

***Genre Research and Forensic
Linguistics. Invitation to a Dialogue***

GSFL Roundtable 2017

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**(Not a forensic linguist by any count, not even a linguist
(but quite fascinated))**

In over my head

(a humilitas trope)

(Photo removed)

Some existing studies

- Converse, C. W. (2012). Unpoetic Justice: Ideology and the Individual in the Genre of the Presentence Investigation. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 26(4), 442-478.
- Devitt, A. (2016). Uncovering Occluded Publics: Untangling Public, Personal, and Technical Spheres in Jury Deliberations. In M. J. Reiff & A. Bawarshi (Eds.), *Genre and the Performance of Publics* (pp. 139-156). Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Freadman, A. (2002). Uptake. In R. Coe, L. Lingard, & T. Teslenko (Eds.), *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre* (pp. 39-53). Cresskill Hampton Press Inc.
- Fuzer, C., & Barros, N. C. (2009). Accusation and Defense: The Ideational Metafunction of Language in the Genre Closing Argument. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a Changing World* (pp. 78-96). Fort Collins, Colorado: WAC Clearinghouse.

Miller, C. (1984). Genre as Social Action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70(2), 151-167.



Miller's impact

- Genres are seen as functional
- The de facto genres of everyday life have become the predominant subject

Miller's definition

genres are

“typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations”

Six tenets of genre research

- Genres are almost omnipresent in culture
- Genres are an interaction of regulation and innovation
- Genres form larger patterns including other genres
- Genres are connected temporally
- Most of our interpretation through genre is tacit and rarely understood as generic interpretation
- Genres are habitual; Our perception of genres tends to naturalize them

1. The omnipresence of genre

- Genres everywhere
- Our "genred" interactions
- Genres of language
- More genres
- Strange genres

2. Norms and creativity

- Genres allow for a variable degree of individual expression but there is always individuality
- Genres are at most “stabilized enough” or “stabilized for now” (Schryer), and possibly not even that.
- The discovery that an utterance deviates from its genre is unsurprising

The destable genres

“genres are not even stabilized for now, as they live and breathe through individual instances and interactions across and within genres.”

Amy Devitt, 2009

3. Genre patterns

Genre Studies has developed a nuanced vocabulary of different terms for the patterning of genres

- “genre set” (Devitt)
- “genre system” (Bazerman)
- “genre repertorie” (Orlikowski & Yates)
- “genre ecology” (Spinuzzi & Zachry)

4. Genres after genres

- The concept of “Uptake” as defined by Anne Freadman
- Based on Austin *How to do Things with Words*
- Adds a dynamic perspective to Miller's theory of social action
- Genres are “uptakes” on previous uses of genre.
- They take previous uses of genre as an invitation or request and take them up
- Each use of genre offers a new uptake for later genre users to react to

An uptake



The bidirectionality of uptake

texts “become identified as being of a certain genre in their interaction with other texts. When a text finds a respondent, the text’s generic identity can be confirmed, but it can also be modified.”

Katja Thieme, 2006

Swales: Genre chain

- Call for papers
- paper proposal
- Review meeting/interchange
- Letter of acceptance
- Paper draft from presenters
- Letter from arrangers to participants with paper draft
- Presentation
- Discussion

5. Genre knowledge is mostly tacit

- Genre knowledge is acquired through socialization
- It remains for the most part unacknowledged
- Most of our understanding of genre comes to us through practice
- Is usually not recognized as genre knowledge
- Allows us to perform complex interpretations unconsciously and instantaneously

Paré, Starke-Meyerring, and McAlpine

[M]uch of the advice offered by supervisors comes from a deep discipline-specific, but inexpressible discourse knowledge. Although we are attempting to get colleagues to articulate the standards to which they hold their doctoral students, even the most experienced supervisors seem uncertain.

Tacit genre interpretation



Kender du
Peter Pabst-Karlsson
fra Nybolig...?

Du kunne
jo ringe
til ham...

 Nybolig

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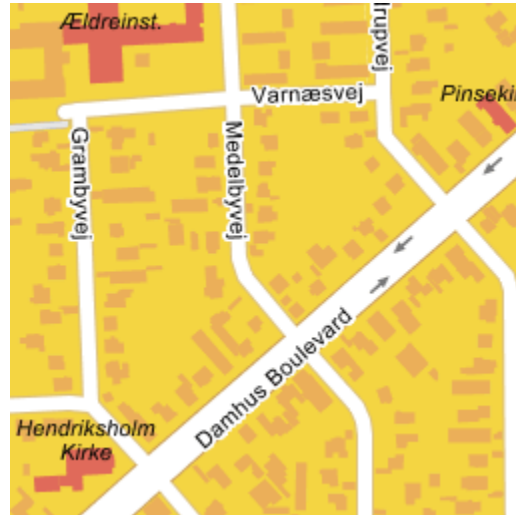
CLEARCHANNEL

6. Genres are habitual

- Being habitual genres acquire an “illusion of normalcy” (Paré)
- The naturalization of genre can be seen as inherently conservative
- The implied power relations and ideologies are not invisible in a genre, just naturalized to the user
- Genres thus demonstrate what is taken for granted, and what is the subject of debate

Home arrest

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Complaint guide

Written decisions which can be appealed against to another administrative authority shall be accompanied by written advice on the right to appeal indicating the appeals authority and the appeals procedure, including any time limit. This shall not apply if the decision is in every particular in favour of the party concerned.

Public Administration Act (section 25, 1)

Two genres, two actions

Complaint

- Antagonistic
- Must lead to a ruling
- Initiates a distinct genre chain
- Must be well-documented
- Requires objectivity
- May lead to sanctions

Evaluation

- Collaborative
- Should lead to reflection
- Leaves the uptake of the recipient unbound
- Needs little documentation
- Allows for subjectivity
- Should lead to improved practices