of parables and epigrams and family letters who make no attempt to coordinate their thoughts into a rigid system (Lin, 1937, p. 412).

In every period, England was able to fight the right war, against the right enemy, with the right ally, on the right side, at the right time, and call it by the wrong name (p. 61).

Polysyndeton's sprightly jig is not all breathless enthusiasm. Like asyndeton, it can strike a steady and heavy and marching rhythm. Milton (1998) painted a diabolical Satan with polysyndeton's brush: "the fiend" who "pursues his way; and swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies". In that other place, in the *King James Bible*, Genesis I assembles God's character from just two repeated coordinating conjunctions. In every sentence, and almost 100 times, Genesis I fashions the deity and his works with "and".

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

But, lo, the figures are devils to classify! The "and" host in Genesis I is polysyndeton and anaphora and both. And so on to anaphora.

Anaphora

To begin with a repeated word or phrase, to begin clauses or sentences with the same or a similar pattern is to use anaphora. To begin with a famous example:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness,...

Dickens opens *Tale of Two Cities* with a whopping 100+ word sentence stitched together by fourteen anaphora and dozens of other parallelisms. That a reader can befriend and comprehend this behemoth shows how the figures go beyond embroidery. Some figures, like anaphora, tie together texts, a phenomenon linguists call cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Most texts need cohesive ties, and the longer and more argumentative the text, the more it needs cohesive ties. Academic writing handbooks include the theory and practice of textual cohesion, where one learns to tie together sentences with words, phrases and punctuation. Yet I found only one writing handbook (Pyne, 2009) that notes musical figures of speech can also tie together texts.

Suppose, like Dawkins, I wish to argue the truth of evolution. I might begin thus.

The factuality of evolution is beyond reasonable doubt. This is because Darwin's theory provides the best explanation for the variety and shared or unique characteristics of lifeforms. Therefore, those who question Darwinian evolution are uninformed or irrational.

These types of referencing, substitution and adverbs are the types of cohesive ties the academic writing handbooks teach. But Dawkins tied together his arguments with the equally cohesive but more seductive anaphora figure.

Evolution is a fact. Beyond reasonable doubt, beyond serious doubt, beyond sane, informed, intelligent doubt, beyond doubt evolution is a fact (2009, p. 8).

Both texts share the same spines of logic and cohesion. But the body of the Dawkins text also dances, to the music of anaphora. It coheres and seduces. Coincidence it cannot be—perhaps it's evolutionary—that anaphora sets texts by Dawkins and Darwin dancing. In chapter one of

Origin of the Species we have: "When we look"... "When we reflect"... "When we compare"... "When we attempt"... "When we bear in mind"... And when we come to the final chapter:

When we no longer look at an organic being as a savage looks at a ship, as at something wholly beyond his comprehension; when we regard every production of nature as one which has had a history; when we contemplate every complex structure and instinct as the summing up of many contrivances, each useful to the possessor, nearly in the same way as when we look at any great mechanical invention as the summing up of the labour, the experience, the reason, and even the blunders of numerous workmen; when we thus view each organic being, how far more interesting, I speak from experience, will the study of natural history become! (1861, p. 422)

Likewise, coincidence it cannot be that the pattern-fancying mathematicians often write the music of anaphora into their prose. Read these aloud, hear the music and feel the rhythms. Musical passages project energy and personality.

Yet, because mathematics builds on the old but does not discard it, because it is the most conservative of the sciences, because its theorems are deduced from postulates by the methods of logic, in spite of its having undergone revolutionary changes we do not suspect it of being a discipline capable of engendering paradoxes (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 93).

Our personal knowledge of space does not show it to be either infinite, homogeneous or isotropic. We do not know it to be infinite because we crawl, hop and fly around in only tiny portions. We do not know it to be homogeneous because a skyscraper in the distance seems much smaller than the end of our nose (p. 132).

The development of mathematics is a counterpart of the everlasting struggle for greater comprehensiveness and greater freedom: from the particular to the general; from configurations bounded by straight lines to pathological curves; from the properties of this or that specific figure to the properties of *all* figures; from one dimension to *n* dimensions; from the finite to the infinite (p. 361).

The mathematicians combine anaphora with other parallel figures, with the vernacular and with paradox to produce writing alchemies with steady rhythms and vivid descriptions that give order to chaos and bring understandings to abstractions. Today, we too seldom see the seductive academic style of these mathematicians or of a Darwin or a Dawkins or a Dennett. Today's academeses writers have stopped evolving, starting

regressing and merit extinction. Imagine a world in which there is no seductive academic writing.

Imagine a world in which there are no stories of murder in newspapers, every one is so omniscient that no house ever catches fire, no airplane ever has an accident, no husband deserts his wife, no pastor elopes with a choir girl, no king abdicates his throne for love, no man changes his mind and everyone proceeds to carry out with logical precision a career that he mapped out for himself at the age of ten—good-by to this happy human world! All the excitement and uncertainty of life would be gone. There would be no literature because there would be no sin, no misbehavior, no human weakness, no upsetting passion, no prejudices, no irregularities and, worst of all, no surprises (Lin, 1937, p. 59).

Epistrophe

To repeat patterns at or near the end of clauses or sentences is—you guessed it—epistrophe. A relatively unknown presidential hopeful sandwiched anaphora and epistrophe together to offer American voters a more hopeful political diet in 2008.

...generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can. Yes, we can. Yes, we can. ... It was a creed written into...: Yes, we can. ... It was whispered by slaves...: Yes, we can. It was sung by immigrants...: Yes, we can.

Obama crafted "Yes, we can" into a campaign slogan. Academic texts might need no slogans, but all communications seduce better with musical figures. Yes, we can use anaphora and epistrophe in academic prose to build rhythms to please dancing ears and parallelisms to please structured minds. And like politics and advertising and songwriting and communications designed for recall, academic writers can use anaphora and epistrophe to repeat arguments and significance, to help readers better remember them.

They did what humans have done for centuries when life became untenable—what the Pilgrims did under the tyranny of British rule, what the Scotch-Irish did in Oklahoma when the land turned to dust, what the Irish did when there was nothing to eat, what the European Jews did during the spread of Nazism, what the landless in Russia, Italy, China, and elsewhere did when something better across the ocean called to them (Wilkerson, 2010).

Chapter two found Strunk and White unable to define style and uncaring for figures of speech. And yet they cannot fashion their own style, and their definition of style, without them, without anaphora, parallelism and metaphors.

There is no satisfactory explanation of style, no infallible guide to good writing, no assurance that a person who thinks clearly will be able to write clearly, no key that unlocks the door, no inflexible rule by which the young writer may shape his course (2000, p. 66).

There is no doubt Strunk and White write stylishly. There is no absence of figures in their prose like there is no presence of figures in academes. There is then no doubt that to write seductively is to use figures of speech. No, Strunk and White—or anyone else—cannot easily define style but they equally cannot convey style without figures of speech. And yet the figures remain conspicuously absent in academic writing pedagogies so no wonder academic writing stinks (Pinker, 2014b).

If the biologists and philosophers and historians and mathematicians on these pages had written in today's academes style, we would be denied their musical and memorable texts. Seductive writers know that prose is performance, and performances need performers, and performers project personalities, and personalities pipe music.

[Darwin] was aware, of course, that characteristics run in families; aware that offspring tend to resemble their parents and siblings; aware that particular characteristics of dogs and pigeons breed true (Dawkins, 2009, p. 29).

It becomes a land where philosophy itself is a pretty simple and common sense affair that can be as conveniently put in two lines of verse as in a heavy volume. It becomes a land where there is no system of philosophy, broadly speaking, no logic, no metaphysics, no academic jargon; where there is much less academic dogmatism, less intellectual or practical fanaticism, and fewer abstract terms and long words (Lin, 1937, pp. 411-412).

May not those naturalists who, knowing far less of the laws of inheritance than does the breeder, and knowing no more than he does of the intermediate links in the long lines of descent, yet admit that many of our domestic races are descended from the same parents—may they not learn a lesson of caution, when they deride the idea of species in a state of nature being lineal descendants of other species? (Darwin, 1861, p. 33)

Anadiplosis

If you saw the trailer for Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*, you saw and heard anadiplosis.

The general who became a slave; the slave who became a gladiator; the gladiator who defied an emperor.

Anadiplosis means "to double again" in Greek, to repeat the end of a clause or a sentence at the start of the next clause or sentence. Then you do it again and again until you conclude your tale, rhyme, proverb, lesson, argument.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed.—*King James Bible*

Anadiplosis coheres by slow marching ideas to its stately drum beat and marshalling texts into musical, emphatic and cohesive regiments of argument. But its august rhythm soon numbs the ear, or bursts the gut, as a certain old woman in a nursery rhyme discovered when her diet ever enlarged from swallowing a fly, then a spider and finally a cow. Use anadiplosis to progress tales, to snowball arguments and to emphasize conclusions (Harris, 2003, p. 111). Lin Yutang does all these.

The private dreams of being a corporal, the corporal dreams of being a captain, and the captain dreams of being a major or colonel (1937, p. 72).

How do these people make their living? And why do they come here? Very simple. The laundrymen wash the clothes of the barbers and restaurant waiters, the restaurant waiters wait upon the laundrymen and barbers while they eat, and the barbers cut the hair of the laundrymen and waiters. That is civilization. Isn't it amazing? (p. 147).

When man has lost his ability to speak in epigrams, he writes paragraphs, when he is unable to express himself clearly in paragraphs, he develops an argument; and when he still fails to make his meaning clear in an argument, he writes a treatise (p. 418).

You will likely hear epistrophe and anadiplosis less often than anaphora, and all less often than the metre of parallelism that keeps the tempo in all. Like the harp, the glockenspiel and the pipe organ, composers reserve some instruments for special effects. Anadiplosis is such a figure. But you cannot make its seductive sound unless you write

parts for your prose with that instrument. And you cannot make *any* seductive sounds unless you write parts for your prose with the chamber orchestra of figures playing in this chapter.

That old woman in the nursery rhyme soon bursts our ears because she set her prose to the music, but seductive writers set the *music* to their prose. Think of music in prose as like the soundtrack to a film: First conjure your text, and then score it to enhance it. Too much prose set to the absolute symmetries of some musical figures sounds like military prose. Your readers want to sing and dance, not goose step and salute. Confucius gave an extended example of anadiplosis, but the passage slowly goose-steps a memorable idea into a martial mantra.

The ancient people who desired to have a clear moral harmony in the world would first order their national life; those who desired to order their national life would first regulate their home life; those who desired to regulate their home life would first cultivate their personal lives; those who desired to cultivate their personal lives would first set their hearts right; those who desired to set their hearts right, would first make their wills sincere; those who desired to make their wills sincere would first arrive at understanding; understanding comes from the exploration of the knowledge of things. When the knowledge of things is gained, then understanding is reached; when understanding is reached, then the will is sincere; when the will is sincere, then the heart is set right; when the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the home life is regulated; when the home life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then the world is at peace (reprinted in Lin, 1937).

Absolute symmetry matters more only in some figures like isocolon and chiasmus. Conductors have two hands. One beats the tempo and the other crafts phrases, so bend and shape the music around your phrases, like Lin Yutang does.

Man's love for words is his first step toward ignorance, and his love for definitions the second. The more he analyzes, the more he has need to define, and the more he defines, the more he aims at an impossible logical perfection, for the effort of aiming at logical perfection is only a sign of ignorance (1937, p. 420).

The figures of music and repetition persuade and seduce with repetitions and rhythms. Repetition is the easiest form of persuasion and the mother of memory. If you do not repeat you cannot compete so why do we see so little musical word and syntax repetition in the competitive game of academic writing and publishing? Anaphora and epistrophe and

anadiplosis and polysyndeton allow for repetitions of words and phrases to fasten persuasion, repetitions of syntax to make music, and repetitions of both to persuade minds and to perform music, so why are they absent from academic writing pedagogies? Because of pedagogy and prejudice or, rather, a prejudiced pedagogy.

Academic writing pedagogies tell writers to vary sentence structures. Composition courses for English language learners tell writers to vary their vocabulary. But these good rules can cause bad outcomes unless qualified. You *should* repeat the same word or the same syntax or both and not substitute a paraphrase or a synonym if the originals offer the best words or structures and if their repetitions build the best arguments and rhythms. Prejudice argues against repetition in academic prose because academic writing pedagogies undervalue or disdain the genres whose prose styles value repetition. This prejudice considers brash advertising and tabloid journalism unsophisticated for their "low tricks" of repetition and emotion. But surely just molehills of badly styled journalism and advertising prose quake beneath the shadow cast by the mountain of zombie-styled academese. Why else would style guides enjoin academic writers to learn to write more stylishly by studying the best prose styles of advertising and journalism?

Alliteration and Assonance

Think of musical prose and think of songs, rhymes, poems, slogans, adverts. Texts written to alert the ear and to burrow into memory make much music with alliteration and assonance. Repeat the same consonant sound in neighbouring words and you make the music of alliteration. Repeat the same vowel sounds in neighbouring words and you make the music of assonance. But overdo this and you bray like an ass or an advertiser.

Coca Cola

Finger Lickin' Chicken—KFC

It Beats...as it Sweeps...as it Cleans—Hoover

Lay lady lay. Lay across my big brass bed.—Bob Dylan

Surely, serious academics don't write like this? Yes, they do, now and then, particularly in titles. Academics can communicate better by studying how advertisers and storytellers communicate (Pinker, 2014a; Sword,

2012a; Thompson & Kamler, 2013). The title of your paper or book or talk advertises your text and you, but academese authors write titles that tell audiences only the topic and advertise authors who care not to interest, engage or amuse. Here are some torpid titles dying for energetic verbs, or any verb.

A Typology of Statements about Discourse—*Journal of Applied Linguistics*

Self-Knowledge and Externalism about Empty Concepts—*Journal of Analytic Philosophy*

Fish condition factor, peroxisome proliferator activated receptors and biotransformation responses in Sarotherodon melanotheron from a contaminated freshwater dam (Awba Dam) in Ibadan, Nigeria—*Marine Environmental Research*

These constipated titles neither flow nor stimulate. Readers want vivacious verbs and animated adjectives, not numbed nouns and perspiring prepositions. Better titles engage and interest by saying what the thing is, why it matters and why readers should care.

Spoken Grammar: Where Are We and Where Are We Going?—*Journal of Applied Linguistics*

Sterile Neutrino Dark Matter: Galaxy Formation and Other Stories—University of Cambridge talk

Un-Friend My Heart: Facebook, Promiscuity, and Heartbreak in a Neoliberal Age—*Anthropological Quarterly*

Really good titles get really creative, with figures like alliteration, assonance, paradox, metaphor, tricolon, personification, wordplay and others. They advertise authors who care to interest, engage and amuse.

Clarity, cut, and culture: The many meanings of diamonds—Anthropology book

Preachers who are not believers—*Evolutionary Psychology*

Regular and novel metonymy: Can you curl up with a good Agatha Christie in your second language?—*Journal of Applied Linguistics*

A baron, some guides, and a few ephebic boys: Cultural intimacy, sexuality, and heritage in Sicily—*Anthropological Quarterly*

The ultrafast talk of two excited electrons: Listening, and then asking them physics questions—University of Oxford talk

Alliteration and assonance write music into titles to aid memory. Consider some memorable books: *The Great Gatsby*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*; *Song of Solomon*; *God is not Great*. Consider academic book titles: *Silent Spring*; *Guns, Germs and Steel*; *Syntactic Structures*; *The Guns of August*; *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; *Fat Gay Men: Girth, Mirth, and the Politics of Stigma*.

A tinkle of alliteration or assonance now and then will not cheapen your prose, but will advertise you care to engage your readers' eyes, ears and minds. And as we have seen, the musical figures like to sing together and to dance to parallelism. Alliteration and assonance are the easiest musical figures to write into prose but also the easiest to abuse (Clark, 2002). Sprinkle them seductively into prose; do not saturate it.

Biology also has some tantalizing tongue twisters (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 4).

Whatever the intentions of the prophet, the prediction has none of the qualities of prophecy (p. 68).

"Existence" is a metaphysical expression tied up with notions of being and other bugaboos worse even than boojums (p. 62).

It is the method employed when we count our change or our chickens; it is the proper method for counting any class, no matter how large, from ten to a googolplex—and beyond (p. 31).

The presses, the graduate programs, the conference, and other professional assembly places have all put a premium on particularity (Garber, 2005, p. 130).

There is no such state as quasi-existence; there are no stable doctrines of semi-realism. Beliefs must either be vindicated along with the viruses or banished along with the banshees (Dennett, 1991, p. 27).

Every time the brain [...] indulges in so-called "abstract thinking" [...] and escapes into the world of conceptualized reality, it becomes devitalized, dehumanized and degenerate (Lin, 1937, p. 57).

I say it [mortality] is a gloriously fine thing. It makes us sober; it makes us a little sad; and many of us it makes poetic. But above all, it makes it possible for us to make up our mind and arrange to live sensibly, truthfully and always with a sense of our own limitations (p. 157).

Alliteration and assonance sound just two of the chords in musical speaking and writing. Those terrific taxonomizers, the ancient Greeks, classified many others. Consonance repeats a consonant sound in other places in a word.

The soul selects her own society.—Emily Dickinson

"Paroemion" repeats sounds for comic excess.

The sibilant, scented silence that shimmered where we sat.—P.G. Wodehouse

You might want to confuse sounds for comedy or couldn't help it. This carries the modern label spoonerism.

