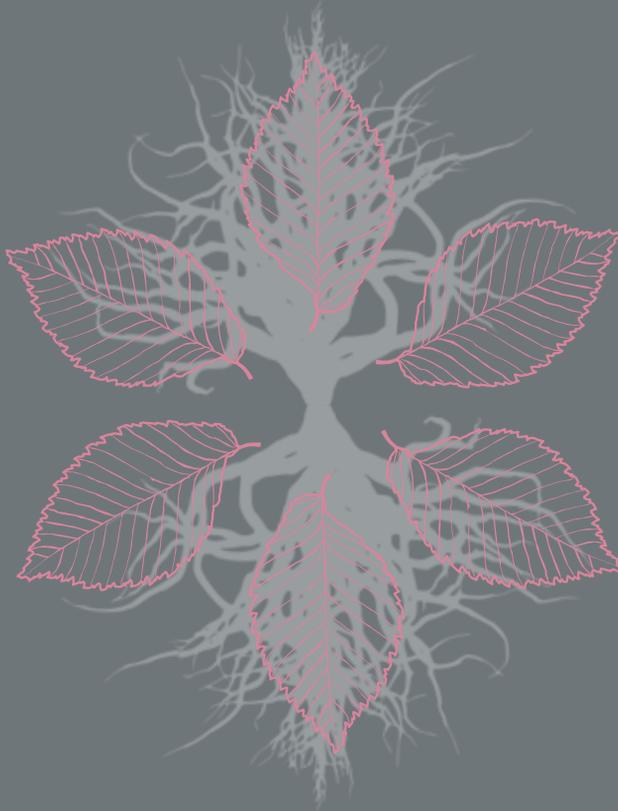


GENRE AND ...

Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2



Ekbatana

Ed. Sune Auken,
Palle Schantz Lauridsen, &
Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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FORLAGET EKBÁTANA

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& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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INTRODUCTION

Sune Auken, Palle Schantz Lauridsen,
& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

DURING THE LAST FIVE DECADES or so the concept of genre has evolved from a local term concerned with categorization within literary (and to some extent aesthetic) studies into a multifaceted core concept within several disciplines: rhetoric, linguistics, communication and media studies, various aesthetic disciplines, and composition, to name but a few. Moreover, this expanded field of use is most likely only the beginning. The explanatory potential of genre is wider, as the type of cultural communication, interpretation, and categorization involved is active in every human endeavor. So there should be room for genre studies for example within the social sciences: a coherent sociology of genres (Russel, 1997, Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010) or a study of the genres of law could be illuminating indeed.

Genre studies addresses the cultural forms that arise in human interaction, the patterns and forms of culture, and the role they play in our production and interpretation of cultural utterances. “Utterances” must be taken very expansively: we are dealing not only with literary or aesthetic works, but also with linguistic and cultural utterances in a very broad sense, including TV programs, the genres of everyday conversation, juridical documents, sculptures, school essays, etc., etc. Genres are everywhere in culture, and the concept of genre follows close behind.

On the one hand, the usefulness of genres in culture has to do with their strongly regulative character. On the other hand, it derives from their flexibility, which allows everyone to modify genres in order to serve his or

her own communicative needs. The regulative function of genre determines, for instance, that a person writing a commercial will know that the recipient will relate it to a product which she can acquire through payment. At the same time, any utterance will contain individual elements based on, among other things, the specific character of its rhetorical situation, its historical and cultural background, and the specific intentions of the utterer (Schryer, 1993, Devitt, 2009). This means that familiarity with the genre of an utterance is a necessary prerequisite for understanding it. But it is not sufficient in itself—and only in the simplest of cases, and perhaps not even in those, is it possible to identify a text as belonging to one genre and one genre only.

As is the case with just about any concept rising to prominence within the humanities, the concept of genre too has become ridden with a multitude of meanings and ambiguities. The close scrutiny involved in any scholarly effort to understand a cultural phenomenon like genre tends to dissolve what appears solid into the thin air of linguistic and conceptual complexity. Adding to this, the widespread analytical and cultural use of genre has led to a number of different definitions of the concept, some so far apart that it is reasonable to wonder whether we are instead dealing with homonyms, as every new context seems to have toned the meaning of the concept—even if ever so slightly.

