

## PREFACE

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For many academics, “stylish academic writing” is at best an oxymoron and at worst a risky business. Why, they ask, should we accessorize our research with gratuitous stylistic flourishes? Doesn’t overt attention to style signal intellectual shallowness, a privileging of form over content? And won’t colleagues reject as unserious any academic writing that deliberately seeks to engage and entertain, rather than merely to inform, its readers?

In this book, I argue that elegant ideas deserve elegant expression; that intellectual creativity thrives best in an atmosphere of experimentation rather than conformity; and that, even within the constraints of disciplinary norms, most academics enjoy a far wider range of stylistic choices than they realize. My agenda is, frankly, a transformative one: I aim to start a stylistic revolution that will end in improved reading conditions for all. In particular, I hope to empower colleagues who have come to believe—I have heard this mantra again and again—that they are “not allowed” to write a certain way. This book showcases the work of academic writers from across the disciplines who stretch and break disciplinary molds—and get away with it. Not only do they publish in respected peer-reviewed journals and place their books with prestigious presses, but they are lauded by their colleagues for their intellectual rigor and flair.