"Jeeves", I said ... "Mr. Sipperly! Jeeves, Mr. Soupperly is in the sip".
"Sir?" "I mean, Mr. Sipperly is in the soup".—P.G. Wodehouse

You might want to combine assonance with isocolon, or to end words with the same patterns of notes, or to make words sound like the things they name. Such phenomena carry the tongue-trapping names "paromoiosis", "homeoteleuton" and onomatopoeia.

You might not want to repeat sounds at all, but can you prevent it? Spoken languages register unique sound footprints like thumbs register unique fingerprints. British English ears hear "wah-wah-wah" when American English tongues speak. American English ears hear "oy" and "eye" when Australian English tongues speak. Australian English ears hear squashed vowels when Kiwi tongues speak: "happy" becomes "hippy" and "deck" becomes "Dick". But all the Englishes tend toward the natural assonance of the schwa /ə/, the commonest sound.

What are we gonna have for dinner tonight?

Style handbooks recommend writing like a speaking person because our spoken languages make music. Write a little or a lot of music into your prose and you will please your readers not a little.

Summary

"Try being a musician in prose", enjoins Harold Evans (2017, p. 108). The best academic writers care enough for their readers to enliven their prose with the energy, rhythm and music of performance. By artfully writing musical figures into their prose they produce performance texts that sound

like real people speaking with passions and patterns and repetitions. Not for them the zombie moans of academese prose. Seductive academic writers enliven and engage the ears and the minds of readers not just for pleasure but because the musical figures also craft logic, patterns and cohesion into texts. Read your texts aloud, and rewrite if there be zombies.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIGURES OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE

Humanity seems doomed to analogy.
—Roland Barthes

But the greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor.
—Aristotle

Introduction

Before you can advance knowledge, you must explain knowledge: What we know and how we know it. In kindergartens, high schools and universities teachers explain stuff. And the more complicated the stuff, the more you simplify it. How do you explain evolution? You draw a tree of life. How do you explain quantum mechanics? You imagine a cat in a box that's paradoxically alive and dead. Explaining, naming or defining things starts with showing what they resemble. To define something means to show to what family it belongs and how it differs from its relatives. "Genus" and "differentia" give the technical names. Properly, a "camel" is an even-toed ungulate ruminant mammal (genus) with a fatty hump (differentia). Impishly, it's a horse designed by a committee.

The Ancients identified many figures of similarity and difference that help us see, feel and understand things. This chapter shows figures seductive academic writers use to define, describe and explain stuff simply, vividly and freshly. Ask people to name a figure of speech and they likely can't name recondite ones like isocolon. But, as quick as a flash, they'll name simile or metaphor. Figures of similarity and difference abound in good literature, which explains why the best academic writers mine literature to write more seductively. Surely no one crafted better or fresher similes and metaphors per page than P.G. Wodehouse. But you don't have to "swell like an embarrassed frog", "gape like a diseased fish" or "look like a bereaved tapeworm" if you can't write similes like Wodehouse. You will engage readers if you strive always to describe

things vividly. Let us begin with the seemingly simplest figure of similarity and difference.

Analogy and Simile

As sure as night follows day, simile is a figure of speech. But as sure as death and taxes, analogy is not. I defend the terminological sin of considering both together with the tedious taxonomy defence. Let the linguists and rhetoricians babble like a basketful of puppies over their differences, and whether a simile without "like" or "as" or "than" is or isn't a simile. They haven't the hope of a toupee in a high wind of reaching agreement. Analogy and simile are similar and useful because they simplify to explain, describe, categorize, and can argue, too.

Analogies for Comprehension

Churchill (1967) called analogy a "formidable weapon" because it helps us comprehend unknowns by imagining them as simplified extensions of knowns. Here's a physicist humanizing a collapsing star to knowns of size and weight.

This collapse continues until the entire core is contained in a ball of roughly a 10-kilometer (6-mile) radius—about the size of New Haven, Connecticut. At this point the matter is so dense that a teaspoonful would weigh thousands of tons (Krauss, 2007, p. 19).

Here the mathematicians make familiar an unfamiliar number.

You will get some idea of the size of this very large but finite number from the fact that there would not be enough room to write it, if you went to the farthest star, touring all the nebulae and putting down zeros every inch of the way (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 23).

Here a philosopher relates absence of human purpose to high school physics.

Without its predictive power [...] human activity would be just so much Brownian motion (Dennett, 1991, p. 29).

Here a great naturalist compares the fossil record to a disorderly museum.

The crust of the earth with its embedded remains must not be looked at as a well-filled museum, but as a poor collection made at hazard and at rare intervals (Darwin, 1861, p. 423).

And here another biologist explains the unfamiliar practices of evolutionary biologists with the familiar detective labour of a Hercule Poirot.

We are like detectives who come on the scene after a crime has been committed...There are footprints, fingerprints (and nowadays DNA fingerprints too), bloodstains, letters, diaries (Dawkins, 2009, p. 16).

Whether his detectives are similes or analogies or metaphors or allegories is a taxonomic trouble Dawkins surely cares little about. What Dawkins does care about is us. He cares enough to give us a guiding image, a Sherlock Holmes treading curiously on the evolutionary trail, illumining our way with a flashlight through the dark unknowns of Dawkins' profession. If we recall only one thing, it will be that evolutionary biologists detect as doggedly as detectives, because the simile repeats throughout the book. Good analogies aid comprehension.

Analogies for Clarity

Analogies describe and explain better if you spurn clichés and craft them vividly. The human animal smells and feels and tastes and loves. So the more your analogies reflect being human, the more vividly you describe. The Ancients named this descriptive ideal "enargia", meaning to make something palpable: "to set forth the objects of which we speak in lively colours, and so that they may as it were be seen" (Quintilian, 1920). Good literature colours descriptions vividly—think of Joseph Conrad's "show, don't tell" injunction—but academic writers should also paint vividly. See how the mathematicians colour their canvas of 18th century mathematics with enargia and tint it with personification, metaphor, isocolon, alliteration and tricolon.

Berkeley, with the subtlety and humour necessary for an Irish bishop, made some pointed attacks on the infinitesimal, during the adolescent period of the calculus, that had the very best, sharp-witted, scholastic sting (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 40).

The more vividly and immediately you describe a thing, the better audiences see and remember it (Kosslyn, Thompson, & Ganis, 2006), and the easier you avoid writing academese (McNamara, Crossley, &

McCarthy, 2010; Miller, 2004). The reason "as happy as a lark" describes less well than Wodehouse's "looking like a boy about to be taken to the circus" isn't because the lark is trite. It's because we will never feel the happiness of a lark but we have felt the excitement of a child.

Too much academic writing paints in greys because non-creative writers don't have the rainbow colours stored in the creative writing classroom. They should steal its primary colours to paint their writing as colourfully as creative writers colour theirs. Here are some colourful, descriptive analogies by creative non-creatives.

[Evolution] is not like blending paints, it is more like shuffling and reshuffling cards in a pack (Dawkins, 2009, p. 29).

The room was empty when I walked in. The desks stood in approximate rows, like teeth in need of attention (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 443).

[The new Dean says:] "I have decided on a new strategic mission, to be backed up by rigorously enforced performance targets". A collective cringe went around the room, as if a giant whip had been raised (p. 450).

The recognition of imaginaries was much like the United States recognizing Soviet Russia—the existence was undeniable, all that was required was formal sanction and approval (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 93).

The German philosophers are the most frivolous of all; they court truth like ardent lovers, but seldom propose to marry her (Lin, 1937, p. 159).

A vague, uncritical idealism always lends itself to ridicule ... Human society would be like an idealistic couple forever getting tired of one place and changing their residence regularly once every three months (p. 4).

Strangely enough, we may have evidence for the truth of something we cannot really understand. Suppose a caterpillar is locked in a sterile safe by someone unfamiliar with insect metamorphosis, and weeks later the safe is reopened, revealing a butterfly (Nagel, 1974, pp. 447-448).

Analogies for Coherence

Chapter three touched on the phenomenon of "cohesion": Texts read more easily when their beams and bricks cement together with words signaling relationships of similarity, difference, sequence, reference. There I swung a wrecking ball at the house of academic writing instruction for neglecting to include the fastening figures of speech among the linguistic joists, spars

and blocks in their pedagogies. Dawkins fastens together his entire book with a detective analogy. This kind of fastening answers to the related name of "coherence", which broadly means texts make sense only if they meet our expectations. A birthday card without a "Happy Birthday!" is as incoherent as a Sherlock Holmes tale without Watson. Coherence is thus a mental phenomenon (Gernsbacher & Givón, 1995)—what we *bring* to a text—as much as a linguistic one—what we find there.

Dawkins crafts an analogy to involve us in making meaning, allowing us to draw from our knowns to better see the unknowns of his discipline. Now, figures like analogy, simile and metaphor can tie together texts coherently (Pyne, 2009), but guess what? The house of academic writing instruction makes no room for them either in the room marked "writing coherently". To teach coherent academic writing without also including the figures that can stick texts together, enhance their understanding and please the reader is as incoherent as teaching method acting without teaching method.

Analogy for Arguments

Analogy can name, define, describe, simplify, but their most powerful punch is argument. Suppose you want to argue something simply to a wide audience. Don't waste your time publishing an essay or blog post or letter to the editor because few people will read long texts. We like to think we live in a knowledge economy, but attention trumps knowledge. Our attention economy favours powerful and pithy points because we have ever more things to read and ever less time to read them. Analogy thrives in this reduced attentive space, on the vernacular internet and on social media. We may dislike the bawdy Twitterverse, and didn't foresee it becoming the internet's megaphone, but it's here today. You can't argue much by Tweeting but you can argue by analogy.



The elusive 20th century Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin coined a vivid term for analogies that debase with the vernacular like these Tweets. He called them "decrowning doubles" (1984) because they take sacred originals like Honest Abe and religious believers and bring them down to earth by re-representing them through profane doubles of Crooked Hilary and homophobes. Rhetoricians and logicians may dislike the simplicity and debunk the validity of analogical argumentation, but analogy makes an argument (Colston & Gibbs, 1998; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1954). And the more vernacular the argument, the wider its reach and the deeper its impression. The internet chatters with debasing analogies, hence Mr. Godwin's (1994) eponymous law that Nazis will inevitably goose-step into internet discussions. Even academics decrown with Hitler analogies (for example, Altemeyer, 2004).

The Vernacular Academic

Bringing things down to earth communicates powerfully because it communicates in the prose style and with the logic and arguments of the common people.

Thousands can see that a proposition is nonsense without possessing the capacity formally to refute it (Lichtenberg, 1990, p. 98).

How did an unknown academic monk become the most read author in the early history of publishing? Martin Luther drew readers like moths to a flame—as later did the Catholic book bonfires draw in his books—by turning his 95 academic theses written in Latin into just 20 pithy polemics published in the common, German tongue. Luther in vernacular German, and later William Tyndale in vernacular English, brought the word of God down to earth from the high Latin of Catholic power to the low tongue of common readers. Tyndale turned obscure Latin interpretations into everyday phrases still used today, like "eat drink and be merry" and "the powers that be".

Seductive academic writers know when to write in the common tongue. It simplifies complexities and shrinks distance between pedagogue and pupil. Recall good writers' advice from chapter three: write like a speaking person, not an institution. The layperson doesn't describe herself in the third person or disguise herself with the passive—unless she wants to hide something—but academese writers do. The layperson speaks clearly and plainly, but academese prose reads darkly and difficultly with jargon, abstractions, nominalizations. Academese writers mistakenly think clarity and simplicity unacademic: "How will I be thought clever if I don't sound clever?" The layperson interests and illustrates with anecdotes and analogies, but academese writers stifle with abstractions and citations. The layperson engages and emotes with hyperbole, humour, irony, sarcasm, ridicule, but academese writers don't because they think these unacademic.

Seductive academic writers know when to engage with the vernacular. Here the mathematicians write like speaking people, with everyday words and analogies, and simple words of few syllables.

If you count something, the answer you get is either perfect or all wrong; there is no half way. It is very much like catching a train. You either catch it or you miss it, and if you miss it by a split second you might as well have come a week late (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 115).

To object to four-dimensional geometry on the grounds that there are only three dimensions is absurd. Chess can be played as well by those who

believe in comrades or dictators as by those who cling to the vanishing glory of kings and queens. What sense is there in objecting to chess on the grounds that kings and queens belong to a past age, and that, in any case, they never did behave like chess pieces—no, not even bishops (p. 19).

In the pleadingly titled *Writing Differently*, two management theorists decrown their discipline's academese with analogies.

[Of a literature review in a presentation] It's rather like a show trial in those more literal regimes of truth, where the accused have been drugged and the witnesses given a script to follow (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 444).

What might be the point of writing something which only a handful of people can understand? Of course it may be that we are like physicists at the cutting edge. But I really doubt it (p. 448).

And here professors of philosophy and English flagellate academe with more decrowning analogies.

This overspecialization of knowledge is not so very different from the overspecialization in a Chinese imperial kitchen (Lin, 1937, p. 414).

I cringe when I see young philosophers doing a smarty-pants demolition number in front of scientists, a talk that would go down like honey in a room full of philosophers but merely makes the scientists shake their heads in dismay (Dennett, 2009, p. 233).

Jobs and departments are often organized as if intellectual life were a pie chart, filling empty slots so that the "pie" will look whole—which is why the missing slices, as is often clear from the idiosyncrasies of job ads, may have nothing in common (Garber, 2005, p. 130).

Seductive academic writing communicates as clearly and plainly as these analogies make it. Figures of speech seduce, but nothing comforts more than the vernacular (Aristotle, 1926; Blanshard, 1954). Texts, discourses and practices mingle much today, a simple mixing given the difficult names of "hybridity" and "interdiscursivity" (Fairclough, 1995; Sarangi, 2000). Few but Donald Trump believed he could successfully run for president. He did so not by acting the cautious politician, but by scripting and starring in his own reality TV show, mixing vernacular politics with celebrity and entertainment. He did so not by having credible policies, but by having incredible conceit and credulous bluster. He did so not by speechifying in town halls, but by Tweeting attack campaigns. Trump attracted believers and repelled disbelievers by campaigning in the

vernacular. Communicate in writing like a speaking person, like the best communicators, regardless of their ideological stripes.

Unearthing Metaphor

Two generals strategize how to unearth their redoubtable foe from the trenches of World War I. Their shovels instead hit on a distinction between metaphor and analogy.

General Ludendorff: The English soldiers fight *like* lions.

General Hoffmann: But don't we know that they *are* lions led by donkeys?

The tale is apocryphal, but Aristotle tells us "simile is metaphor enlarged by a particle of comparison prefixed" (1926, p. 12). General Ludendorff crafts a simile with the particle "like". But General Hoffmann crafts a metaphor, English squaddies as fearsome lions led by asinine commanders. The beasts substitute for the people. This almost insignificant difference yields significant effects. It explains why analogy occupies very few pages but metaphor fills very many pages of analysis and pedagogy in stylistics, poetics, rhetoric and linguistics. The so-called "cognitive" linguists are so mad about metaphors they locate them literally on the brain (Lakoff, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor is textbook figurative language. The Ancients considered language figurative if it turned away from more literal expression (Nash, 1989)—"figurative" comes from the Greek "trope", meaning to "turn". On the tree of life, Hoffmann's brass asses leading leonine squaddies have branched away from the human family. Today people consider language "figurative" whenever it departs from the supposedly "literal". But we cannot define "literal" language (Stern, 2006) so we cannot binarily define "figurative" language. When someone says, "This is the literal truth" or "I was literally at my wit's end", they are speaking persuasively, not literally. To speak of "literal" as true and "figurative" as untrue is to make a category error. "Literal" and "figurative" labels will always merge into muddy waters because to use language is to use symbols representing something else (Chandler, 2007; Saussure, 1959). And the more colourful, lyrical or poetic the symbols, the more we value them. Aristotle esteemed metaphor.

But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances (1902, p. 87).

It is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else (1926, p. 355).

Seductive writers master figures like metaphor because texts with few or no figures lack life, humanity, character (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 367). We like figurative writers because the figures convey their passion and creativity (Quintilian, 1920). They write like a living person. We like figurative writers because the figures express their personality (Wilbers, 2000). They write like a living person. We like figurative writers because the figures abound in the vernacular (Aristotle, 1926). They write like a living person. Here are some academic writers mastering vernacular metaphors.

Write a solid, scholarly book for specialists in your field; otherwise you will step off the yellow brick road to tenure (Garber, 2005, p. 130).

A system is but a squint at truth, and the more logically that system is developed, the more horrible that mental squint becomes (Lin, 1937, p. 419).

The layman is satisfied with an intuitive grasp; the mathematician demands an exact formulation. However, in the higher dimensions, while the layman is halted by a blank wall—the natural limitations of his senses—the mathematician scales the wall using his extended formula as a ladder (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 123).

The Chinese people take to indifference as Englishmen take to umbrellas, because the political weather always looks a little ominous for the individual who ventures a little too far out alone (Lin, 1936, p. 46).

Names like "the age of Johnson" are more suggestive to us than a name like "the eighteenth century", for only by recalling how Johnson lived, the inns he frequented, and the friends with whom he held conversations does the period become real to us (p. 15).