Since there is nothing unusual in this situation, as scholars we need not be surprised by it, much less discouraged. Attempts at discrediting and discarding the concept of genre have met with little success, and today the concept is as prolific in research as it is in culture in general. But we do need to let our understanding be challenged by the concept's manifold meaning.

This volume is one of several possible ways to address this challenge. Its subject is the relation between genre and a number of other central concepts within the humanities. Each article in this book discusses the relationship between genre, on the one hand, and another important humanistic concept, on the other. These concepts range from extremely broad ones,

such as language, rhetoric, and categorization, to much more specific concepts, such as the novel, multiprotagonistic narrative, and poetry, on the other. Even when taken in combination, these articles of course cannot provide an exhaustive and coherent rendering of the numerous networks and relationships pertinent to the study of genre. They can, however, demonstrate some of the complexities involved in an understanding of genre, as well as give a small hint of the scholarly potential present in genre studies.

The present volume is based on a long-running discussion within the Research Group for Genre Studies at the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen. The authors represent several scholarly fields and a plurality of methods. However, the articles that follow are not to be taken as an argument for methodological pluralism, as the inherent contradiction in working from mutually exclusive assumptions is self-defeating. Instead, we have tried to let the various members of the group work from their own assumptions while in constant discussion with other approaches. Not all of these discussions will be noticeable in the articles that follow, but some will. Furthermore, given the variety of subject matters in the book, the theoretical framework must vary from article to article. For example, the Rhetorical Genre Studies of Carolyn Miller, Amy Devitt, and their partners are much more relevant to the articles on education and rhetoric than they are to the articles on conversation and paratext.

Despite these differences, numerous interrelations remain, and these form an interdisciplinary network throughout the volume. This discipline-based interdisciplinarity is, in fact, one of the central points of genre studies. The universities are under considerable pressure to work with interdisciplinary approaches, and whole institutes have been restructured on the promise of this notion. However, the call for interdisciplinarity is more problematic than it appears at first glance. As one of the great interdisciplinarians, Northrop Frye, puts it: "A scholar in an area not his own feels

like a knight errant who finds himself in the middle of a tournament and has unaccountably left his lance at home.” (Frye, 1982, p. IX). Interdisciplinary approaches threaten to turn into tournaments without lances: a lot of flying colors, shiny armor, and fine horsemanship, but very little in the manner of actual jousting. The problem is that most of us have spent our professional lives training to be strong within a discipline. That is usually where our primary interests lie. Our professional competencies are embedded within our respective fields; our scholarly work presupposes the effort of countless other researchers from our own fields; and even our vocabulary depends strongly on a knowledge specific to our discipline. Scholars often attend interdisciplinary conferences only to discover that the better part of the papers and keynotes are either utterly incomprehensible or at least without any meaningful relationship to their own work. One of the fundamental attractions of genre studies, therefore, is that they allow researchers to work within their specific fields, without having to take in vast amounts of unknown material and semi-digested theoretical approaches from other fields, all while carrying on a meaningful interdisciplinary dialogue.

Most of the authors of the present volume are connected to the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen, and all our authors have an immediate affinity to Scandinavian Studies. As a consequence, much of the material discussed is Scandinavian in origin, and none of the authors are native English speakers. Given the ELF (English as Lingua Franca) character of international research, this presents us with at least two major challenges. The first, obviously, is the language barrier, and the editors wish to thank Hanne Sæderup Pedersen and David Possen for their care in turning our second-language English into something reasonably correct.

The other challenge, however, is more vexing. As has been demonstrated in a number of studies (for instance Wolters, 2013, Tange, 2012, Aalbers, 2004), the dominance of the English language in research has also

led to a dominance of American and English subjects and points of view. Whereas these are considered of universal relevance, other subjects and points of view are frequently perceived as merely local, or as necessarily dependent upon what happens in the Anglo-American world.

