

This is transcript for Shantam Goyal's interview for Inventio in 5, published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(1), available at <https://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.1/inventio/index.html#goyal>

Goyal Inventio in 5 Descriptive Transcript

0:05

Rich Shivener

Hi, everyone, I'm Rich Shivener.

[Title slide reads: "Inventio in 5: A Kairos Mini Series. Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy"]

0:07

Liz Chamberlain

And I'm Liz Chamberlain. We're co-editors of Inventio. We're serious about the "how" of digital media scholarship. In Inventio, authors interrogate how their digital scholarship came to be.

[A split-screen Zoom shows Rich Shivener and Liz Chamberlain in their home offices. Each waves at the camera.]

0:16

Rich Shivener

And as Inventio editors, we invite you to participate in this series. Reach out to us anytime at the Kairos email listed below. We also plan to reach out to more authors as the series continues. Until then, thanks for watching.

[An introductory title slide features a picture and brief biography of Shantam Goyal: "Shantam Goyal is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Buffalo in New York." On the right side of the slide, there is a screenshot from the beginning of his Kairos review, "*Politics and Pedagogy in the 'Post-Truth' Era: Insurgent Philosophy and Praxis* by Derek R. Ford." The screenshot includes a picture of the cover of the book, which features an abstract illustration of a light circle superimposed on interleaved gray-toned strips.]

[A question slide says, "What did the prep stage look like?"]

In a recorded Zoom, Goyal (a male-presenting human with dark wavy hair and a mustard-colored sweater over a red-striped collard shirt) speaks to the camera against an orange velvety wingback chair.]

0:50

Shantam Goyal

I pretty much went in with no prep. I was just trying to figure out, instinctively—and it was not a very long book, as well.

So, I had it in my head that the second time I read it through, that's when I sort of start structuring my review, but the first time I read it through I will try and, sort of, check my own instinct.

And think about which chapters feel exciting to me, what naturally feels like it should be

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highlighted or noted down as something that is really interesting.

And that sort of almost leads to the book determining its own review structure for me.

So for instance, when I went in, my review in the end came out structured in I think four or five parts, where it was like, this section is suitable for teachers, this is suitable for students, this is suitable for a certain kind of political thinker or political activist.

[Here, a screen recording scrolls through the review, demonstrating that the navigation features pages devoted to the particular types of readers Shantam names; the recorder clicks on the "for teachers" page.]

That's not what I had in mind—so I did not have those categories in mind before I started reading the book.

I went in and when I sort of looked through my notes when I was reading through the book a second time I said all right, there is something neat coming out.

It feels like Professor Ford—the author of the book—is speaking in different registers in different parts of the book, almost as if he means these parts to be said by different people.

[A title slide reads, "How was the process of writing a review different from other types of academic writing?"]

As Shantam speaks, he gestures frequently below the view of the camera; you can see just the tips of his fingers.]

2:25

Shantam Goyal

You know I'm learning from the book itself, I'm not in a position where I can teach the author anything—not that I would want to—and that, I think, sort of makes the reviewing process slightly tricky.

Because you're also thinking about your own location, vis-à-vis the thing that you're reviewing, how much of an expert you consider yourself to be, and even if, you know, you have an authority over that knowledge, where you are located in relation to the author, both in your career and in your own work.

For instance I work on Pedagogy; I'm very interested in Communist Pedagogy as Professor Ford sort of unfolds it throughout this book, but that's not my idea of research, that's not what my thesis is on.

I work on Irish literature, I work on something completely different from what that book is about, and, in a sense, what I see or what I read from that book has very little bearing on my own work.

It has some bearing on my academic thought, but it won't find space; I won't be citing Professor Ford's book in my thesis, for instance, and that also changes how I'm approaching that book.

So I'm almost thinking of it as a non-specialist who's reviewing a book purely out of interest, as opposed to, let's say if I were reviewing a book on Modernism, or Irish Literature or Sound

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Studies, or James Joyce or something of that sort, then my stakes would be different.

[A title slide reads, "How has your composing process evolved throughout the years?"]

4:06

Shantam Goyal

I used to review books for a newspaper, and some of those were academic books but the reviews were meant for non-academic audiences, or let's say non-specialized audiences.

And it was a very different sort of reviewing process, where it was not so much about, you know, name dropping, as reviews often become.

I could not go in and say "all right, this person says this but they've not considered this large biographic tract that I have in my mind," and obviously you're familiar with such and such tradition of thought—no, none of that sort of work.

So my training I guess came from there, where you know, editors for newspapers are merciless, they'll just strike down anything they see as being a bit too obtuse because they have a particular audience in mind and they're doing the right thing.

So that, I guess, sort of, I think about it, trained me in not entering any text that I am about to review with an academic perspective in mind or with, you know, a reviewing identity in mind.

[Title slide reads, "How aware were you of your composing strategies?"]

5:29

Shantam Goyal

I mean there are a couple of things that you need to be aware of regardless, which you know, my professors have told me about, where you know, one of the important instructions that I received long long ago that you know, whenever you're reviewing a book, again as an early career academic you're sort of putting your opinion of someone else's work out there, and you have to be careful, right?

Which is why, like I said, you're not necessarily looking to say something is bad or something is horrible or this is just a one star book or anything of the sort—you don't do that with academic reviews.

Part of the reason for which is that you're still in early career academics so you're very aware of your positionality so that changes how aware you are at the sentence level when you're sort of, done sort of explaining what is going on in this book and you're now trying to say something about the thing that you explain.

Saying this is how; this is what this thing has bearing on or this is where, this is the sort of academic thinking this book is coming from.

They become very aware at a sentence level of what kind of words you're using, whether you sound at all, a bit arrogant or a bit denigrating, which, you know, you might mean to sound that way but you shouldn't, or you might not mean to sound that way but you still might, so you become very aware of the word choices just at sentence level.

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So when I'm reading through my paragraphs I'm trying to think about whether everything that I'm saying is just completely up in the air, or am I able to ground it in something that makes it well, more enjoyable to read; that makes it more useful to read for anyone who might be fortunate enough to be reading my review, and that is an awareness that stays there.

I'm not—I wouldn't say that I'm really that aware of structuring at large, where, as I mentioned, I'm not really aware of how this particular section is going to end.

In that sense, it's a bit more organic, a bit more instinctive, the writing. But there is a lot more awareness at the sentence level and at the level of how much abstraction is there in what I'm writing in, and can I ground that abstraction down to something more concrete. So that stays, yeah.

[Closing slide reads: "Edited by: Leah Ciani, Chante Douglas. Music credit: 'Lo-Fi Chill Hip Hop | Chilling' by Alex Productions"]