Mastering Metaphor

Mastering metaphor means mastering the same rules for mastering analogy. Rule one says describe vividly and freshly. You cannot assemble vivid and fresh substitutions from the worn and broken parts littering the floors of the factories of metaphors and comparisons. You must machine anew good metaphors, hence Aristotle's commandment not to learn metaphors from others and Orwell's (2002) dictum to spurn dead metaphors. Rule two says simplify proportionally. A bad metaphor presents a

"contrary juxtaposition" (Aristotle, 1926, p. 355), but a good one substitutes proportionally to the thing described. Donkeys don't lead lions, but asses proportion to inept leaders and lions proportion to fearless fighters. The wisdom of these rules appears when metaphor performs her ballet brisé, the metaphorical stretch.

Extending Metaphor

Leave alone the question of whether you should use "I"—that ship has sailed. I and his friends You and We are out on the prow of the *SS Academia* shouting that they're kings of the world (Hayot, 2014, p. 184).

Physicists may consider time to be a fourth dimension, but not the mathematician. The physicist, like other scientists, may find that his latest machine has just the right place for some new mathematical gadget; that does not concern the mathematician. The physicist can borrow new parts for his changing machine every day for all the mathematician cares. If they fit, the physicist says they are useful, they are true, because there is a place for them in the model of his world in the making. When they no longer fit, he may discard them (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 119).

Vivid writers can sustain a metaphor across sentences, paragraphs or whole texts by following the proportions rule. Richard Dawkins signposts for readers the journey along the evolutionary pathway by proportionally fashioning his coherent detective metaphor. But the factory metaphor I extended above won't work. Evolution might seem to assemble life from off-the-shelf parts, but evolutionary biologists are dogged detectives not skillful machinists. Here's Dawkins crafting and extending more metaphors to navigate us along the pathways of evolution.

Reasonably enough, other scientists erected fortresses of scepticism (2009, p. 274).

Of course, the relationship between insects and flowers is a two-way street and we mustn't neglect to look in both directions (p. 53).

The first edition [*Origin of the Species*] is the most historically important. It is the one that thumped the Victorian solar plexus and drove out the wind of centuries (p. 403).

Long before we got our hands on the chisels in the artificial selection toolbox, natural selection had already sculpted wolves into self-domesticated "village dogs" without any human intervention (p. 71).

Dawkins even refers to his evolutionary detective.

I have used the metaphor of a detective, coming to the scene of a crime after it is all over and reconstructing from the surviving clues what must have happened (p. 111).

Naming language parts like this carries the name "metalanguage". We talk about "language about language" for reasons like understanding what it does and how it works. Dawkins talks about his metaphor to guide readers through the evolutionary crime scene his detective investigates and to story-tell with a character that fastens our understanding by binding together the pages, chapters and volume.

The extended family members of metaphor, simile and analogy are remarkable, because they show genius and give clarity. The genius of Dawkins' detective metaphor comes from his perceiving similarity among dissimilars, to begin our understanding. The clarity comes from its proportionality to purpose, to consolidate our understanding. These extended family members are also remarkably unusual. We don't remark of a sentence, "What a perfect parallelism!" or "Your assonance is faulty". But we make similar remarks about metaphor, simile and analogy, because they make texts coherent, if they follow the proportions rule, and incoherent if they foul it.

Metaphors for Coherence

Academic writing pedagogies esteem how clarity and coherency (Pinker, 2014a; Sword, 2012a) aid understanding. Academic writers cohere long manuscripts with signposts and summaries like "Chapter three will review..." and "We earlier considered..." Dawkins shows we can cohere texts more seductively with metaphor and extended metaphor—or with simile or analogy.

Here's a physicist announcing his purpose with an extended metaphor.

What I want to present here, then, is not so much a trail guide through the modern physics jungle as a guide on how to hike in the first place: what equipment to bring, how to avoid cliffs and dead ends, what kinds of trails are likely to be the most exciting, and how to get home safely (Krauss, 2007, p. xii).

Here's a literary theorist with two perfectly proportioned metaphors.

But students also need to be taught to take charge of a thought and to become the conductor—even the violent tamer—of an idea (Garber, 2005, p. 130).

And here the mathematicians tell a story of mathematics by extending and combining metaphors.

The infinite has a double aspect—the infinitely large and the infinitely small. Repeated arguments and demonstrations, of apparently apodictic force, were advanced, overwhelmed, and once more resuscitated to prove or disprove its existence. Few of the arguments were ever refuted—each was buried under an avalanche of others. The happy result was that the problem never became any clearer (Kasner & Newman, 1949, pp. 36-37).

Metaphorical Sunken Cars

Metaphors won't work or extend if they flout the rules of vividness and proportions: Cars often crash but seldom sink. And dead metaphors are no longer metaphors because overuse strips them of their figurative costume to expose the cadaver beneath. I once caught a discussion about leadership on the BBC *Today Programme*. Management expert and parliamentarian Robin Walker lined up a parade of dead metaphors which marched his contribution into a chloroform gas of inanity.

For a CEO coming in to a listed business, the first hundred days is actually quite a short period in the corporate cycle in which they'll be keeping their head down, they'll be dealing with those people who perhaps wanted the job and didn't get it and making sure that they've kept them on board and they won't necessarily be going out to the public until the end of that period to set out their stall.

Avoid dead metaphors, similes and analogies, not like the plague but like a vampire avoids daybreak, or a little boy avoids bedtime, or a diplomat avoids frankness, or a French aristocrat avoided the tumbril, by crafting fresher and more vivid alternatives. English can reek of metaphorical corpses. Hear them—if you can bear them—when sportspersons relate their performances: "We were neck and neck". "I'm at the top of my game". "I'm below par". "I gave it my best shot". Better to cremate the metaphors we have shot to death.

I've been reading about *crumbling* infrastructure for twenty years. Hasn't it crumbled away yet? (Evans, 2017, p. 17)

Another metaphorical casualty is the mixed metaphor. This describes poorly because it draws from incompatible domains or proportions. Fortunately, these disfigure writing less often than speech because good editors euthanize them. Good writers consider and craft their metaphors at leisure; bad writers use prefabricated metaphors; and unrehearsed speakers may trip over their metaphorical shoelaces. Here's Melvyn Bragg tripping up in an episode of the BBC's *In Our Time*, discussing the 12th century renaissance.

Greek texts...Aristotle is coming in, Plato. There's also mathematics, astronomy, medicine. This is gradually...the dam of silence—that doesn't work, does it?—is about to burst. [laughter]

Metaphors Unbounded

Fully extended metaphors can vividly bind together whole texts or become allegories, moral tales with animals or imaginary beings describing the follies of human societies. Think of *Aesop's Fables*, *Animal Farm* or *Alice in Wonderland*. From such allegories come everyday proverbs and metaphors like "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others", "going down the rabbit hole" and "through the looking glass". The sciences don't lend themselves to the art of allegory, but an extended metaphor or a little allegory enlivens a humanities text. Chapter one tried as much with the coroner's inquest into dead academic writing.

Metaphors have even described the problems of academese. I call academese a disease because prose soon suffers its symptoms after picking up the illness from academic writing programs. Helen Sword introduced the term "zombie nouns" (2012b) to describe one of its commonest afflictions. To zombie prose you convert vivacious verbs and animated adjectives into zombie nouns and abstractions. Here's some academese from a life sciences student who gassed to sleep his sentence with passive voice and zombie nouns.

Polymer scaffolds can be employed as three-dimensional matrixes for cell cultivation and targeted tissue-growth stimulation.

Nominalizations and passivizations anaesthetize prose. An adrenalin shot in the writer's arm restores the blood flow: turn the nouns back into verbs and activate the passive.

Polymer scaffolds can serve as three-dimensional matrices to cultivate cells and stimulate tissue growth.

Other observers distressed by academese have pressed the zombie noun metaphor into service. The zombies are becoming allegorical.

Helen Sword calls nominalizations zombie nouns because they lumber across the scene without a conscious agent directing their motion. They can turn prose into a night of the living dead (Pinker, 2014b).

Metonymy and Synecdoche

I emphasized similarities between metaphor, simile and analogy, for between them "there is very little difference" (Aristotle, 1926, p. 367). All enliven texts, but in the natural history museum of figures of speech the curators separately label two classes of metaphor. The exhibits under glass labelled "bread" and "notes" carry the class label synecdoche because they substitute for a thing with its parts. "Bread" and "notes" stand for the wholes of food and money. But the exhibits in the next glass case labelled "bookworm" and "bottle" carry the class label metonymy because they substitute through attributes of the thing or its whole. Spot the difference? Me neither. I see a distinction without a difference—at least not one that matters to audiences. Classifications aside, elastic members of the extended family of metaphor, simile and analogy all substitute one thing for another.

Style handbooks teach us to tell stories, avoid abstractions and write like a speaking person. Metaphors serve these needs. Style handbooks teach us to write clearly and coherently and to simplify complexity. Metaphors serve these needs. Workshops on how to avoid academese recommend against zombie nouns and needless passives. Metaphors serve these needs by substituting living things for abstractions. Aristotle teaches us to master metaphor because audiences esteem it. A fresh and vivid metaphor pleases, an extended metaphor delights and an allegory entertains. Master metaphor.

Personification Tells Stories

Miss Proper opens one of her student's academic composition papers and reads on.

Provide an objective account of the incidence of *The Three Little Pigs*

It is established that a sow and her three progenies were unsustainably accommodated such that a situation of negative sustainability is evidentially demonstrable. Further growth of the piglets henceforward was

not to be accommodated, and so impacted upon them were the desiderata for pig housings to be assembled for the individual accommodation of each inhabitant, and nourishment to be gathered for their sustenance, respectively. Therefore, it may be stated that the satisfaction of these preconditions is the *sine qua non* if a situation of non-negative sustainability is to be effectuated. However, it must further be stated that a caution was expressed to the piglets that it had heretofore been acknowledged that a wolf was considered to be located in the proximal vicinity.

Miss Proper begins to sense an A-grade. But objectivity intervenes, so she scans the assessment checklist. Does the writer use abundant passive voice? Check. Does the writer use jargon and abstractions? Check. Does the writer ~~use~~ utilize a precision language ~~of~~ encompassing polysyllables and Latinate terms? Check. Does the writer condescend with abundant nominalizations, low-frequency vocabulary and arcane terminology? Check. Does the writer demonstrate techniques that avoid telling a story containing persons, actions and a storyteller? Check. Does the text conceal the writer's voice? Check.

This parody laughs at the sins of academes, but academic writing pedagogies teach the academes checklist and ignore an injunction in every style handbook: Tell stories. You cannot tell stories about pigs with nominalizations and passive voice. You cannot describe what pigs do with abstractions and comatose verbs. You cannot engage readers if you write with pregnant polysyllables and rarefied vocabulary. And you cannot narrate stories if you absent the characters and the storyteller from the storytelling. Storytellers befriend their readers by talking to them, adding commentaries, asking questions. They do not hide behind passives and abstractions. Herein it may be explicated thus!

Personification tells stories by turning non-human things into persons doing things. It's common enough that we overlook it and its narrative power. The sun and moon beam and smile and hide and peep out. We cannot believe our ears or trust our other senses. Fortune and fate frown or favour or cheer. The north wind blows and howls and rages. Time drags and marches and vanishes. History steps forward and backward and stumbles. History once imprinted personifications onto pages with capital letters. In the *Fables*, Aesop personified the North Wind, the Sun, the Plane Tree, Pots and Planets and Roses. Personifications seldom dress so formally today, but lurk in the background if you care to look for them. Here are some academic personifications denouncing academes.

[Aristotle] was the first man also to start the impertinent academic jargon incomprehensible to the common man, which is being outdone by the

American sociologists and psychologists of today (Kasner & Newman, 1949, pp. 415-416).

The effect of this strangled and pretentious tone of critical management writing is to make it incapable of speaking to anyone outside a very limited circle (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 445).

The writing was obsessed with its own cleverness, rather than what it might do for others (p. 448).

Common academic personifications may also pass unnoticed. A thesis or book might "argue", "defend" or "conjecture". Its chapters might "describe", "outline" or "explain". Its sections might "introduce", "detail" or "summarize". When we opened the doors to analogy and metaphor earlier, we found seductive ways of looking forward and backward and mapping the journey for readers in texts. These time travels get called "signpost language" and challenge creativity because signposts are essential but unloved. Personification enlivens signposts, but too often academics retreat into the comatose passive. Here's a frigid signposting example in some frozen-stiff prose from some refrigeration engineers.

The results are thoroughly evaluated with a statistical analysis of the residuals showing that nearly systematic information is removed proving that only marginal improvement will be possible. Finally, a discussion further elucidates the features needed to be taken into account for supermarket refrigeration load forecasting and suggestions for further studies are presented (Rasmussen et al., 2016).

Humour scoffs that "No monuments stand for anything designed by a committee". This text's committee of six authors committed themselves to the passive but not to clarity, concision or creativity, and certainly not to storytelling. Their findings might have "revealed", their discussion might have "argued". They might have told a story of forecasting load refrigeration in supermarkets that "required", "advanced" or "anticipated". Lively personifications can replace many academic writing standbys. "Necessity requires" can replace the wordy existential "It is necessary to". "Reason suggests" can likewise replace "it is reasonable to". "Memory recalls" can replace "it will be remembered". Problems can "frustrate" and complications can "make mischief". Solutions can "present" themselves and explanations can "jostle for attention". Evidence can "insist" and conjecture can "speculate".

The more you personify abstractions the more you tell stories and write like a speaking person. Seductive academic writers follow these two golden rules. Listen to the mathematicians tell stories.

To count is to talk the language of number (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 27).

The number π reached maturity with the invention of the calculus by Newton and Leibniz (p. 75).

Just how far have we been carried by common sense in arriving at these conclusions? Not very far! (p. 65).

Personification Signals

We have seen how academic texts must often remind readers of where they have been and announce where they are going. But convention again too often passivizes these time travels: "It will be remembered...". "Such and such a thing will be examined in chapter four". Personifying prose that looks backward or forward enlivens it with a talking guide. You could write "Chapter Two introduced..." or personify yourself and your readers: "We will see that..." See how humanely the mathematicians signal the journey for readers.

"Googol" is already in our vocabulary (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 32).

The going has been rather hard in the last paragraph, and if a few of the polygenic seas have swept you overboard, we shall throw you a hexagonal life preserver (p. 15).

Our intention is to explain in the simplest, most general manner, not the physical space of sense perception, but the space of the mathematician. To that end, all preconceived notions must be cast aside and the alphabet learned anew (p. 113).

The mathematicians' prose populates these pages because they set themselves to write seductively and originally on *every* page. They reviewed the literature on mathematics by writing a literary work of mathematics. How much more creative to write "already in our vocabulary" than "it will be remembered". How much more caring and companionable to write "we shall throw you a hexagonal life preserver" than "the subject may have been challenging for the reader". All good writing campaigns against cliché. Recruit metaphor and analogy and

personification into your army of figures like the mathematicians do. They humanize competent prose and vanquish academese prose.

Personification flows in weak and strong currents and into the streams of other figures. The "common sense" the mathematicians personified immerses readers into metaphorical waters more turbulent than the mirror pool reflection cast by a simple personification like "This chapter argues". Again we see how the figures slip like eels through the taxonomizers' fingers and win our affections with their shape-shifts.

We can write a little figuratively or a lot. And we can write more freshly and vividly by combining figures. Lin Yutang does all these. See how he personifies abstractions.

Conscientiousness and Insight seem suspicious of one another, and yet they might be friends (1937, p. 416).

The inevitable stales, while doubt and hope are sisters (p. 421).

The German philosophers are the most frivolous of all; they court truth like ardent lovers, but seldom propose to marry her (p. 159).

And see how he turns abstractions into metaphors, persons and persons carrying on conversations, a figure called "dialogismus".

He has made it possible for philosophy to forget its beautiful air-castles and return to life itself (p. 421).

Life or existence does not have to go down on its knees and beg logic to prove that it exists or that it is there (p. 420).

Therefore any truth which has been erected into a system is thrice dead and buried. The dirge that they all sing at truth's funeral is, "I am entirely right and you are entirely wrong" (p. 419).

Egregious Ergatives

Another way to spurn the Plutonian passive is to make inanimate things animate themselves. Between active and passive voices, a soloist called middle voice can sometimes animate prose. Verbs that can sail this middle passage are called ergatives and often lend a hand in the kitchen.

[active voice] We sautéed the snow peas.
 [passive voice] The snow peas were sautéed.
 [middle voice] The snow peas sautéed.

Even suicidal vegetables will never cook themselves, but we accept this middle voice in the kitchen, on the highways and even in science: cookies can bake, ships can sail and ice can form. Ergatives overlap with personification and offer another energetic shortcut to action, but beware again the grammar sergeants: They will swallow the cookies that baked themselves and may tolerate the dissertation that breaks new ground. But they will likely reject a chapter that "divides itself into two halves" and revise it to read "the chapter is divided into two halves". Pedagogues tolerate ergatives in some places but think them egregious in others, even when no confusion arises. Here's a mischievous ergative from Lin Yutang.

These [abstractions] arrange themselves into three groups (1936, p. 129).

Synesthesia

Personification sisters non-identical twins found more often in literature. Setting aside the neurological condition, the figure "synesthesia" describes the non-human through the senses. Recall the rhetorical principle of enargia we visited earlier. The more you make non-human entities smell and feel and taste and sound, the more vividly audiences picture and recall them. Some synesthetic personifications hide in plain sight. Looks can be icy, but smiles are warm. Passion burns, love hurts and corruption stinks. Reluctance is heavy, excitement dizzy and irony delicious.