Genre studies is not particularly biased in this respect, as is demonstrated, for example, by the pivotal roles of such continental theorists as Jauss, Genette, and Derrida, and the prominence of Brazilian subject matter in a major recent work like *Genre in a Changing World* (Bazerman, Bonini, and Figueiredo (eds.), 2009). But it does have to take it into consideration. As a consequence, several of the articles of this book are theoretical in orientation, and address the international theoretical debate more or less exclusively. On the other hand, a study of genre would be sadly lacking, if it did not contain a strong empirical element, and most of the empirical material addressed in this volume is taken from the area of Scandinavian Studies. Care has been taken to ensure that this material is treated in such a manner that the Scandinavian material is readily accessible to non-Scandinavians. Furthermore, every article has broader theoretical and analytical implications, whose relevance does not depend upon expert knowledge of Scandinavian Studies.

As argued above, the following articles enjoy considerable conceptual and theoretical overlap. All deal with a mixture of theoretical and analytical questions, and these are often deeply interdisciplinary. Because of this, it would cut against the book's very intention to structure it by dividing it into strictly separate sections. Nevertheless, because a book must somehow be sequential, we have arranged the articles in three parts.

The first part deals with "Approaches through Theory." It opens with the article "Genre and Writing Pedagogy," Anne Smedegaard's investigation of genre understanding and genre teaching in the discourse community of the subject of Danish as taught in upper secondary schools in Denmark. This article focuses on the three examination genres, the "literary article," the "feature article," and the "essay", which were introduced in

2005 by a departmental order and teacher guidelines issued by the Danish Ministry of Education. Smedegaard's main argument is that the official documents describe the context of the three genres vaguely and ambiguously; that they do not make explicit the full potential of mapping genres; and that they do not encourage critical genre awareness. Smedegaard eventually argues that this has severe consequences for the actual pedagogy that is informed by these guidelines. To undergird its discussion of the three genres, the article also provides an introduction to the three most prominent international pragmatic genre theories and their accompanying pedagogical programs. These three genre schools are *Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)*, *English for Specific Purposes (ESP)*, and the *Sydney School*.

Next comes Frans Gregersen's article "Genre and Conversation." Gregersen makes three claims: (1) The source of all written genres is ultimately to be found in spoken language. (2) This necessitates giving some thought to the historical problems of the evolution of genres, the institutionalization of oral genres, and the synchronic problem of the status of structure and function. (3) The empirical study of genre may benefit from the study of the various genres that can be found in sociolinguistic interviews. This is because they are the successors to the long line of oral genres from the past, and because they make up a significant portion of our interpretative repertoire for understanding what goes on not only in our everyday lives, but also, by implication, in literary texts. The analysis involves a theoretical introduction, an exemplification in a corpus of sociolinguistic interviews, and finally an analysis of a piece of modern Danish prose, namely, a short story by Katrine Marie Guldager.

"Genre and Rhetoric" is Christel Sunesen's introduction to modern rhetorical genre theory and its possibilities and limitations in regard to literary genre theory and analysis. Sunesen outlines three primary types of rhetorical-aesthetic genres, viz. literary paratextual genres, occasional genres, and literary de facto genres, and examines the relationship between the rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions of texts from a generic perspective centered on the rhetorical terms "rhetorical situation" and "social action."

Despite the numerous possibilities for rhetorical genre theory in relation to literary genre theory and analysis, the main challenge is that literary texts, unlike rhetorical texts, are defined by their ability to transcend the situation in which they were written.

Closing the first part of the book, but with a foot in the door of the second part, is Anders Juhl Rasmussen's "Genre and Paratext." Paratexts, as defined by Gérard Genette in *Paratexts* (1987/1997), are the manifold marginal texts in a literary work—the title, genre indication, preface, jacket copy, and more—that surround the body text, and shape how the reading public understands it. However, the sociology of the text, with its emphasis on how the material layers of literary works contribute to determining how they are understood, indicates that "paratext" should be (re)defined as an umbrella term that *also* includes typography, illustrations, formatting, etc. While much has been written about genre and paratexts since the late 1980s, no one has yet presented a focused account of the relation between the two in literary works. In "Genre and Paratext," Anders Juhl Rasmussen aims first to define "paratext" *qua* concept, and then to clarify the sociological status (particularly with regard to the sociology of publishing) and pragmatic function of paratexts, both in general and in a concrete analysis of the paratexts of the novel *6512* (1969), by the Danish author Per Højholt. Finally, the paratextual strategies of modernism and postmodernism are examined in a genre-historical perspective.

