

Introduction to the special issue on genres and social ways of being

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This thematic issue of *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* presents a range of new works by Brazilian, Canadian, and U.S. authors exploring how different genres enact social ways of being, realized in participant roles, identity formation, power relations, situated knowledge, and social practices. All of the articles assembled here were selected from presentations made at the 4th SIGET (International Symposium on Genre Studies), which took place at the University of Southern Santa Catarina (UNISUL), Brazil, in August 2007. Two other collections will be forthcoming from the same conference: a special issue of the journal *L1* and a volume, *Genre in a Changing World*.

The first article, 'Breast cancer narratives as public rhetoric: genre itself and the maintenance of ignorance', by Judy Segal, explores questions of the permissible and the impermissible in breast cancer narratives. The analysis deploys a theory of discourse and counterdiscourse to argue that the genre of the personal narrative performs a regulatory function in public discourse on cancer. Using examples of both conventional and unconventional stories, she argues that ignorance about cancer is maintained by standard plots and features, and that suppress or displace other stories. Her work demonstrates how public genres can affect our most personal experiences of disease.

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The following article, 'The psychiatric interview: practice in/of the clinic', by Tânia Conceição Pereira, analyzes a psychiatric interview, understood as a genre in the particular institutional context of psychiatry. The analysis uses a Sociolinguistic Interactional perspective to show that the doctor sets four frames of interaction, characterized by relations of discursive symmetry/asymmetry between doctor and patient. These frames structured by the genre define the kind of information elicited and the activity carried out within the interview –thereby influencing the unfolding of clinical practice.

In the third article, 'Engaging with and arranging for publics in blog genres', the authors Kathryn Grafton and Elizabeth Maurer take a rhetorical approach to weblogs, examining two sets of blogs: blogs responding to a national literary event called 'Canada Reads' and 'homeless blogs'. By focusing on uptake as a public dynamic, Grafton and Maurer suggest how features of the blog such as blog posts and commentaries about antecedent genres may enable a blogger to legitimate the self as an integral part and perpetuator of publics: a blogger's uptake both actualizes a public (declaring membership), and imagines it anew (envisioning subsequent uptakes).

The fourth article, 'Professionalizing the student body: uptake in a nineteenth century journalism textbook', by Chalet Seidel, also applies the concept of uptake to consider how models of professionalism are translated into the writing classroom by examining one of the first journalism textbooks used in American universities. She argues that, through uptake of the textbook's discourse of Professionalization, students would adopt a submissive subjectivity amenable to the needs of the corporate newsroom. She concludes that the textbook presented the genre as a form of life, a complex of feelings, beliefs, behaviors, roles, and relations students must inhabit in order to perform the genre successfully.

In the fifth and last article, 'Colonial texts in postcolonial contexts: a genre in the contact zone', Shurli Makmillen applies genre theory to nineteenth-century deeds used to appropriate land from indigenous people in British Columbia, Canada, and in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The author suggests there are particular interpretive contradictions between legal reasoning and the speech acts that constitute the genre colonial treaty. These documents' actions in colonial and postcolonial contexts suggests genre is not based on the mutual recognition of form and situation by genre participants, and indeed may even preclude it within contact genres.

All these articles in revealing how genres are formative of ways of life also reveal genre's role in infusing life circumstances with ideology and ideologically-shaped discourse.