Personification's mischievous twin is "hypallage", but she prefers her hipster name of "transferred epithet". To transfer an epithet, you move a descriptor from its proper place to an improper place nearby to produce a fresh or funny outcome. You can "fly through the countryside in a train". But looking through the window at "the flying countryside" is more figurative and more fun. Similarly evocative is languishing in a lonely hotel and bathing in a naked lake. Transferred epithets chuckle in P.G. Wodehouse, on whose pages you'll find Bertie Wooster buttering moody crumpets, lighting pleased or thoughtful cigarettes and soaping a meditative foot at bathtime.

Synesthesia might seem a stranger to academic texts with their precise descriptions and interpretations. But the mind's eye better pictures and enjoys sensory, figurative or incongruous descriptions. Sensory incongruity lives in commonplace expressions like blue music, laughing colours and golden touch. Here's Daniel Dennett seasoning our eyes.

Folk psychology helps us to understand and empathize with others, organize our memories, interpret our emotions, and flavour our vision in a thousand ways (1991, p. 29).

Personification and synesthesia offer more adrenalin shots into the dead arm of academese. Prefer them over torpid passives and frowning abstractions. And combine them with other figures to tell stories and visualize prose.

The infinitely large offered more stubborn resistance. Whatever it is, it is a doughty weed (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 40).

The Greeks considered negative numbers no numbers at all. But algebra needed them if it were to grow up (p. 90).

...what an earlier century called wit and judgement (Garber, 2005, p. 131).

Plant biochemistry is blind to the difference between the two carbons (Dawkins, 2009, p. 103).

Roses tell the same stories (p. 46).

Antithesis

Figures of similarity have so far filled this chapter. Antithesis emphasizes difference, but a little throat clearing must come before we can speak properly of a seductive antithesis.

Humans like and need to argue if opinions, knowledge and societies are to progress. An argument tussles around differences so arriving at its centre requires pinpointing the differences that tug oppositely at the argument's ropes. Tony Blair urged his parliament to support invading Iraq not by emphasizing similarities between his government and its allies nor similarities between the invading allies and ordinary Iraqis. He emphasized differences between the statements, actions and values of the government of the Iraq of Saddam and the Coalition of Bush and Blair. He argued Saddam's Iraq made "false" declarations, "hid" terror weapons, "breached" its disarmament obligations (2003). Blair's contrasts rest on binaries: true—false, transparency—secrecy, faultlessness—transgression. Human reasoning rests upon and tussles about base and hidden classificatory schemes like binaries (Barthes, 1968; Jakobson & Halle, 1956; Lévi-Strauss, 1974; Lyons, 1977).

Now we may properly examine antithesis. We first identify a binary logic in an argument tug-of-war and then craft a contrast. But a difficulty arises. An antithesis makes a contrast, but not every contrast makes an antithesis. This contrast, which is an antithesis, speaks to a trouble I found when writing this section. Pages of examples of other figures I had collected but just a handful of antithesis examples appeared. Had I

overlooked antithesis? Had I misunderstood antithesis? Is a golden antithesis rarer than an honest statesman? The answer partook of all three, and its explanation lies undercover in the figures handbooks. My handbooks all say antithesis contrasts ideas, but only one (Corbett & Connors, 1999) sorts a golden antithesis from a tin contrast.

Antithesis can contrast ideas, words or both. To contrast ideas, we might say: "Tony Blair swept into office like a *saviour*, but fled it in *disgrace*". To contrast words, we might say: "The *guilty* Tony Blair should apologize to the *innocent* wounded civilians". And to contrast ideas and words we might say: "A British Iraq veteran *cannot escape his war wounds* yet a British prime minister *can escape his war crimes*". Golden antitheses contrast ideas *and* words (Aristotle, 1926, p. 396). Dress the contrasts in parallel patterns and they glow brighter still. Make antitheses pithy or incongruous and, by alchemy, they turn to platinum. We prize platinum antitheses for they are witty, rare and memorable. This explains the poor yield I reaped from my antithesis harvest.

Platinum Antithesis

Even the dullest antithesis shoulders an argument (Fahnestock, 1999, p. 58), but a platinum antithesis argues more acrobatically. In a chapter titled *Chance and Chanceability* I chanced upon the mathematicians using all three types of antithesis. First comes a contrast of ideas and then a contrast of words.

We are able to predict the motions of planets millions of miles off in space, but no one can predict the outcome of tossing a penny or throwing a pair of dice (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 226).

Nevertheless, even within the realm of chance we sense a certain regularity, a certain symmetry—an order within disorder (p. 226).

Only when contrasting words and ideas and enfolding both within parallel packaging does the alchemist's forge burn hot enough to transmute a base contrast into a platinum antithesis.

As a matter of principle, faulty conclusions based on limited knowledge and correct reasoning are infinitely preferable to correct results obtained by faulty reasoning (p. 228).

Platinum antitheses dazzle for they show balance, economy, cleverness, philosophy—wit, in a word. This type alone can elevate a humble contrast to a memorable aphorism. One supreme wit often forged his wit from platinum antitheses.

Nowadays, all the married men live like bachelors, and all the bachelors like married men.

There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.

There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.—Oscar Wilde

An aphorism a day keeps boredom at bay but any more begins to bore. One should therefore never read at length volumes of quotations or aphorisms because too much brilliance blinds the senses. A sentence with a platinum antithesis thrice illumines: We admire the thought and the wording, and esteem the artistry expended in wording it thus. Like some other figures, antithesis dazzles by shape-shifting. It is a figure of similarity and difference because it expresses contrasts. It is a figure of music and repetition because it dresses in parallelisms. It is a figure of play and mischief because it expresses wit.

[The Chinese philosopher] is seldom disillusioned because he had no illusions, and seldom disappointed because he never had extravagant hopes (Lin, 1937, p. 1).

What strikes me most is that the Greeks made their gods like men, while the Christians desire to make men like the gods (p. 17).

The argument is, of course, that expenditures on war are a necessity while travel is a luxury. I feel inclined to disagree: travel is a necessity, while war is a luxury (p. 75).

Here's a final, extended platinum antithesis showing the figure's versatility. The first chancellor of Berkeley set out the contrary qualities a university president needs in a very long yet very musical sentence which tastes rich but digests easily because he seasons it throughout with parallel antitheses.

He should be firm, yet gentle; sensitive to others, insensitive to himself; look to the past and the future, yet be firmly planted in the present; both visionary and sound; affable, yet reflective; know the value of the dollar

and realize that ideas cannot be bought; inspiring in his visions yet cautious in what he does; a man of principle yet able to make a deal; a man with broad perspective who will follow the details conscientiously; a good American but ready to criticize the status quo fearlessly; a seeker of truth where the truth may not hurt too much; a source of public pronouncements when they do not reflect his own institution (Kerr, 1963, p. 30).

The platinum antithesis is one of the cleverest figures. Use it rarely or it loses its lustre. No one likes a smartass.

Chiasmus

Chiasmus is another rare and glittering figure of speech. It's the priciest firework in the fireworks chest, the biggest and brightest star shower to dazzle the darkness and close the light show with a bang. As composers favour certain instruments, communicators favour certain figures. President Kennedy favoured chiasmus.

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

Chiasmus—meaning "diagonal arrangement"—obeys stricter rules than antithesis, which require mirroring the structure (X & Y) of parallel clauses. Here's JFK again.

Mankind (X) must put an end to war (Y), or war (Y) will put an end to mankind (X).

Let us never negotiate (X) out of fear (Y); but let us never fear (Y) to negotiate (X).

Think of chiasmus and you may think of Kennedy but think why he often used it. Chiasmus demonstrates *intellectual* fireworks: to say something clever is challenging, but to cleverly say something clever, with chiasmus, is musical and memorable. Chiasmus thus recommends itself to academics (Clark, 2002, p. 72) scrabbling up the tower of learning keen to broadcast their clever ideas from its symmetrical turrets. The cleverness of Chiasmus comes from its symmetry, for the more symmetrical the mirror images, the brighter chiasmus illumines the thoughts on the page. Here the mathematicians give an unremarkable antithesis followed by a remarkable chiasmus.

But about most of the phenomena which surround us we know very little. We know neither the laws they obey, nor indeed, whether they obey any laws (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 226).

Like antithesis, chiasmus synergizes a striking contrast and parallel expression into a terse and tasty thought that lingers in the mind in a manner ordinary thoughts envy. They linger too in public memory because they can express wit, wisdom, paradox, humour.

Life imitates art far more than art imitates life.—Oscar Wilde

It is not truth that can make men great, but men that can make truth great.—Confucius

He was knitting a sock. He knitted a good deal, he would tell you if you asked him, to keep himself from smoking, adding that he also smoked a good deal to keep himself from knitting.—P.G. Wodehouse

Clever chiasmus looks as meretricious as platinum antithesis when overused. Use them as sparingly as chefs use saffron or white truffles: Tantalize the tongue with their richness and rarity. I found barely a dozen chiasmi in Lin Yutang's *The Importance of Living*.

We find a host of essayists who are at the same time poets, and poets who are at the same time essayists (p. 412).

I suspect that the American hustler admires the Chinese loafer as much as the Chinese loafer admires the American hustler (p. 147).

When we see a writer belabouring an idea we may be sure that the idea is belabouring him (p. 80).

We see the beauty and cleverness of chiasmus—or other figures—if we try expressing their ideas with different or no figures (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 394). Let's try expressing the last example with isocolon, analogy and anadiplosis.

Belaboured writing reveals belaboured thinking.

Belaboured writing belabours readers like arthritis belabours jugglers.

If you can't think clearly you can't write clearly. If you can't write clearly you can't communicate clearly.

These can match the symmetry and even better the economy of the original, but they cannot match its cleverness and symmetry. Like

platinum antithesis, chiasmus impresses by synergizing a clever thought and a remarkable symmetry into a remarkably symmetrical thought. And memory remembers chiasmus easily because it need only recall the first half (XY) to construct the other half (YX). Chiasmus wears also the label "antimetabole". Some handbooks disambiguate them but these again make taxonomic distinctions without a persuasive difference.

Seductive academic writers sparingly decorate with a platinum antithesis or a glittering chiasmus because they know readers enjoy the rarity, wit and seduction they inject into prose. Take the time to learn and apply these rare figures and your prose will stand above good prose and tower over academese. Antithesis and chiasmus express complex ideas musically, logically, tersely, wittily, aphoristically. Doesn't every academic's prose dream of such esteem?

Summary

Academic writing describes and classifies and compares and critiques and argues. All these purposes you can achieve by writing clearly and coherently but uninterestingly. Or you can write more freshly and seductively with figures of similarity and difference. Too often we say of a phenomenon or an experience that "it is impossible to describe", that it "cannot be put into words". But in figurative language we begin to touch, taste and apprehend the intangible. Figures of similarity and difference inoculate writing against symptoms of academese. They help a writer sound and argue and describe more like a speaking person. They help a writer simplify and explain and persuade, particularly when writing in the vernacular. They help a writer frame and narrate stories and fasten them together. They help academics become writers readers admire because their prose is vivid and sensuous, striking and original, wise and witty.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIGURES OF EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION

There is a rare treat in store for the reader of this book. Except in the foreword, which will soon be over, it is entirely free from footnotes.

—P.G. Wodehouse

Introduction

The exemplary academic writers we called on in earlier chapters seduced by setting their prose to music and writing vividly, immediately and engagingly. They write to speak and show their personality. And like all stand-out personalities—whether by wearing garishly colourful socks or fastidiously trimmed fingernails—they show off a little somewhere and retire a little elsewhere. This chapter explores how to write with personality by expanding and contracting your prose. I don't mean necessary expansions like the weighty footnotes P.G. Wodehouse objects to. I mean unnecessary expansions—like choosing to wear loud patterned socks inside the tight business shoes you wear to your job interview—because for you to really be you requires you project your personality.

Seductive academic writers clothe their prose with a handful of personable figures to show their personality, to tell readers stories and to take them on digressions to interest, amuse and provoke them. After all, to write about your research is to tell a story (Denzin, 1998; O'Leary, 2004) in which you star and project your personality. No doubt zombie writers have personalities, too—perhaps they secretly wear heliotrope underwear beneath their grey outerwear—but readers cannot see our personality unless we show it. Consider good teachers you have known. Some high school teachers rescued you from adolescent boredom by telling the odd funny story. Some superannuated professors had eccentricities of dress, manners or behaviour. We remember such people because they projected their personalities. Academics who write their personality into their prose write more personably. Personalities digress a little here and tell a little story there, so we will begin with anecdotes.

Anecdote

A good writer writes like a speaking person, talks to readers and tells them stories. Write anecdotes into academic prose and you meet these aims and reject the falsehood claiming anecdotes do not belong in academic prose (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001). Anecdotes humanize authors and cosset readers, for the texts we first heard and read were stories for bedtime, stories for kindergartens, stories to amuse, soothe and teach. Anecdotes engage readers and inject the author's personality into the text.

Now the querulous reader rightly remarks, "anecdote is not a figure of speech". Anecdote is not a figure, but a figurative way of speaking because anecdote digresses, takes a narrative turn down a forest path into a story book realm. Be they real, fabular or apocryphal, anecdotes sit somewhere beyond the master narrative they serve. They share also that remarkable property of the extended family members of analogy, simile and metaphor: We may remark upon them, perhaps saying, "it's a good analogy" or "let me share an anecdote". One story goes that, on discovering the Christian "flock" and "good shepherd" metaphor translated poorly among the sheepsless, pig-farming Papua New Guineans, the missionaries reembody their saviour as "swineherd" and addressed their congregations as "swine" (Hitchens, 2007). Good anecdotes amuse.

Everyone tells stories but what makes a story merit the appellation "anecdote" and inclusion in nonfiction? Folk wisdom says anecdotes run short and interest or amuse. I searched the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* for a less folksy definition and found none—nor even an entry!—but instead an example under the entry for anthropologist Robert Gelston Armstrong (1917-1987).

An anecdote reveals the nature of his work in Nigeria. Dancing with the young boys and girls in a rather erotic exchange, Armstrong was reproved by the more Westernized (and scandalized) members of the audience, saying that he was encouraging the old ways. Armstrong wrote in a private letter, "[T]his was my precise intention" (Childs, 2006, p. 479).

This anecdote and mine might interest readers but won't amuse them. Let's therefore winnow everyday stories from engaging anecdotes with a quality test like we used to sort base comparisons from platinum antitheses. The good academic writer tells stories to divert, decorate or illustrate. Here's Steven Pinker recounting a proverbial tale of academes.

I once attended a lecture on biology addressed to a large general audience at a conference on technology, entertainment and design. The lecture was also being filmed for distribution over the internet to millions of other

laypeople. The speaker was an eminent biologist who had been invited to explain his recent breakthrough in the structure of DNA. He launched into a jargon-packed technical presentation that was geared to his fellow molecular biologists, and it was immediately apparent to everyone in the room that none of them understood a word. Apparent to everyone, that is, except the eminent biologist. When the host interrupted and asked him to explain the work more clearly, he seemed genuinely surprised and not a little annoyed. This is the kind of stupidity I am talking about (2014a, p. 59).

Seductive writers go still further. Their anecdotes momentarily lift the serious reader out of the serious text and up into the giddy clouds of levity. They know what the best teachers know: Learners can have serious fun learning serious stuff and perhaps learn the better while laughing. The mathematicians leaven their heavy mathematics with lighthearted tales and wit.

The infinitely small had been a nuisance for more than two thousand years. [...] Leibniz, according to Carlyle, made the mistake of trying to explain the infinitesimal to a Queen—Sophie Charlotte of Prussia. She informed him that the behaviour of her courtiers made her so familiar with the infinitely small, that she needed no mathematical tutor to explain it (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 39).

When the Greek philosophers found that the square root of 2 is not a rational number, they celebrated the discovery by sacrificing 100 oxen. The much more profound discovery that π is a transcendental number deserves a greater sacrifice (pp. 79-80).

[Introducing a great 18th century mathematician] Simeon Poisson's family tried to make him everything from a surgeon to a lawyer, the last on the theory that he was fit for nothing better (p. 160).

The best anecdotes illustrate and entertain. Here the poor academic may object: "I already have to publish or I perish; I already have to write clearly, concisely and coherently; and now you want me to entertain as well? Just how do you make thermodynamics or quantitative economics or Kant's critique of pure reason entertaining?" I know not the answers but I know the best teachers and writers entertain. William Zinsser says *Writing Well* requires pouring entertainment into the good writer's inkwell.

You must find some way to elevate your act of writing into an entertainment. Usually this means giving the reader an enjoyable surprise. Any number of methods will do the job: humour, anecdote, paradox, an unexpected quotation, a powerful fact, an outlandish detail, a circuitous

approach, an elegant arrangement of words. These seeming amusements in fact become your "style" (1995, p. 276).

We have already met some of these figures and will meet more here and in the next chapter. Perhaps anecdote belongs there rather than here, but this slides us back into the oily business of classifying the unclassifiable: Creativity. You will write more seductive academic prose if you add or create anecdotes to interest, engage and entertain. Readers who remember the comedy duo the Two Ronnies will recall little Ronnie Corbett sitting in his big leather chair and telling a funny story each show. The joke took just a minute but the monologue five because funnier than the joke were Corbett's digressions and anecdotes. Add some stories to your academic prose because people love digressions and amusing stories, and writing well about research means telling stories, even superficial ones.