The second part of the book is named "Reading Genre," and contains a number of articles focused on empirical work with genres. Opening the second part of the book, but with a foot in the door of the first part, is Sune Auken's "Genre and Interpretation." Despite the immensity of genre studies as well as studies in interpretation, our understanding of the relationship between genre and interpretation is sketchy at best. The article attempts to unravel some of intricacies of that relationship through an analysis of the generic interpretation carried out by us all in everyday life, and the role of generic interpretation in scholarly work. The article argues that

the role played by genre in interpretation has as much to do with the individual characteristics of an utterance as with its relationship to other utterances. An interest in the generic traits of an utterance will lead to a characterization of its individual, as well as its general characteristics. The article proceeds to describe three central concepts within genre studies that are applicable to generic interpretation: “horizon of expectation,” “world,” and the triad “theme-form-rhetoric”. The purpose is to form a heuristic tool for generic interpretation whose primary value lies in its conceptual openness, and the ease with which it interacts with a broad variety of utterances and genres.

American movie blockbusters, as well as British and American television series, have rearticulated the international popularity of Sherlock Holmes. But how did it all begin? What were the channels through which the fictitious British character gained popularity over a hundred years ago? Through which forms, and through what generic modulations of the stories, did early readers and audiences encounter the character? In “Genre and Modulation,” Palle Schantz Lauridsen analyses this reception through the generic modulations performed by the play *Sherlock Holmes*, which was extremely popular at the beginning of the 20th century. He also includes a Danish film series and other adaptations and pastiches from the period. The article concludes that audience expectations, and the change from print media to the medium of popular theatre (and, later, film), made possible substantial generic modulations within the universe of which Holmes was the central character.

Along similar lines, Erik Svendsen’s “Genre and Adaptation” focuses on two interrelated phenomena in contemporary media culture: adaptations and the blurring of boundaries between genres. The first part discusses the ways adaptation today—as a media industrial phenomenon—challenges our traditional understanding of the transformative process from novel into film. The second part discusses how the blurring of genre boundaries is now a widespread phenomenon. Genres are dynamic systems that change historically, and one single text is never representative of a genre. The

final part of the article focuses on semiotic transformations and differences in relation to adaptations. The central question is how to compare a conventionally defined, symbolically anchored written language with a visual language consisting of both iconic and indexical signs. The article argues that refraining from insisting on a hierarchy between the two sign systems makes it possible to navigate between them by means of a double gaze which calls attention to adaptation as a media cultural fact, and yet emphasizes each media product's particular qualities and characteristics.

René Rasmussen's article, "Genre and Lyric Poetry," is an attempt to define lyric poems as a genre different from narrative or dramatic poems. Such poems often contain a high degree of tropes, figures, and significant enjambments. The presence of tropes and figures must not be considered a mark of a latent semantic signification connected to the poems, but rather a subversion of any semantic dimension. Such poems are also marked by subjectivity, which can be manifested by an "I" in a poem; though such an I can also disappear in the poem. This possibly delicate position of this "I" necessitates that we distinguish between the enunciated and the enunciation. Regarding this important distance between the subject of the enunciated and the enunciation, along with the importance of tropes and figures in lyric poems, the article attempts to show how poems paradoxically "talk" about that which cannot be spoken of in language.

Beata Agrell's article "Genre and Working Class Fiction" deals with genre conceived as rhetorical action, and as a cognitive schema associated with an *exigence* or social need calling for utterance and action. Genres in this sense are permeated with *addressivity*, and are instruments of knowledge, interpretation, and communication rather than taxonomic systems. This concept of genre is further illuminated by the example of early Swedish working-class fiction as a new literature of low-brow hybridicity and multigeneric origin, created by autodidactic authors without conventional education or cultural prestige. The focus is on how this fiction came into generic being in the early 1900s by combining narrative traditions in the margins of classic realism, symbolism, and protomodernisms of the

day. The aim of the article is to discover how addressivity and form-shaping ideologies are generated out of such blendings, how cognitive schemata are set at work, and how generic worlds as *chronotopes* will mediate the themes.

