

**BHANU KAPIL**

## Style Handbook for New Immigrants to the US

*Available in pamphlet form or as a pdf you will never be able to open as your internet connection is ridiculously slow. This is no life. It's not too late to go home!!!!*

**STYLE:** from my iMac dictionary: "a nondirective style of counseling type, kind, variety, sort, genre, school, brand, pattern, model." As an experimental prose writer or poet, depending on the country I am writing in/falling in love in: in-in: my BRAND is the sentence. I pattern my brand with a syntax designed, I sometimes think, to slow things down enough that I can have them: thoughts. Have one: a functional nervous system. Or: to build up tolerance to a particular image. With its silver, black and yellow marks that I used to pretend: were lightning.

I came here to write. Not to feel better. If I'd wanted to feel really great, I would have stayed where I was. I didn't do that and that is why I use semi-colons and commas the way other people use love. As a way to adhere to the earth. Punctuation has curvature. And volition. Here, for example, are four NOTES. Four notes towards a genre that suits me. You don't need to know me or care about me to use these notes for your own purposes or schools. I hope you do. As Ariana Reines wrote last week: "Punctuation is a form of acupuncture."

To summarize: My friends call me The Beak. I am like a glossy black bird with giant shabby wings. Imagine this. I come to your house with this envelope, and I drop it off, and I fly away. You come to the door, pick the envelope up off the ground - it's started to rain - and open it. And read. Start reading:

HOW TO WRITE A SENTENCE or WHAT TO WEAR WHEN YOU GET OFF THE AEROPLANE:

### 1. Sentences

lie down next to each other, but don't touch. Species is ecstatic. Like everyone else, after some years of refusing to touch, I touch, having avoided touch because it is a thoroughfare. For nerves. A nerve has a charge. In this way, a sentence is fundamental to the sensorimotor sequence. Its discharge. Its completion. But I don't want it to. I don't want to complete it all at once.

### 2. The semi-colon

faces backwards and is, thus, magnetized by what precedes the sentence, just as the body recoheres to the scrap torn and kept on a meat hook, pre-history. The sentence moves in one direction; its memory in another. Like the skin being stripped off the body by a great force. A blast. I don't know if punctuation is for being here or for holding on, or if it's simply the physical mark the body leaves when it is being torn from another body. (Notes.) A form of early worship. The hooks in the back. And the sun above the jungle warping into, and out of, the sky.

### 3. Semi-colons are like long scratches

on a body. Vowels as saturated. Rimbaud drinking coffee in a room with red and yellow wallpaper, looking out the window at the jungle rain. But commas as a scarring process set in motion by the abrasions performed by other kinds of punctuation. I like commas. I like semi-colons. Though they mar a lyric effort, I want them. I want a sentence that takes up the theme of bodies and violence, thematically. The theme of the sentence is its grammar.

"What appears in the photograph is unfamiliar. We don't recognize it." (Duras.) Like that: a content dissipating before a person's eyes. Like smoke trapped beneath a glass, in fairytales. And bars. As a late-night trick, in the time when you could light up. Inside. So that what I assess is the pollen index of a poem, the places where the surface is speckled or torn, with drifting grains. A dash. A line. A stop. Every texture is diasporic. Every body, in its fundament, will loosen from its radical core and drift, too. This is why I prefer cremation over burial. I don't want to be buried. I want my ashes to be taken to the Ganges, and to the coast of Oregon, at Florence, where I first saw the Pacific – I heard it before I saw it, and my heart swung wide. (Notes towards an Asian-American Grammar Book.) (Notes for the sea.)

#### 4. [A sentence arrives](#)

just as I do, unconscious of its immediate environment. Tasteless. Over-dressed. Already wanting something but frustrated, always frustrated. Thus, many of the sentences were about eating something as you walked down the street. Not me. You. I think of the aeroplane slitting the white fog to arrive, in a city made of silver and citron-yellow triangles. Kolkata. Berlin. I am going to Berlin. En route. Pressed against the glass, like the end of *Blue*.

Renee Gladman has sent me *Event Factory*, and I am going to open it now, within an hour of its arrival. *Now*:

"From the sky there was no sign of Ravicka. Yet, I arrived; I met many people. The city was large, yellow and tender."

YELLOW. And I look at the beautiful cover of the book – the rough geometric shapes, somewhere between a rectangle and a triangle, on tall stalks. Girding. Behind them, it's grey.

Then I open the book again, at random, to a paragraph that I realize, suddenly, is about fisting. A woman lying on her back. The fist is inside her, but she processes it slightly later than the instant it is happening. A doppler effect. A delay, too, in the reader, who reads the sentences but does not understand them. Does not really read them. Can't read them, not really, because they are moving faster than the time in which they are written. Had. The sentence is already inside you, like a fist. Like a native language. "I did not breathe."

Reading Renee, I experience relief. The relief of being held in place, unable to look away from the book, which is "implanted in me through the reading of that very book." Next, I prevent myself from reading it. That is the next step in reading, which nobody taught me. I taught myself how to avoid happiness, at all costs.

Do you understand?