There was once a prime minister, Chang Kungni, who was much envied for his earthly blessedness of having nine generations living together under the same roof. Once the emperor, T'ang Kaochung, asked him the secret of his success, and the minister asked for a brush and paper, on which he wrote a hundred times the character "patience" or "endurance" (Lin, 1936, p. 45).

[On stupidity in the sciences] The best cartoon I have ever seen in *Punch* is that of a congress of behaviourists who, after passing a number of pig "subjects" through a test, with a thermometer in the snout and a pearl necklace dangling in front, unanimously resolve that pigs do not respond to the sight of jewellery (p. 82).

Dialogismus

Another way to write like a speaking person is to create dialogue for your characters or to create both characters and dialogue. Recall again the rhetorical principle of *enargia*, to make things lifelike and palpable. The figure of *dialogismus*—meaning "conversation" or "dialogue"—enlivens academic prose like gossip animates the workplace. Instead of articulating or anticipating an argument or a counterargument, have your characters argue it on the page.

Dialogue drives disputatious disciplines like philosophy. In the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, David Hume invites readers into the coffeehouse to hear the protagonists dispute God's existence. A spoken argument conveys much more than its summary. We smell the coffee, hear the arguments and read off undercurrents and tidal flows like desires and

emotions. Dialogismus thus follows Joseph Conrad's "show, don't tell" injunction. In *Life of Johnson*, Boswell recounts Dr. Johnson's contempt for Bishop Berkley's thesis. But rather than summarizing what Johnson thought of it, Boswell shows us through anecdote and dialogue.

After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, "I refute it thus" (1832, p. 209).

You need not belong to a disputatious discipline to write dialogue into academic prose. Dialogue serves other academic purposes: anticipating or acknowledging critiques, counterclaims and limitations. Is not the discussion that concludes a seminar the most animated and engaging part of a seminar presentation? Have you not seen your Dean sleep soundly through presentations, then awake snappily with acute observations and vigorous questions when the presenter concludes? Consider arguing contesting claims, making critiques and stating limitations in dialogue, like the mathematicians do, because readers want to *hear* these more than read them.

With the Hottentots, infinity begins at three. Ask a Hottentot how many cows he owns, and if he has more than three he'll say "many". The number of raindrops falling on New York is also "many". It is a large finite number, but nowhere near infinity (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 20).

Someone may still object: "You tell me that four-dimensional geometry is a game. I will believe you. But it seems to be a game that doesn't concern itself with anything real, with anything I have ever experienced". We may answer in the Socratic way with another question. "If four-dimensional geometry treats of nothing real, what does the plane geometry of Euclid consider? Anything more real? Certainly not!" (p. 116).

In topology we never ask, "How long?", "How far?" "How big?"; but we do ask, "Where?" "Between what?" "Inside or outside?" A traveller on a strange road wouldn't ask "How far is the Jones farm?" if he didn't know the direction, for the answer, "Seven miles from here," would not help him. He is more likely to inquire, "How do I get to the Jones farm?" Then, an answer like, "Follow this road till you come to a fork, then turn to your right," will tell him just what he wants to know (p. 221).

Dialogismus seduces because readers want to meet and hear characters on the page. No one wants to read a novel that's all description and no dialogue, so write in a character here and some dialogue there and your academic prose will chatter with characters. Remember also how well the figure of personification enlivens and embodies abstractions. Give dialogue to these persons—real or imaginary—and prose chatters seductively.

Who could imagine even the aristocrat of science at the breakfast table asking, "Please pass the 0-anhydrosulfaminobenzoic acid" when all he wanted was the sugar for his coffee? (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 4).

The Doctrine of the Golden Mean covers all and envelops all. It dilutes all theories and destroys all religions. In an argument with a Buddhist priest who is probably able to spin out an absolute proof of the non-existence of matter and the futility of life, a Confucianist would simply say, in his matter-of-fact and illogical way, "What would become of the world, the state and the human race if everybody left his home and entered a monastery like you?" (Lin, 1936, p. 105)

Of course, it is useless to defend concubinage, unless one is ready to defend polyandry at the same time. Ku Hungming, the Edinburgh M.A. and profuse quoter of Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, once defended concubinage by saying: "You have seen a teapot with four teacups, but did you ever see a teacup with four teapots?" The best reply to this are the words of P'an Chinlen, concubine of Hsimen Ch'ing in Chinp'inmei: "Do you ever see two spoons in the same bowl that do not knock against each other?" She knew what she was talking about (p. 157).

Talk to your Readers

Which do you prefer? "It has been argued that passive voice is less desirable than active voice" or "Orwell rightly viewed passive voice with contempt". Feeling-people prefer the second because we know what someone thinks when we hear their voice. Readers want to hear the writer's voice so you might say "I want to show..." or "I would argue..." or "Let us consider" or "You may wonder why we needed such a long introduction". Readers like writers who actively talk to them, but academic writing instruction infects writers with chronic passive voice symptoms. Academese writers are too passive to activate their verbs, too passive to personify things, too passive to tell stories, too passive to creatively craft a metaphor, too passive to daringly write first-person prose, too passive to daringly address "you" the reader, too passive to daringly challenge the deadly dictum that objective academic prose requires passive prose.

I have frequently held passive voice in the cross hairs of this book because it leeches the lifeblood from prose. When I tell my graduate students to talk to their readers, they think they should write something like "In the previous section it was shown that..." or "The authors will suggest..." No, I mean talk to your readers like a speaking person. Academese sharpshooters have punctured the academic balloon marked with the mantra "avoid using first person" and shown, that like all balloons, hot air fills it (Holliday, 2002, p. 129; Sword, 2012a, p. 36).

You really can write in the first person and objectively, too, providing your research method is objective. You really can write more convincingly if you say what you think, and you will sound more confident by doing so. Let me therefore close this section with some writers confident enough to talk to their readers, to amuse them, to comfort them, to show they care for them.

While the definition may seem worse than the disease, it is not as difficult as it appears at first glance. Read it carefully and you will find that it is both explicit and economical (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 30).

Let us have this much balm for the reader who has bravely gone through the pages on analytical geometry and complex numbers. The average college course on analytic geometry (not including complex numbers) takes six months. It is therefore a little too much to expect that it can be learned in about five pages (p. 103).

Today, why do you find yourself talking to things—your car, your computer, your refrigerator? Do you grant agency to inanimate objects because you want to unburden yourself of responsibility? Or is it simply because you're lonely? Because, unlike a child, you do not have a toy to talk with? (Brown, 2003, p. 186)

For reasons I won't go into now, it is of the essence of sexual reproduction that you shouldn't fertilize yourself (Dawkins, 2009, p. 47).

Long before having arrived at this part of my work, a crowd of difficulties will have occurred to the reader. Some of them are so grave that to this day I can never reflect on them without being staggered; but, to the best of my judgment, the greater number are only apparent, and those that are real are not, I think, fatal to my theory (Darwin, 1861, p. 154).

I do want to use an idea that Plato developed in his famous cave allegory—in part because it makes me appear literate, but more important, because building upon it allows me to provide an allegory of my own (Krauss, 2007, p. 124).

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions get maligned, mislabelled and misunderstood (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977). Misunderstood and maligned because "style" sections of academic writing handbooks say limit or avoid using them (for example, Bailey, 2011; Swales & Feak, 1994). Language teachers encourage students to present like a speaking person and engage audiences with rhetorical questions when they make presentations. But they bizarrely discourage students from asking rhetorical questions when they present their work in print. Try telling the philosophers to spurn rhetorical questions. Daniel Dennett showers readers with 39 of them over 26 pages in one article (1991). Writing pedagogies that discourage or banish rhetorical questions, and other figures of speech, teach the academese writing style.

Rhetorical questions are twice mislabelled. Texts are always rhetorical, so why do we speak of rhetorical questions but not of rhetorical sentences? And since rhetorical questions seek no answers from audiences, why are they even called questions? They invite audiences instead to think, feel, listen, laugh, bond. They signal to tell us why things matter, who thinks what, where we're going, and much, much more. We like them because the speaker or writer addresses us. And yet rhetorical questions get mislabelled, misunderstood and maligned.

The discipline of rhetoric, whence come the figures of speech, has ever been maligned (Vickers, 1988). "Rhetoric" almost always connotes negatively so the poor rhetorical question suffers most because this figure alone has "rhetorical" printed on its tee shirt. When someone makes a persuasive speech people agree with, its audience critiques not the arguments or arrangement or style. But when someone makes a persuasive speech people disagree with, they protest its "mere rhetoric", its "rhetorical tricks", the speaker's "sophistry". Rhetoric thus unjustly goes by a bad name even though we are always in a rhetoric, if only our own (Corder, 1993). Like "ideology", rhetoric is what we think other people have. Meanwhile, hypocrisy keeps our word turning. Rhetoric may engage or enrage, but its faults lie with the persuader and not with a style or the figures of speech.

Rhetorical Questions for Effects

Writing rhetorical questions enlivens academic prose because the writer directly addresses the reader. In one psychology paper, Bob Altemeyer (2003) conducts a choir of rhetorical questions to sound many effects.

Let's hear some of them. Rhetorical questions generate interest, particularly where it matters most, in titles.

What happens when authoritarians inherit the earth? A simulation

Rhetorical questions can frame problems or research questions.

The world's a stage for billions of wonderfully unique people. But what would it be like if everyone had similar levels of some personality trait? If all the actors scored relatively high in right-wing authoritarianism, what kind of future would unfold? (p. 161)

Altmeyer's rhetorical questions speak vernacularly to stimulate interest in the problems. See how much more this stirs readers than if we frame the problem in the formulaic academic style.

This paper conducts an experiment to investigate the extent to which similar personality traits among individuals (1) influence group behaviour and (2) how much authoritarian individuals influence group behaviour.

Rhetorical questions can glance backward and forward, recall and anticipate.

What kind of future did the low RWAs produce in 1994? (p. 163)

So what do you think happened on Wednesday? (p. 168)

What else do you need to know? (p. 164)

Rhetorical questions can guide and summarize.

Remember a few lines ago when I said high RWAs seemed to be the most prejudiced group ever found? Well, they lost the title when... (p. 163)

What can we conclude from this little experiment? (p. 168)

Rhetorical questions can introduce topics and reasons.

That having been said about right-wing authoritarians in general, how did those special high RWAs who also scored relatively high on the Social Dominance scale perform? (p. 167)

In fact, only five gold coins were squirrelled away. Why so few? My guess is... (p. 168)

Rhetorical questions in prose can serve many more academic purposes than their higher purposes of writing like a speaking person and communicating in the vernacular. Naysayers will say their disciplines disallow them. Different disciplines have different discourse styles, but all the disciplines excerpted in this book—the arts and the sciences—ask rhetorical questions. Naysayers will say the journals disallow or disprefer the plain style the rhetorical question speaks with, but the journals favour the plain and simple style (Sword, 2012a, p. 26). Good teachers know you keep your students engaged, guided and thinking with Socratic dialogue and rhetorical questions. Treat your readers likewise in academic writing.

Epilexis

The rhetorical questions that most needle the naysayers are the sassy ones.

So basically influenced are we by this matter of food and drink that revolutions, peace, war, patriotism, international understanding, our daily life and the whole fabric of human social life are profoundly influenced by it. What was the cause of the French Revolution? Rousseau and Voltaire and Diderot? No, just food. What is the cause of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet experiment? Just food again. As for war, Napoleon showed the essential depth of his wisdom by saying that "an army fights on its stomach". And what is the use of saying, "Peace, Peace" when there is no peace below the diaphragm? (Lin, 1937, p. 45)

Why, on the theory of Creation, should this be so? Why should all the parts and organs of many independent beings, each supposed to have been separately created for its proper place in nature, be so invariably linked together by graduated steps? Why should not Nature have taken a leap from structure to structure? (Darwin, 1861, pp. 173-174)

Compounded rhetorical questions take the name "epilexis" and suffer two dispreferences. They stir us with the rhetorical principle of "movere" (Cicero, 1942) that makes pathos appeals, but the Western obsession with academic objectivity has severed the blood supply of reason from the heart and groin and stomach. And since academic writing pedagogies dislike rhetorical questions, they forbid repeated rhetorical questions. But repetition and emotions beat the heart of persuasion (Burke, 1969) not least because audiences feel and process texts faster than they comprehend them (Hayot, 2014).

Our speaking always betrays our human emotions (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Wilce, 2009) so speakers with flatline emotions cannot move us any more than writers cannot engage us when their

flatline-prose shuffles with the zombie gait of academese. Why were so many Democrats unenthused by their party's candidate for American president in 2016? Because clever, calm and qualified Hilary Clinton could not or would not move the hopes, the loves, the fears, the emotions of voters. Clinton spoke like an established institution, not a passionate politician. Stir some emotions by writing rhetorical questions into your academic prose or the electorate of readers may not turn out to your talks or to read your texts. Can you not feel the rhetorical passions of these authors?

What can it mean if only 20 people in the world understand what we are saying? It means that we are either so bad at writing that we can't communicate, or so full of ourselves that we don't want to communicate. The first possibility seems unacceptably incompetent, the second simply despicable (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 448).

[Defending the need for non-Euclidean geometry] Whence came the doubts? Whence the inspiration of those who dared profane the temple? Were not the postulates of Euclid self-evident, plain as the light of day? And the theorems as unassailable as that two plus two equals four? (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 134)

Is "the production of the higher animals" really "the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving"? Most exalted? Really? Are there not more exalted objects? Art? Spirituality? Romeo and Juliet? General relativity? The Choral Symphony? The Sistine Chapel? Love? (Dawkins, 2009, p. 43)

Remember also to structure epiplexes with one of the patterns for figures with multiple elements we met in chapter three. Repeated rhetorical questions can move from general to specific, from short to long, from broad to narrow, but should always unpack like Russian dolls.

Parenthesis

The easiest way to expand prose is to set off additional content with punctuation that signals its additional but unessential nature. Standard ways of doing this include the following.

[non-defining relative clause] The philosopher, who lives next door to me, is out searching for Schrödinger's cat again.

[parenthetical element] That cat, I suppose, has an infinite number of lives.

[parentheses or brackets] Schrödinger's cat (a famous thought experiment) presents a paradox.

[apposition] The thought experiment, Schrödinger's cat, defies logic.

These standard ways of adding information are standard fare in composition and style handbooks and go by the standard labels of "parentheticals" and "appositives", which are also the names of their matching figures of speech. But this book explores an academic writing style that rises above standard composition to expand prose by inserting interesting or amusing information with the figure of parenthesis. Here's a standard way a mathematician might parenthetically add.

An important mathematician, Cardan, was a founder of algebra who recognized the importance of negative roots.

Kasner and Newman instead expand by inserting the unessential but interesting elements of storytelling.

Cardan, eminent mathematician of the sixteenth century, gambler and occasional scoundrel, to whom algebra is vastly indebted, first recognized the true importance of negative roots (1949, p. 91).

The curse of putting parentheses or appositives mid-sentence is that they interrupt the flow (Clark, 2002, p. 38) like hiccups interrupt monologue. And the farther apart you keep the subject from its meaningful verb, the more disassembled information the reader must store in their mind until appears the verb to unlock and assemble the sentence meaning. The first sentence above obeys these rules, but doesn't seduce. Kasner and Newman break the rules, but seduce and fasten understanding because they supply interesting and amusing additional information. We might conclude from this that interesting and amusing parentheticals can cohere texts like some of the figures of music and repetition in chapter three.

Parenthetically Speaking

Like the best anecdotes, the best parentheses seduce with amusing digressions that reveal the writer's voice and personality. Use parenthesis to, again, write like a speaking person. And make your digressions useful, interesting or arresting, like the mathematicians do.

Who could imagine—that is, who but a mathematician—that the number expressing a fundamental relation between a circle and its diameter could

grow out of the curious fraction communicated by Lord Brouncker to John Wallis? (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 78)

The Greeks, for whom geometry was a joy and algebra a necessary evil, rejected negative numbers (p. 90).

The word "radical", favourite call to arms among Republicans, Democrats, Communists, Socialists, Nazis, Fascists, Trotskyites, etc., has a less hortatory and bellicose character in mathematics (p. 16).

Parentheses place less essential information usually between commas. Really unessential information like digressions and author asides sit better between long dashes. Some punctuation symbols' names make sense. Period. Digressions between dashes dash away the reader down an interesting side street before dashing them back to the main destination. Here the mathematicians take us on more dashing digressions with the company of more figures—iscolon, metaphor, wordplay and parallelism.

The fact that π , a purely geometric ratio, could be evolved out of so many arithmetic relationships—out of infinite series, with apparently little or no relation to geometry—was a never-ending source of wonder and a never-ending stimulus to mathematical activity (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 78).

Like most reforms it is not wholly satisfactory—even to the reformers—but by means of their theory of types the last vestige of inconsistency has been driven out of the house that Cantor built (p. 63).

Too often mathematical rigor serves only to bring about another kind of rigor—rigor mortis of mathematical creativeness (p. 70).

Nevertheless, intelligent people, weary of the nervous pace of their own existence—the sharp impact of the happenings of the day—are hungry to learn of the accomplishments of more leisurely, contemplative lives, timed by a slower, more deliberate clock than their own (p. xiii).

Some prefer to enclose parentheses within (the circularly named) parentheses or (the better named) brackets. Here's a parenthetical Roland Barthes.