Bo Jørgensen's contribution, "Genre and the Collective Novel," focuses on the generic definition of the collective novel. Theorists typically classify the collective novel as a genre bound to a specific literary period, the nineteen thirties, but a number of contemporary Danish works proclaiming to be collective novels have recently been received as examples of the genre. The intention behind the article is twofold: to seek to present literary material that raises fundamental generic questions, and to embark on a re-contextualisation of the genre itself. With examples taken from Danish and international literature—and perspectives drawn to recent trends in film—the article examines the ideological and aesthetic repercussions of new works that insist on being read as examples of a genre belonging to the past, and tied to a specific period.

The discovery of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory has had a crucial impact on the view of literary genres, especially the novel, in the last decades. In "Genre and Novelness," Gorm Larsen analyses this impact in relation to the generic concept of the novel. Bakhtin has linked the novel to the appearance of modern society, described it through a long (pre)history, and regarded it in relationship to other genres. Instead of formalistic or structural approaches, Bakhtin studies the novel from different conceptual point of views, e.g. polyphony, dialogue, and chronotope. This results in a broad understanding of the novel that includes not only its relationship to its surroundings, but also awareness of stylistic and semantic profiles. Because the literary subgenre, such as the sonnet, exists and can be identified with the help of specific formal features, there has been a strong preoccupation in literary theory with the search for specific features that classify each subgenre. But by following Bakhtin it will be more precise to talk about the possible potentials of the novel in preference to the Novel with capital N. This kind of *novelness* opens up

the notion of genre. Although Bakhtin's concept is no longer new, it can be difficult to see the full consequence of it. Gorm Larsen tries to remedy this by arguing that the novel as a genre has no fixed closure, but rather is characterized by different possible elements, such that each one can be more or less novelized.

The two articles forming the final part of the book, "Perspectives," both reach beyond genre studies to adjoining areas. In "Genre and Language," Nina Møller Andersen interprets Bakhtin from a linguistic point of view, and shows what is meant by "speech genre" through a linguistic reading of his work in its original language, Russian. In his most important work on genre, "Speech genres" from 1952-53, Bakhtin's starting point is, as the title also suggests and as often is the case with Bakhtin, language; a fact that is hardly recognized by his critics from literary scholarship. Møller discusses different readings of Bakhtin and of his work on genre. Her aim is to specify and define the concepts of speech genres according to their intended and original use, so they can be operationalized and used in analyses of both language and literature. Bakhtin's concept "speech genres" are compared to the Oxford School's "speech acts", the concepts of Bakhtin's works on speech genres are operationalized into an analytic system illustrated by examples from both language and literature. Finally, Nina Møller Andersen puts the concepts to use in an analysis of poetry.

In "Genre and Categorization." Ib Ulbæk asks whether "genre" is a concept like any other concept, or whether it has a special structure or special content. This question is interesting, because different ways to use genres follow from different answers to it. Looking at the Aristotelian and the prototype theory of concepts, and how to build conceptual hierarchies, Ulbæk's approach gives an account of what a concept is and how concepts are organized. Genres as concepts and hierarchies are exemplified by analyzing the academic genres, and their fundamental branching into research, teaching and public communication. Genres are cognitive resources for the communicating agents. Categorization into genre yields extra knowledge

of the text; but this comes at a cost. The cognitive agent has to identify the text as belonging to a certain genre, and so has to start an inductive process of collecting cues to arrive at a genre judgment. The reward of this classification is the hierarchy into which the text is put—and the knowledge it carries.

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Frans Gregersen, b. 1949, Professor of Danish language, dr. phil., and Director of the Danish National Research Foundation’s LANCHART Centre, University of Copenhagen 2005-2015. He has contributed to the study of sociolinguistic variation in Danish by editing volume 41 of the journal *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* in 2009, including a presentation of the data and design of the LANCHART study, and is currently working on the history of Danish linguistics concentrating on the early periods of the 19th century, cf.: Gregersen 2013 (introduction to the new edition of Niels Ege’s translation of Rasmus Rask’s prize essay “On the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language 1814”), and Gregersen 2014 (on the first professor of Nordic N.M. Petersen (in Danish)).

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RGGS embraces the highly developed research in current Genre Studies. At the core of this research is the advanced, remarkably cohesive, and extensive body of knowledge established in Rhetorical Genre Studies, in English for Specific Purposes, and in Systemic Functional Linguistics. The field now spans important work within Rhetoric, Composition, Linguistics, Sociology, Ethnography, Business Communication, Composition and Information Studies.

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