To describe is thus to place the empty frame which the realistic author always carries with him (more important than his easel) before a collection or continuum of objects which cannot be put into words without this obsessive operation (which could be laughable as a "gag"); in order to speak about it, the writer, through this initial rite, first transforms the real into a depicted (framed) object; having done this, he can take down this

object, remove it from his picture: in short: de-depict it (to depict is to unroll the carpet of the codes, to refer not from a language to a referent but from a code to another) (1974, pp. 54-55).

As pictures go, parentheticals wearing brackets dress more garishly than parentheticals wearing dashes. A page must catch our eye's appetite before the mind digs in to taste the text (Zinsser, 1995, p. 126). That's why publishers and advertisers spend so long on and invest so much in presentation. But this English translation of Barthes looks, at first sight, more like computer code, with its brackets and italics and semi-colons and colons. Readers want to read prose not computer code so serve up your dashing parentheses between hesitant commas and daring dashes.

Adding the Essentially Unessential

Parentheses supposedly add unessential content. But unessential content that interests, exemplifies, illustrates or amuses makes for essentially seductive communication. The mathematicians put parentheses to all these purposes. See how they share Steven Pinker's dictum that explanations require examples, for "an explanation without an example is little better than no explanation at all" (2014a, p. 65).

Here, then, in mathematics we have a universal language, valid, useful, intelligible everywhere in place and in time—in banks and insurance companies, on the parchments of the architects who raised the Temple of Solomon, and on the blueprints of the engineers who, with their calculus of chaos, master the winds (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 358).

Parentheses digress, but readers want light digressions from heavy texts like builders want cooling tea breaks from their sweating labours. Academic digressions offer readers a quiet space in which to breathe, loosen their clothing and kick off their shoes. Above all, make your parenthetical digressions interesting or arresting.

So though I'm not pro-jargon—and who could be? It would be like being pro-gonorrhea—I'm not anti-jargon, either. But I am anti-anti-jargon (Hayot, 2014, p. 178).

We spend most of our careers as teachers trying to help strangers—all of whom, even the rich or obnoxious ones, are members of the public—learn how to be better thinkers and writers (p. 178).

Summary

The figures we met in this chapter perform a sacred triptych of good writing: Write like a speaking person, write with your personality and talk to your readers. They inject character into academic prose by adding to its necessary content the author's unnecessary but seductive voice and personality. Writers don't need to tell anecdotes or add parenthetical asides, but who doesn't enjoy reading an interesting or amusing digression? Writers don't need to put arguments into dialogue, but who doesn't enjoy hearing characters dialogue on the page? Writers don't need to speak to steer or startle readers with rhetorical questions, but who doesn't enjoy a living author's living prose?

Why have I overlooked the easiest and the commonest expansive and contractive figures of hyperbole and litotes? Hyperbole cannot come to class because he remains in serial detention for speaking with chronic clichés and exaggeration. Perhaps you recall Doctor Q in chapter one complaining too few had read him. He tells us "everyone has an innate passion for exaggeration and attenuation of actual facts" (Quintilian, 1920). In a world of world class exaggerators, even seductive writers struggle to win a gold medal for hyperbole.

The highly conventional introductory section that describes the upcoming chapters at length is usually one of the most boring things in the universe. I almost always skip it (Hayot, 2014, p. 100).

That is a large number, but not as large as the number mentioned by the divorcee in a recent divorce suit who had telephoned that she loved the man "a million billion billion times and eight times around the world". It was the largest number that she could conceive of, and shows the kind of thing that may be hatched in a love nest (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 21).

Hyperbole's super-saturation of prose makes it one of the most clichéd if not the most boring things in the universe. Leave it to world champions like P.G. Wodehouse or use more creative figures like simile or metaphor.

A big chap with a small moustache and the sort of eye that can open an oyster at sixty paces—*The Code of the Woosters*

He felt like Noah listening to someone making a fuss about drizzle—*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*

A fellow whose face ought to be shuffled and dealt again—*A Damsel in Distress*

Or you can exaggerate by understating. But since irony and comedy often drive litotes, let us defer exploring it to the next chapter, where it keeps happier company with the figures of play and mischief.

CHAPTER SIX

FIGURES OF PLAY AND MISCHIEF

Non cogitant, ergo non sunt.
—Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

If not actually disgruntled, he was far from being grunted
—P.G. Wodehouse

Introduction

Why make play and mischief in academic prose? Because humans need to laugh. Because readers like their learning leavened with some laughter. Because laughter projects a writer's personality into their prose. Because esteemed academic writers like Erving Goffman make us laugh (Fine & Martin, 1995). A serious writer is seriously no fun, but a serious writer who is sometimes seriously funny is. Academese writers spurn the seemingly superficial. They don't digress or tell stories or write dialogue—the stuff of the last chapter—or make play and mischief—the stuff of this chapter. These seeming superficialities flow in the mix of good "style". This fidgeting fish keeps slipping through our fingers, but one way to firmly grasp style is to see in prose the writer's personality (Leech & Short, 1984; Wilbers, 2000; Zinsser, 1995). Readers want to meet a companionable personality on the page, not a mirthless zombie or a faceless institution.

We esteem personalities that entertain us in person or on the page because humour is a philanthropist. It gives the gift of laughter to the species that needs to laugh. This chapter explores figures of speech academic writers can make play and mischief with. Not all are figures, but all can figure in laughter. All can embody on the page a writer with a personality confident enough to make play and mischief of themselves, their field or others. All can realize William Zinsser's injunction to make prose—even academic prose—entertain at times.

Lightening the Load

Definitions make for dreary openings but we cannot speak of playful and mischievous language without first inspecting laughter. Humans love and need to laugh like they need sex, love and satisfaction. We are not the only laughing animals but we are the only ones that laugh with language. Laughter speaks in many languages—from irony to sarcasm to wordplay and beyond—but her polyglot tongues contain two common letters in their vocabularies. S is for "surprise". We laugh at surprising incongruity (Bergson, 1911), and the greater the incongruity, the greater the laughter. See how P.G. Wodehouse and the mathematicians surprise us.

It was a fine cow, as cows go, but, like so many cows, it lacked sustained, dramatic interest.—*Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*

To form a rational belief, we must have some pertinent knowledge. Occasionally, such knowledge may be sufficient to justify our certainty that the proposition is true or false. Thus we are certain that Socrates was not an American; and we are equally certain that Hitler should have remained a house painter (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 228).

Humour's understandings and explanations live not in sciences and taxonomies any more than do Pride's, Love's or Jealousy's. But we experience something that it is *like* to be proud, to be in love, to be jealous, and something that it is like to laugh. Those somethings live in the letter Q for "qualia" (Lewis, 1956), a term philosophy coined to capture how things feel to us. Now my two-letter laughter alphabet cannot, blessedly, make as many mirthless words as the larger alphabets in the larger libraries of the linguistics, philosophies, psychologies and sociologies of laughter (Attardo, 1994; Berger, 1997; Bergson, 1911; Billig, 2005; Dynel, 2011; Martin, 2007; Nash, 1985; Raskin, 1985). But it does capture laughter's lived quality: Something surprises us, our ribs tickle us, and we laugh. This simple understanding will serve this laughing chapter.

You don't need figures of speech to make people laugh. No figures are born funny, but some bend to comedy by springing upon us surprising contrasts, like chiasmus in the care of Mae West.

It's not the men in my life; it's the life in my men.

Let us explore how seductive academic writers tickle ribs from two directions. William Zinsser's injunction to entertain directs a philosophy that recommends catapulting the letter S for surprise into prose, to lighten the load of knowledge, to prompt the author to tickle the reader's ribs with

the letter Q for the qualia of laughter. The second direction loads into the sling the weapon of surprise the catapult launches: figures of speech, literary techniques, discursive strategies—surprise wears several costumes.

The Surprise of Laughter

Laughter leavens scholarly prose like yeast leavens heavy dough. Spring an incongruous surprise on the reader and laughter results. Most people enjoy a pleasant surprise, and surprises come in different gift wrapping—as Zinsser observes. The mathematicians gift to their readers many surprises, which some might seek to classify. I shall comment only on the figures of speech they and other seductive academic writers build into their humour and why academics can and should write with humour (Griffith, 1994, p. 236) since nothing deflates humour more than its explanation. Here the laughing mathematicians load wordplay, paradox, irony and parody into humour's catapult.

The theory of rings is much more recent than the theory of groups. It is now found in most of the new books on algebra, and has nothing to do with either matrimony or bells (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 5).

Simeon Poisson's family tried to make him everything from a surgeon to a lawyer, the last on the theory that he was fit for nothing better. One or two of these professions he tackled with singular ineptitude, but at last he found his metier ... becoming one of the greatest mathematicians of the nineteenth century (pp. 160-161).

One who knows nothing of the formal processes of counting is still able to compare two classes of objects ... for example, barring prior mishaps, it is easy to show that we have the same number of figures on both hands (p. 29).

The infinitely small has been a nuisance for more than two thousand years. At best, the innumerable opinions it evoked deserved the laconic verdict of Scotch juries: "Not proven" (p. 39).

Writing and reading academic prose sweats the mind, but too much work and too little play make Jack and Jill dull readers. As with amusing anecdotes, readers love the distractions of levity. They esteem the frivolous writer who dares to grasp humour's pinprick to puncture academic certainties, disciplinary maxims and pompous prose. Again, as with anecdotes, writers need not tell us stories or make us laugh. They do so because they *care* for us. They know Jack and Jill will study hard when set

to. But they also know Jack and Jill want to play sometimes, so they meet our frivolous needs as well as our knowledge needs. Here's a seriously funny philosopher.

The philosopher feels a tension that the scientist seldom has occasion to feel. [...] No one opens a book on algebra with anxiety as to whether the author is going to treat the binomial theory roughly, or a book of physics with the feeling that hope will be blighted if Ohm's law comes out badly. But people do feel that it is of importance whether their religious belief is honeycombed, or their hope of survival blasted, or even whether pleasure is made out to be the only good (Blanshard, 1954, pp. 6-7).

Humour, like the figures, seems superfluous in the minds of the Mr. Gradgrinds in the ivory towers. You can write like a zombie, present like a zombie, build and advance your career on zombie prose that cares not a jot for the victims it falls upon. So why bother to interest, elevate and amuse? This selfish rationale will meet its nemesis in the final chapter. I raise it now only to reiterate that the seductive academics who have befriended us on these pages give us more than we need. They meet our mental needs and our bodily needs: Our need to hear the musical speaking voice, our need to perceive things sensorily, our need to encounter a personality on the page and our need to laugh at life's insufferable absurdities.

Academese writers display almost human intelligence but lack human personality. Their personalities lie imprisoned in the dungeons of the Tower of Babel whose institutional prose they bureaucratically fabricate. That's why they attract ridicule. Here's poor Bertie Wooster struggling with the unethical prose style of Martineau's (1891) *Types of Ethical Theory*.

I opened it, and I give you my honest word this was what hit me:

"Of the two antithetic terms in the Greek philosophy one only was real and self-subsisting; and that one was Ideal Thought as opposed to that which it has to penetrate and mould. The other, corresponding to our Nature, was in itself phenomenal, unreal, without any permanent footing, having no predicates that held true for two moments together; in short, redeemed from negation only by including indwelling realities appearing through".

Well—I mean to say—what? And Nietzsche, from all accounts, a lot worse than that! (Wodehouse, 1956)

Bertie preferred mystery thrillers, but Nietzsche's style might have thrilled him. Philosophy may consider Nietzsche a greater aphorist than philosopher but he understood (Salomé, 2001) readers want writers to feel

things for them, understood readers want abstractions relayed through the senses, understood readers want to meet a personality on the page, understood above all that readers want a prose style that feels as alive as the anecdotes and music and humour that animate the great prose styles.

Seductive academic writers speak not the language of Babel. They write for comprehension and with personality. Sense of humour is an esteemed personality trait. A little humour projects a lot of personality and a lot of confidence. Here's a playful and mischievous Lin Yutang.

Fewer social crimes arise from food than from sex. The criminal code has comparatively little to do with the sins of illegal, immoral and faithless eating, while it has a large section on adultery, divorce, and assault on women. At the worst, husbands may ransack the icebox, but we seldom hang a man for spiking a *Frigidaire* (1937, p. 48).

We are not indulging in idling fooling now, discussing the smiles of dictators; it is terribly serious when our rulers do not smile, because they have got all the guns (p. 77).

Stand-up comedians playing on the comedy circuit know something of what their audiences will be like and what humour they will like. The Scots want to laugh at the English, "working men" want to laugh at professional men, and leaders want to laugh at other leaders—even Kim Jong-un laughs at Donald Trump. Academic writers know rather less about their readers. Probably they are potential or practising academics, but they cannot know what they might care to laugh at. Human tribes laugh at different things (Billig, 2005)—or nothing if stereotype speaks rightly of the Germans. But you can always tickle ribs if you write for the universal funny bone. Write for the S of surprise like seductive writers do. Another standard rib-tickler is self-deprecating humour. The Jews do it, the Australians, the British, perhaps even the Germans. Here are some self-deprecating academics.

In this same striving after consistency and generality, mathematicians developed negative numbers, imaginaries and the transcendentals. Since no one had ever seen minus three cows, or the square root of minus one trees, it was not without a struggle that these now rather commonplace ideas were introduced into mathematics (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 117).

Nevertheless, in spite of the famous epigram that mathematics is the science in which we do not know what we are talking about, at least we shall have to agree to talk about the same thing (p. 36).

In fact, I believe the reason why the Chinese failed to develop botany and zoology is that the Chinese scholar cannot stare coldly and unemotionally at a fish without immediately thinking of how it tastes in the mouth and wanting to eat it (Lin, 1937, p. 46).

Academics confident enough to thumb their noses at themselves or their professions amuse us because humour binds together laughers and shrinks distance between the pedagogue and the pupil (Fine, 1983; Holmes, 2000). A little light levity, particularly at oneself, helps the reader befriend the writer. Let's now explore some figures and strategies academic writers can put to comedy's purposes.

Irony

Irony and her sneering younger brother, sarcasm, are universal and also figures of speech (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Quintilian, 1920). Irony tickles ribs but also stirs minds. It thus serves intellectual writers particularly well because it cracks particularly intellectual jokes. It binds the comic and her audience together in laughter—providing they get the joke (Kaufers, 1977; Walker, 1990).

This is ten million billion. Contrary to popular belief, this is a larger number of words than is spoken at the average afternoon bridge (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 21).

One of the fruits of the higher education is the illuminating view that a logarithm is merely a number that is found in a table (p. 83).

The idle life, so far from being the prerogative of the rich and powerful and successful (how busy the successful American men are!) was in China an achievement of *highmindedness*, a highmindedness very near to the Western conception of the dignity of the tramp who is too proud to ask favors, too independent to go to work, and too wise to take the world's successes too seriously (Lin, 1937, p. 152).

Irony and sarcasm come from the Greek, "eironeia" and "sarkasmos", meaning "dissimulation, assumed ignorance" and "sneering, jesting, taunting". Irony wears several disguises, but verbal irony best dresses academic prose. Verbal irony tickles ribs with incongruity and absurdity. You assert something you do not believe; the audience gets your humour by inverting your assertion. Irony thus makes smart jokes by drawing together a writer and readers with the intellect to recognize and unpack the dissimulation, who feel smarter for having the intellect to get the joke.

Irony persuades well but carries risks, because the joke falls flat if the audience misses the dissimulation. But academics generally write smart texts for smart readers so verbal irony recommends itself more than its opponents recommend against it.

Irony is as much a way of commenting on the world (Kierkegaard, 1965) as a figure of speech so you can make ironic comedy with figures like rhetorical questions and litotes (Booth, 1974; Gibbs & Izett, 2005; Kaufers, 1977) or without them. Here's litotes.

In chemistry, substances no more complicated than sugar, starch, or alcohol have names like these: Methylpropenylendihydroxycinnamylacrylic acid, or, 0-anhydrosulfaminobenzoine, or, protocatechuicaldehydemethylene. It would be inconvenient if we had to use such terms in everyday conversation (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 4).

Irony shines academic reputations because we expect smart people to make smart jokes with smart figures like chiasmus, and other figures like paradox and wordplay that await us. Use irony to exacerbate incongruities within the surprise of humour. Irony ultimately drives much humour, particularly ridicule, to which we now turn.

Ridicule

Ridicule might seem unexpected in academic prose. After all, academics weigh evidence and arguments, critique precisely and objectively and advance cautious claims, don't they? Sure, but academics enjoy a seat at the spectator sport of a cat-fight as much as anyone else. And their smart claws tear even deeper. Now and then bloody cat-fights break out in the journals in successive articles with titles like "Marmalade replies to Venus" and "Venus responds to Marmalade". Academic ridicule has for centuries thumbed her nose at silly ideas, from David Hume and Bertrand Russell's avuncular witherings of theology to Richard Dawkins' supposed "militancy". Here's rhetorician Brian Vickers ridiculing Roman Jakobson's claim that the many dozens of figures of speech can be reduced to just two.

One hardly knows which to admire most, the vastness of his thesis or the paucity of argument. Perhaps further analysis would only have complicated the issue (1988, p. 446).

Here's Daniel Dennett ridiculing social sciences for protesting the objectivity of qualia.

...and of course qualia exist—anybody who has ever had a toothache knows that! (2009, p. 233).

Here's Charles Darwin ridiculing classifications.

Under genera, including the most polymorphic forms, Mr. Babington gives 251 species, whereas Mr. Bentham gives only 112,—a difference of 139 doubtful forms! (p. 49)

And here's Lin Yutang ribbing feminists.

Many men have doubt about their true vocation, and shift from one to another, but there is never a doubt in a mother's mind concerning her life work, which is the taking care and guiding of the little ones. Successful politicians have thrown up politics, successful editors have thrown up magazine work, successful aviators have given up flying, successful boxers have given up the ring, and successful actors and actresses have given up the stage, but imagine mothers, successful or unsuccessful, giving up motherhood! (1937, p. 173)

Anything silly deserves ridicule, particularly when spoken by intellectual mouths. Like analogy, ridicule can stand alone as an argument (Colston & Gibbs, 1998). That's why we may simply say of a silly idea, "It's ridiculous!" To echo an earlier argument, seductive academic writers know when to artfully write in the vernacular to give readers prose they can identify with and understand better because it speaks and reasons in the common tongue. The public, the hoi polloi, the downtrodden have ever ridiculed the more powerful because ridicule disciplines by soundly thrashing intellectual and pompous asses (Bakhtin, 1981; Shaftesbury, 1999; Stone, 1914). Kant believed the deeper we ridicule the things we find silly the more "annihilating" the laughter (1997, p. 54). Listen to the mathematicians smartly and sensitively battering some backsides.

A very distinguished scientific publication recently came forth with the revelation that the number of snow crystals necessary to form the ice age was a billion to the billionth power. This is very startling and also very silly (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 20).

Everyone who will read this book can count, and yet what is counting? The dictionary definitions are about as helpful as Johnson's definition of a net: "a series of reticulated interstices" (p. 28).

Litotes

A vernacular figure that often drives ridicule is understatement. It goes by the Greek names of "litotes" or "meiosis", meaning "plainness, simplicity" and to "make smaller". Monty Python fans will recall Arthur King of the Britons duelling with the Black Knight who barred his progress to Camelot. After Arthur had hacked off both his opponent's arms, the Black Knight made smaller his diminished anatomy by describing it as "just a flesh wound". Litotes plays irony's tune because it asserts by denying its opposite. But it is a more esteemed figure of play and mischief than commonplace hyperbole because it is rarer. And it is a more intellectual figure because ironic understatement asserts more by saying less and because it requires more craft to tease the audience's intellect. Here's an example from P.G. Wodehouse.

Bertie: Shakespeare said some rather good things.
 Jeeves: I understand he has given uniform satisfaction, sir.—*Much Obliged, Jeeves*

Here's some litotes in ridicule's service from the mathematicians.

A celebrated scientist recently stated in all seriousness that he believed that the number of pores (through which leaves breathe) of all the leaves, of all the trees in all the world, would certainly be infinite. Needless to say, he was not a mathematician (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 22).

Unfortunately, as soon as people talk about large numbers, they run amuck. They seem to be under the impression that since zero equals nothing, they can add as many zeros to a number as they please with practically no serious consequences. We shall have to be a little more careful than that in talking about big numbers (p. 21).

Ridicule Redux

Ridicule is a discursive strategy more than a figure of speech. The Ancients identified one complete figure of ridicule—"diasyrmus", meaning to reject an argument through a ridiculous comparison—but we see ridicule dresses down ridiculous ideas by wearing and combining costumes like hyperbole, litotes and irony.

Because they argue less empirically, the humanities bite with ridicule's sharp teeth more than the sciences. But even disciplines built on empirical foundations will fall if they assemble from silly concepts and silly methods that make for silly arguments that merit ridicule's dynamite

charge. Consider economics. It has the silly concept of "rational" humans and silly models that ignore as "externalities" the things they cannot accommodate—like altruism and global warming effects—and thus silly arguments that even economists cannot believe. Hence George Bernard Shaw's proverb.

If all the economists were laid end to end, they'd never reach a conclusion.

Ridicule seeks obvious targets like economics or theology or homoeopathy. But a dose of light ridicule—if only to chide oneself or one's discipline—comforts readers with the vernacular. The downtrodden love to ridicule the powerful, the pompous, the high priests of the professions, so get them on your side by making play and mischief like they do.

Theological minds are so much occupied with salvation, and so little with happiness, that all they can tell us about the future is that there will be a vague heaven, and when questioned about what we are going to do there and how we are going to be happy in heaven, they have only ideas of the vaguest sort, such as singing hymns and wearing white robes. Mohammed at least painted a picture of future happiness with rich wine and juicy fruits and black-haired, big-eyed, passionate maidens that we laymen can understand (Lin, 1937, pp. 124-125).

Paradox

Despite all our learning, logic and rationality, we still live in a chaotic, random and seemingly purposeless universe. Physics looked to find order in chaos only to discover chaos and uncertainty drive the laws and orders it found there. That is a paradox. Paradox means "contrary to opinion" and is a figure of speech that makes truthful yet self-contradictory statements. We love paradoxes because they make mischief of reason and logic. This book opened with the paradox that figures of speech bestrew the prose of handbooks on stylish writing yet their authors do not teach them. H.L. Mencken's provocative pen recorded a related paradox.

With precious few exceptions, all the books on style in English are by writers quite unable to write (2010).

Paradoxes surround us: Be cruel to be kind. Every rule has exceptions. Every generality is false. To proclaim a paradox delights readers because it tickles their intellectual funny bone. And it lacquers the writer's reputation with intellect's dazzling sheen. Paradox says, "Here is a clever

mind that spots contradictions and expresses them cleverly, tersely and amusingly".

Paradox Standing Truth on her Head

Paradox is "truth standing on her head to get attention", says G.B. Shaw. If you can make play of incongruities you can tickle ribs. If you can make mischief of logical or rational incongruities you can tickle irony's funny bone (Cuddon, 1991). And if you can craft incongruities into sentences that make mischief of reason and logic, using figures of speech, you can dazzle with your intellect. We esteem writers who write cleverly yet simply. We esteem writers who use figures of speech. We esteem writers who make us laugh. We thrice esteem writers who do all three.

Here are some paradoxes standing truth on her head. They say, "Look at me. I'm a paradox".

Paradoxically, then, the number of people studying rhetoric increased vastly while the number practising it was reduced (Vickers, 1988, p. 12).

Perhaps the greatest paradox of all is that there are paradoxes in mathematics (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 193).

Simplicity, then, paradoxically is the outward sign and symbol of depth of thought. It seems to me simplicity is about the most difficult thing to achieve in scholarship and writing (Lin, 1937, p. 80).

Like some other intellectual figures we have met—analogy, metaphor and irony—writers may name these figures to demand our attention and to proclaim the writer's intellect. Not all paradoxes are such show offs. Reason and logic run the science lab. But now and then unreason and illogic break into the lab, inhale the laughing gas and make merry mischief.

...for an amazing revelation awaits us: Infinite classes can also be counted, and by the very same means (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 31).

To express this giant bombshell in terms of a small firecracker: *There is a way of dividing a sphere as large as the sun into separate parts, so that no two parts will have any points in common, and yet without compressing or distorting any part, the whole sun may at one time be fitted snugly into one's vest pocket* (p. 207).

Paradoxes to Console and to Chide

Logical paradoxes wear the scientist's lab coat. But paradox can wear funnier costumes to console and to chide. Consider the Socratic paradox that to learn ever more is only to learn the extent of your ignorance. Such paradoxes comfort the afflicted and reflect on the frailty of knowledge. Here the mathematicians and a philosopher tell paradoxical stories of our Socratic search for knowledge.

Words of wisdom are spoken by children at least as often as by scientists (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 23).

There are surely plenty of words already in mathematics as well as in other subjects. Indeed, there are so many words that it is even easier than it used to be to speak a great deal and say nothing (p. 2).

Squaring the circle is proclaimed *impossible*, but what does "impossible" mean in mathematics? The first steam vessel to cross the Atlantic carried, as part of its cargo, a book that "proved" that it would forever be impossible for a steam vessel to cross anything, much less the Atlantic (p. 6).

For we have now come to a state of human culture in which we have compartments of knowledge but not knowledge itself (Lin, 1937, p. 414).

Other paradoxes console like irony by reflecting on the tragicomedy of life and her ideals. Memory recalls Churchill's aphorism that "democracy is the worst form of government apart from all the others". Less well known is his possibly apocryphal rejoinder that five minutes spent talking to the average voter is the best argument against democracy (Staeheli, 2010). Our ideals are paradoxically unideal, as Lin Yutang observes.

And nothing is so uninteresting as to spend one's life with a paragon of virtue as a husband or wife (1937, p. 58).

The three great American vices seem to be efficiency, punctuality and the desire for achievement and success. They are the things that make the Americans so unhappy and so nervous (p. 161).

Run across any hall of honor, with statues of the great men of history lining the corridor, and you will perceive that rationality of conduct is probably the last thing to be recalled from their lives (p. 59).

Paradoxes and Wit

Seductive academic writers broadcast their intellect by finding incongruities and their wit by expressing them with figures of play and mischief. Aristotle says metaphor demonstrates "genius". So does paradox, because you perceive and publish something others overlook. And that's the point. You cannot comb the beach of ideas to gather paradoxes, nor fresh similes and metaphors. You need the intellect to first perceive them and then the wit to express them. The wit of paradox is in its expression not its discovery. The same goes for paradox's show off brother, oxymoron. He also says, "Look at me. I'm an oxymoron. How clever I am!" Business ethics, open secret, passive-aggressive—oxymora all. But oxymora quickly cool to frozen clichés while paradoxes can be crafted anew. And paradox creates monuments to her expression in aphorisms and proverbs. Seductive paradoxes thus never fossilize into clichés but ever tease and torment the intellect by defying solution.

Paradox realizes many ideals of seductive academic writing. Paradox demonstrates the intellect of the writer, and its expression demonstrates the wit and the craft of their prose. Paradox demonstrates the ethos of the writer, someone confident enough to make play and mischief, someone caring enough to provoke their readers' intellects, tickle their ribs and comfort with the impossibility of absolute knowledge and certainty.

Wordplay

Playing with words for comedy also shows off your intellect, and your genioglossus if you can tap your tongue across its Greek names of "adnominatio" and "paronomasia". These tongue-gymnasts describe simple wordplays like puns and elaborate ones elaborately dressed whose elaborateness is best not elaborated—that's "polyptoton", repeating words derived from the same root. Here's another from Lin Yutang, which we met earlier among the rhetorical questions.

As for war, Napoleon showed the essential depth of his wisdom by saying that "an army fights on its stomach". And what is the use of saying, "Peace, Peace" when there is no peace below the diaphragm? (1937, p. 45)

It is never clever to overuse clever figures because meretriciousness attracts no merit. But readers enjoy meeting clever figures like wordplay, chiasmus and anadiplosis now and then because they can rub heads with the writer's intellect. They meet a personality, a wit, a humourist. Recall again Zinsser's behest that prose that must inform should sometimes

entertain. And again recall it matters not how you entertain. Just do it—or try to do it—to show you care enough for readers to lighten the load of learning with the levity of laughter. Here are mathematicians playing with ultraradical numbers.

We first meet these ultraradicals, not in Mexico City, but in trying to solve equations of the fifth degree (Kasner & Newman, 1949, p. 17).

And here are management theorists playing with the gastric incontinence of academese titles.

Her heart sank as she read the second half of the title. That post-colonic phrase said it all. Maximum jargon offered with an impenetrable flourish, all delivered as a kind of casual afterthought (Grey & Sinclair, 2006, p. 447).

We can classify wordplays by rules, but to make play and mischief is to bend and break rules. Therein lies the comedy. Clever wordplays other than pun and polyptoton include a Shakespearean favourite, substituting a part of speech for another, "anthimeria".

Lord Angelo dukes it well.—*Measure for Measure*

To their creators goes the genius of these wordplays; overuse soon dulls their brilliance. Just "Google" them if you have been "impacted" by anthimeria or if you resent your university department being "benchmarked".

Puns

Puns are the best-known wordplays and "the highest form of literature" according to a possibly ironic Alfred Hitchcock but perhaps too juvenile for academic texts. Advertisers and newspapers—particularly the tabloids—make mischief from ambiguity in homographs and homophones. A homograph puns with two words with the same spelling but different meanings, as in the headline "Juvenile court tries shooting defendant". A homophone puns with two words that sound the same but mean differently, as in the headline "Fearing for the wurst: German ministry under fire for meat-free buffets". Academics should pun cautiously, for, paradoxically, nothing so lowers an academic text as to call it "journalism" (Nash, 2004, p. 8) even though most journalists write better than most academics. But, like adverts, readers may appreciate puns in academic texts that should most demand our attention: titles and abstracts.

The ultrafast talk of two excited electrons: Listening, and then asking them physics questions—Oxford University seminar title

Summary

Seductive academic writers care for their readers. They give them the gift of laughter now and then because they know serious subjects read more easily helped by a little humour. They know humour bonds and consoles. It reduces distance between reader and writer. It draws them together with the comfort of the vernacular. It projects the writer's personality, confidence and intellect. It comforts with the Socratic paradox that the more we know, the more we know we know ever less and ever more the limits of our knowledge. Seductive academic writers are not comics, jesters, satirists. But like the crying clown and the laughing policeman, they feel and share the tragicomedy of life. Laughter can speak seriously and serious people can make laughter. Laughter polishes the ethos of academic writers because we respect clever people with the compassion to understand the necessity of laughter and the funny expression of serious content.

PART III:

FIGURING OUT MORE SEDUCTIVE ACADEMIC PROSE

CHAPTER SEVEN

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF!

It requires no especially great talent to write in such a way that another will be very hard put to understand what you have written.

—G.F. Lichtenberg

It's fortunate that academics are trained to read difficult material, since so many of them produce just that.

—William Germano

Subject without style is barbarism; style without subject is dilettantism. Art is the two together.

—R.G. Collingwood

Admonishing the Sins of Academese

The prose of seductive academic writers that quickens these pages tells happier tales than the tales of the Paradox, Problem and Oxymoron in chapter two. The paradox of style handbooks failing to teach the figures of speech that seduce remains, but seductive academic writers self-learn and apply the figures throughout their prose. The incontinent problem of flatulent and constipated academese remains, but seductive academic writers compose free-flowing, feeling prose that engages and cares for readers, disproving the oxymoron holding that academic writing cannot be stylish. And yet seductive academic prose remains as rare as the writing handbooks teaching the figures of speech that quicken it.

This chapter starts nervously but ends encouragingly. Quaking like a minor prophet about to admonish the sins of the people, it upbraids the sins of academese authors and teachers. Descriptions of the patterns and problems and practices of academese we have enough already not to require their restatement here. But still the academy has too few and too fearless a number proclaiming a truth: academese is immoral. I shall restate why, give voice to its defenders—only to overthrow them—and show how, from the good writer's pen, figures of speech realize the social good of humanistic communication, leading to the encouraging conclusion that academese is curable, if the academy chooses to heal itself.

Bene Dicendi

Rhetoric was the highest social good in the Hellenistic Greece of Aristotle (384-322 BC) and the early Empire Rome of Quintilian (35-100 AD), whose societies believed only a good person could be a good speaker and thus a good speaker must be a good person. Under Cicero (106-43 BC), rhetoric became a humanistic discipline of mastering the art of speaking well, *bene dicendi scientia*, where "well" meant speaking correctly, eloquently and for the public good. The belief that only a good person can speak well goes unbelieved today, circles logic and fathers paternalistic prose. Adolf Hitler spoke well but was evil. Pope Benedict XVI seemed good, to some, but spoke poorly. Ever will we disagree on whether a person is good or bad, but we can broadly agree on when a person speaks well. And like all societies, we esteem people who act well *and* speak well.

Herein lies the covenant and the curse of the academy. Education is a social good. Do so many academics not communicate well because when society esteems the knowledge profession, its professors think they need not communicate their knowledge well? Do so many shifty politicians, salespersons and estate agents communicate well because they have not the social good advantage academia enjoys? Advertisers, journalists and business people who act well but communicate poorly get fired. Academics who act well but communicate poorly get tenure. But the social good of teaching and learning dulls when academics communicate in *academese*.

The seductive academic writers on these pages pursue and practise two truths. Truth one holds that good writing and speaking are the moral acts the ancient rhetoricians prized. Whatever one must say, one should say it well, not just clearly, concisely and coherently—the ideals of academic writing pedagogies—but humanistically, recognizing a human writer communicates with human readers all of whom hold in their heads and hearts ideals, hopes and fears. This moral argument carries the ideals of rhetoric and has been made well enough elsewhere to only adumbrate here. Writing in the professional writing styles of *academese*, *legalese* and *businessese* is like committing perjury, claims Richard Lanham. You can *choose* to write humanistically or choose not to and commit perjury in the court of prose like most others in your profession (2007, p. 127). *Academese* authors perhaps choose not to care for their readers, or perhaps never learned to care for their readers, or perhaps cannot be bothered to care for their readers—like the dead academic writer in chapter one—or perhaps offer other reasons still before us.

Some of the seductive academic prose in this book comes, unsurprisingly, from hortatory and admonishing essays from academics concerned enough about the serial perjurers in their professions to shame them. But I suspect an Atticus Finch image lingers in the minds of all stylish academic writers to guard them against the sins of academese. Prose examples of mathematicians Kasner and Newman line these chapters and sometimes censure the dark prose of the professions. They write of how easier it is to be clever than to be clear (p. 357) and of how

High priests in every profession devise elaborate rituals and obscure language as much to conceal their own ineptness as to awe the uninitiate (p. 113).

Academese might decline and fall if on every page of their drafts academics had imprinted the precept "care about your reader". Care enough for the dignity of the human reader to write with clarity, concision and coherency, sure, but go further—a good recipe or instruction manual performs that holy triptych. You must also care enough to interest, elevate and amuse, which brings us to the second of the truths. Great stylists they may not be, but seductive academic writers write distinctively enough to *have* a prose style: not just clear, concise and coherent, but an individual style projecting a personality we meet and enjoy on the page. This argument has again been made well enough elsewhere to only adumbrate here. The great stylists, says Brand Blanshard, are "unfailingly interesting" because they throw themselves "headlong" into writing prose "saturated with feeling".

Readers want their writers to make them feel alive, and when they can sit with their authors and jeer and laugh and scold and rejoice and admire with them, they feel intensely alive (1954, p. 12).

To write living prose of a living person seems as good a definition of style as any other because it encourages writers to practise a rhetorical doctrine mentioned before: *movere*. We should communicate not only clearly, concisely and coherently but to compel audiences to understand us, by speaking to empathy, the human condition and the social good (Cicero, 2016; Quintilian, 1920; Vickers, 1988). Seductive academic writers craft prose that lives, speaks and moves audiences with a throbbing pulse, dreaming heart and lusty limbs in a style antithetical to the academese of the dead academic writers that haunt earlier chapters.

When men with hearts as well as heads are dealing with themes of human importance, they should not deal with them as if nothing but their heads, and somewhat desiccated heads at that, were involved (Blanshard, 1954, p. 8).

Naysayers may accept the humanistic imperative to move audiences lives in the arts and the social sciences, but contend that the subject door marked "hard sciences" and the style door marked "objectivity" shut out the human condition. But what of the condition of the most important human, the reader? Have we not seen the mathematicians repeatedly please, amuse and compel us not only to understand mathematical method but to value its social good? Seductive academic writers care for their readers and compel their understanding.

Noblesse Oblige

The moral campaign to euthanize academese and bring forth living, caring prose shoulders another campaign placard: noblesse oblige. Is it not wicked that those educated to the highest levels when climbing the ivory towers seem incapable or unwilling to compassionately disburse their bounties?

It is obvious that in the arts of presentation the learned speaker is almost illiterate, sometimes that, though not illiterate, he thinks that only substance matters and form can take care of itself (Blanshard, 1954, p. 10).

Every professor's resume boasts of the social good of academic noblesse oblige in a section titled "service" from which we learn that Professor Altruist gives instructive presentations, advises policy groups, guides editorial boards, heals the sick and uplifts the downtrodden, all without remuneration, all for the social good. How strange it is that those who disburse such value to society in their secondary endeavours cause such difficulty to readers in their primary endeavour of communicating their research in their prose. The countervailing claim that academic prose must be highbrow because it contains complexities comprehensible only to highbrow readers has again been inflated and deflated well enough here and elsewhere. Here's Patricia Limerick puncturing it.

Everyone knows that today's college students cannot write, but few seem willing to admit that the professors who denounce them are not doing much better (1993, p. 200).

Limerick then moves us to laughter, suggesting professors write badly, perhaps revengefully, because they were the high school highbrows with whom no one wanted to dance at the high school ball.

Often we speak well of how sunlight disinfects the dark places of society. Just imagine how the highbrow and superfatted prose emperors of academia will look when the illuminating sunbeam of the European Union illuminates their dark prose and dark disciplines when that benighted institution makes all publicly funded university science research in Europe freely available to all Europeans from 2020 (Enserink, 2016). Those sunbeams may reveal some emperors too shabbily dressed to serve as more than stool servants and perhaps emperors or empires without clothes or kingdoms.

The Rhetoric of Academese

Those concerned with the disease academese spreads through academia and beyond have voiced those concerns for more than a century, time enough to acknowledge academese is no mere style but a rhetoric, a black art of expression of a cadre of bafflegabs who prize its Stygian darkness. The rhetoric of academese taints all who write in and uphold the social good of the academy because audiences read from a rhetoric the culture, values, priorities and moralities of its practitioners (Spence, 2007). What does it say of the social good of education if so many educators value dark communication and devalue those who must suffer to read it?

Eight decades have passed since the disease of academese entered the etymologies, time enough to recognize and redress the problem and yet still some deny its existence or contagion. Like the proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand, many academics and many academic writing handbooks do not see academese or speak its dirty word. Some even applaud those who keep them employed in its service: "most academics these days write extremely well", claims Dixon (2004, p. 136). To paraphrase Brian Vickers, should one admire more the vastness of this thesis or the absence of any evidence?

Sometimes even those who see academese negate its contagion or berate its critics or—when courage fails—hide behind the academy's "social good" barricades. Thompson and Kamler co-author wholesome writing handbooks for graduates, offering prescriptions against academese. And yet their medicinal *Detox your Writing* still objects to the "glib, arrogant tone" of the critics that necessitate their prescriptions, and names and shames as "unhelpful" (2016, p. 203) academic diagnoses of academese. Billig (2013, p. 5) joins company with critics of social science

writing but suggests publish or perish compels it. Yes, universities crack the whip that drives academics to publish, but no one demands they write badly. Anyone who defends bad writing by opining about publication pressures argues amorally.

Applied Linguistics Spreads Academese

Writing must no more occur in a moral vacuum than writing instruction must occur in a style vacuum. But too often this happens in applied linguistics, the field that most researches and teaches academic writing and most spreads academese. Consider a marked difference. Students who learn to write poems and plays and fiction and journalism and advertising receive excellent exemplars. Their instructors spend hours carefully choosing, collecting and analyzing exemplars rich in content *and* style for their students to study and emulate. These instructors no more give their students badly written texts than priests give their congregations bad moral teachings.

But the opposite occurs in the style vacuum of applied linguistic approaches to academic writing. The fashion today is to assemble large corpora of academic texts, or sections of texts, with seemingly no concern for the quality of the writing packed into the teaching treasure chests. This mad and bad method thinks "if it's published it must be good and therefore we will teach what we find there". The unhappy result is garbage-in, garbage-out. If half the published academic writing sickens with academese—a modest estimate—then half the exemplars in the pedagogies teaching academic writing teach students to write as badly as the academese-infested texts they pack into their treasure chests to teach it with.

Arrogance and glibness do not drive the argument that applied linguistics spreads academese through the academic writing programmes it directs. The facts do. Academese has infested academic prose for more than a century so you might think the academic writing journals have discussed it, diagnosed it and prescribed its medications. How many articles on "academese" appear in the premier academic writing journal, *English for Academic Purposes*? None. How many articles research how and why academics should write music and rhythms into prose? None. How many articles on the musical figures of parallelism, tricolon, anaphora, polysyndeton? None. How many articles on how to tell stories by personifying abstractions and writing with ergative verbs? Again, none.

Consider more evidence. It's a rare academic writing or English-language-teaching reading list that does not include postgraduate academic

writing guides by linguists John Swales and Christine Feak. Their *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (2012a)—now living its 3rd astigmatic life—and *Abstracts and the Writing of Abstracts* (2009) offer reference texts for academic writing pedagogies. They spread health and heartiness teaching skills like coherency and objectivity. But they spread academese by *uncritically* selecting the examples they teach academic writing with. And they and their champions put their fingers in their ears and their heads in the sand when critics point to their exemplars and shout "Academese infests these texts!"

Like many teachers of English for academic purposes, Swales and Feak (2009) do not caution against academese because they do not speak its name because they cannot see it perhaps because they refuse to see it. They instead select and praise abundant academese exemplars. They praise 'neat' nominalizations (p. 8) and do not caution against the abstractions and passives that fatten the waistline of so much obese academic prose. They select and praise as effective a comatose sentence that ends an abstract by effectively saying, "I found something important but I will not tell you what; struggle on and find it for yourself".

Implications for the management of each employee type as well as suggestions for future research are discussed (cited in 2009, p. 6).

This sentence masters academese by packing polysyllabic nominalizations between prepositions and spearing the lard together with a weak, passive verb. "Such sentences project no life, no vigor. They just are" (Lanham, 2007, p. 3). Swales and Feak did not write this sentence but they recommend it and many others like it and thus spread academese. Had the writers—or indeed Swales and Feak—resuscitated the sentence with Lanham's 'paramedic method' (p. x), they could have raised its corpse heavenward to proclaim, "We discuss and suggest how practitioners can better manage their employees".

Swales and Feak (2009) teach students to build academic writing from the "prefabricated hen-houses" Orwell dynamited (2002, p. 957), with empty, conceptual, formulaic phrases like "little is known about" and "we extend the literature" and "the current study"—The "current" study? The word "currently" actually and currently adds nothing but lard to what anyone actually or currently or presently says, actually. Swales and Feak are not uniquely the problem, but their approach directs many others which exemplify how academese gets spread by writing pedagogies with a stolid hammerhead for only content and no discriminating eye for good style.

Several times have I shown that academics should learn from the languages of advertising, and no academic text should advertise more than an abstract and its title. An abstract must proclaim and repeat a contribution, loudly. Swales and Feak say make this once and bury it in the last sentence. They don't say put it at the start and end and repeat it and put it in the title, like persuasive adverts and persuasive abstracts do. They give just a page to the writing of titles (p. 57). The dreariest and tritest—the most academese—title reads [noun phrase: explanatory noun phrase]. Guess which type Swales and Feak recommend? Their accompanying teacher's *Commentary* (2012b) says next to nothing about "style"—neither the good nor the bad. They say nothing about writing musically or creatively. They say nothing about caring for and interesting the reader. Overall, they ignore or teach the opposite of the good academic writing style good academic writers master.

Applied linguistics will continue to spread academese and undermine academic ethos and the social good of education until it wakes up and smells the stylistic stench its writing pedagogies infest into academic prose and its teaching. Two remedies volunteer themselves. Applied linguistics must apply itself to teaching not just content but a good academic writing style by critically selecting stylishly written exemplars. It does not follow that a published paper is a well-written paper or written well enough to offer an exemplar. Until we weed out the turnips from the harvests that fill the teaching corpora, we will continue to teach turnip writing.

Second, applied linguistics should follow the good practice of disciplines that teach writing unhindered by the astigmatism to style that clouds applied linguistic approaches. In rhetoric we do not bifurcate prose into literal or figurative camps, or creative/literary or non-creative/non-literary camps, whose residents never meet or converse or swap tales or gossip or clothes. Creativity and the emotions and the audience should matter as much in academic prose as facts and reason and quantity matter in more literary prose. In rhetoric we do not praise objectivity and censure subjectivity like academic writing pedagogies tend to, because humans think and live and reason with their heads and their hearts.

Tales from the Front Line

We know that graduate education covers barely the basics of academic writing instruction and leaves chance and fate to direct how students develop their writer's style and persona, which too often merge into the singular spectre of the dead academic writer. Let me close this trial of academese by sharing some tales from the front line as one, of I hope

many, who teaches—or tries to teach—graduate students and writing instructors to write and teach more seductive academic prose.

Quickly this noble errand turns into a fool's errand. Suppose you can persuade academic writing instructors that academic writing stinks. Clutching their well-thumbed copies of *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, they reply, "but that is how academics write, and that is the writing style the handbooks teach, and so that is how we must teach it". And suppose you can persuade them that passives and abstractions and nominalizations slowly stupefy readers. Again they will chorus "but that is the writing style the handbooks teach" and ask, "Where are the handbooks teaching the stylish academic writing you speak of?" Sadly, no single academic writing pedagogy—one weighting academic content and style *equally*—exists. And perhaps none will while the astigmatics see substance and style as fruits grown in different orchards.

Graduate students tell similar tales. They know academic writing stinks and value stylish academic writing workshops teaching them to awaken zombie prose with techniques taught here and in the best non-academic style handbooks that almost never make top or any billing on the reading lists of academic writing courses. But they soon find these techniques questioned or rejected by their academic writing instructors and thesis supervisors. Caution directs both to encourage graduate students to write safe, academese prose their examiners can decipher, not engaging, enjoyable prose anyone can read. "You can go pick the sweet fruits from the trees in the style orchard after you graduate", goes this philosophy, "but you must first give readers the gooseberry".

Academese pleads another common defence when she stands on trial: The publish or perish career whip driving early career academics up the first flights of the ivory towers leaves them too little time to expend the much time it takes to write seductive academic prose. Pressures of work cannot excuse academese because it long precedes the pressures of today's benchmarked academics and departments. When a student submits her apologetic assignment, saying "I could not find the time to put in the effort I should have", we do not reply "I will overlook your bad writing style because I understand how competitiveness curtails quality in university". Noblesse should oblige and shame an academic's conscience: "You work in an esteemed profession that advances human knowledge so if you cannot find the time to communicate your social good in a good style perhaps you should work elsewhere".

Sometimes the justification "I had not the time" conceals the truth "I could not be bothered". For academic writing instructors open to reforming academic writing pedagogies we might stretch this justification

to "I could not find the time or I lack the skills to teach a better style of academic writing". Recall the mathematicians telling us how easier it is to be clever than to be clear. It is easier for academic writing instructors to teach students to write to models and to principles—however flawed—than to challenge and reform them. This explains why graduate students generally write, and are taught to write, formulaic, characterless research abstracts, because their instructors teach them to include all the abstract "moves" (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990) in the predictable order that the abstracts pedagogies teach. But writers need not do either (Can, Karabacak, & Qin, 2016). Seductive academic writers bend or break the rules in abstracts and elsewhere to above all write creatively. But writing and teaching to formulaic patterns is far easier than teaching creative writing, the best antidote to academese, or any -ese.

Figuring out More Seductive Academic Prose

We have seen how three C-words guide academic writing pedagogies: clarity, concision and coherency. But they must admit other C-words to their Club if we wish to euthanize academese. Creativity and caring for the reader vanquish academese by reminding us to write as humans communicating with other humans and not as institutions. The few handbooks championing or teaching stylish academic writing say write creatively and borrow from creative genres. Seductive academic writers draw from the languages of literature and advertising and journalism and humour to craft creative and engaging prose. And they write to two rhetorical universals. Precept one says we better describe, explain and argue our subjects if we care about our readers. Corollary precept two says caring for readers requires sharing the best features of humanity, which include practising the art of rhetoric and writing with figures of speech (Spence, 2007, p. 24).

Seductive academic writers invest abundant figures into their prose because they know they repay imperatives of human persuasion and academic writing. They write with figures because they realize the good rhetorical doctrines of *movere* and *enargia* that help writers describe, explain, argue, tell stories, make play and mischief, write like a speaking person and talk to their readers. They write with figures because they know they abound in the highest literature for experts and the common and persuasive tongue for all. They write with figures to broadcast their intellect and satisfy the reader's desire for prose with music, patterns and logic.

Seductive academic writers write with figures not just to decorate but to structure and cohere sentences, paragraphs and texts. They write with some figures moderately, others frequently and all appropriately. My prose sometimes violates the moderation rule, but only to draw attention to the figures the other style guides overlook. Seductive academic writers write with figures because they realize the beneficence of creative and caring human beings who communicate to build relationships, understandings and societies. They write with figures because they reject the astigmatic academic writing pedagogy that wrongly thinks creativity matters only in the creative disciplines (Fahnestock, 1999, p. xii).

Optimism Leads the Way

Academese may decline if the academy chooses to heal its self-inflicted harms, but will it? Optimism draws a little comfort from the small but accreting number of books like this which seek to heal the dead academic writer with pedagogies teaching living academic prose. Optimism finds a little satisfaction in these volumes and other unignorable essays demonstrating the moral sickness of academese and prescribing its compassionate killing. Optimism draws a little more satisfaction from the few and recent lay volumes (Forsyth, 2013; Leith, 2012; Romm, 2012) bringing rhetoric and the figures of speech back into the communications public sphere where they belong. But sadly, only academics who value the discarded discipline of rhetoric will consult these prescriptions and apply their medicines to heal sick prose. Clear, concise and coherent prose can still make for dull prose unless writers aerate it with the breath of life and character of personality the figures of speech convey.

Optimism may overcome the prevailing pessimism about academese, but only if the academese academy acknowledges its sickness and relearns the craft of writing from the disciplines that write best and the disciples who teach the best writing. Optimism dreams a day will come when reading lists for academic writing courses read beyond the style-astigmatic academic writing pedagogies and give top billing to non-academic and non-applied linguistic writing pedagogies of human composition disciples like Zinsser (1995) and Lanham (1991) and Wilbers (2014) and Clark (2006) and Cioffi (2005) and another recent critic, Harold Evans.

Fog in the ivory towers where the arbiters of academia all over the world are conned into publishing volumes of computer generated garbage (2017, p. 4).

Optimism suggests that in today's attention economy, academics who can say a lot in a few words that most can understand will improve their prose and their careers. Perhaps a single successful academic TED Talk or YouTube video spreads more social good than several academic papers. Audiences more esteem academics who write and speak simply and seductively and show care for their audiences.

Optimism hopes that academics who write more seductively by drawing from academic disciplines beyond their own and from disciplines beyond the academy will attract as many accolades for their prose style as society showers on the best novelists, journalists and historians. Here lies buried another truth. Style and seduction dance on the page when writers view their academic prose as good literature rather than as just telling people stuff. It's a stretch to view academic articles as literature, but seductive academic writers stand apart because they compose more original, more creative, more literary prose by applying the same arts of rhetoric, figures of speech and storytelling skills that animate good literature. Every academic research paper, book or presentation begins by "reviewing the literature", so why not begin composing your academic texts with the ideals of literature in mind?

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