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Introduction

FROM GENRE TURN TO PUBLIC TURN

*Navigating the Intersections of Public Sphere Theory,
Genre Theory, and the Performance of Publics*

Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi

Over the past thirty years, scholarship in rhetorical genre studies (RGS) has contributed a great deal to our understanding of how genres mediate social activities within academic and workplace settings, providing insight into how systems of related genres coordinate ways of knowing and doing within institutional contexts as well as how individuals enact these ways of knowing and doing through available genres. From this scholarship has emerged a view of genres as both social (typified, recognizable, and consequential ways of organizing texts, activities, and social reality) and cognitive (involved phenomenologically in how we recognize, encounter, and make sense of situations) phenomena. In this way, genres help us define and make sense of recurring situations while providing typified rhetorical strategies for acting in recurrent situations.

More recently, scholars in RGS have begun to examine the inter- and intrageneric conditions (material, embodied, temporal, affective) that inform individuals' genre performances or what Anne Freedman (1994; 2002; 2012; 2014), extending the work of J. L. Austin in speech act theory, has called *uptakes*, which account for the dynamics of agency and the contingent, impromptu, multidirectional performances of genre in real time and space. Attention to genre uptakes—to the interconnections, translations, and pathways between genres—extends a core understanding in RGS of genres *as* social actions, first proposed by Carolyn Miller (1984). While the conceptualization of genres as social actions was groundbreaking and has generated a wealth of research on the role genres play in producing social actions, a focus on genres as forms or sites of social action (as social artifacts that store cultural memory and that, through their typifications, can tell us things about how individuals define recurrence and acquire social motives to act in certain ways)

implies that genres *themselves* perform social actions (Freadman 2014). While genres orient us in relation to situations and provide strategies for responding to and acting in situations, and while genres “persist because they frame what they permit as that which is possible” (Dryer 2008, 506), it is only in the uptakes they routinize (but never completely determine) that genres are performed as social actions. In part because of its focus on genres as mediating tools within fairly stable activity systems such as academic and workplace settings, RGS has paid less attention to the uptakes between genres where performances of social action take place. In focusing attention on public genres and their uptakes, this collection aims to extend RGS beyond its traditional focus on relatively bounded institutional settings (workplace, professional, and academic disciplinary contexts) and into public domains where publics exist as assemblages of interconnections continuously performed and transformed in relation to one another; where networks of genres exist in less predictable or hierarchical, more heterogeneous, polycontextual ways (see Spinuzzi 2008); and where genre uptakes are more diffuse and emergent. It is within these interplays and trans-actions between genres that the performances of publics take place.

Despite Freadman’s (2002; 2012) description of genre uptakes as dynamic, multidirectional, and based in selection rather than causation (involving agency rather than predetermination), a focus on institutional contexts within genre research has tended to foreground the stabilizations (even if “for now” in Schryer’s [2002] well-known formulation) of genre and their trained uptakes, in which, say, a call for papers leads to a proposal, a verdict is a precursor to a sentencing, or an assignment prompt gets taken up as a student paper, which gets taken up in teacher feedback, and so forth. When studying genres within academic and professional settings, genre scholars have identified what Janet Giltrow has called “meta-genres” as well as other forms of apprenticeship that guide genre acquisition and uptakes (Giltrow 2002). As Giltrow has described, metagenres such as writing guides and professional manuals all serve to discipline genre performances within activity systems, attempting (to varying degrees) to coordinate the pathways through which genre uptakes relate to one another in the achievement of expected object-motives. But what about less clearly defined public contexts that function less as systems and more as assemblages in which object-motives are not as shared, in which the meditational means are more wide ranging and subject to transformation, in which participants are not as institutionally ranked and roles are not as clearly demarcated, and in which genre uptakes are less “disciplined” and predictable? What

can genre scholarship learn from attention to such public contexts? And what can public scholarship learn from genre research? In its theoretical and methodological framework as well as its case studies, this book aims to address these questions.

Towards that end, the book brings together scholars whose work adds insight into how publics and the performances of public life are textually embodied and mediated through genre networks and whose perspectives on genre account for complex relations between rhetorical and material conditions that can enrich our understanding of genre evolution and change in all contexts. Our aim is threefold: (1) to fill a gap in rhetorical genre studies' attention to public genres, (2) to bring rhetorical genre studies into dialogue with public sphere scholarship in ways we hope will contribute to both areas of study, and (3) to enrich an understanding of public genres as dynamic performances that can contribute to research on and the teaching of public discourse.

In this introductory chapter, we explore the intersections of rhetorical genre studies and public sphere scholarship, with a focus on overlapping interests in the relationship between discursive formations and the formations of public life and an examination of the ways in which genres serve as both occasions for productive interaction/resistance and frameworks for critical analysis of publics. We will also explore a more recent focus in both areas of study on the material conditions that shape genre uptakes and the formation of publics and counterpublics. This attention to the dynamics of genre uptakes and the materiality of public performances can provide a critical framework for studying processes of public engagement and can contribute to our understanding of public performances—in ways that reveal what we stand to gain when we bring RGS and public sphere scholarship into critical dialogue.

RHETORICAL GENRE STUDIES AND PUBLIC SPHERE SCHOLARSHIP: INTERSECTIONS

In our overview of genre studies, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy* (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010), we note the occurrence of a “genre turn” in rhetoric and composition studies, a reconceptualized view of genre as social action that was formulated approximately three decades ago and has subsequently informed research and pedagogy. Likewise, more recently, theorists such as Paula Mathieu (2005) and others have argued that the vibrant and dynamic development of public rhetoric scholarship has led, over the past decade, to a “public turn” that has expanded the field’s perspectives on the complex

performances of public texts and the rhetorical enactments of readers and writers within public contexts (see, for example, Ackerman and Coogan 2010; Deans 2003; Mathieu 2005; Welch 2008; Wells 1996; and Weisser 2002). However, these so-called turns—the “genre turn” and the “public turn”—seem to be moving in different directions and have not intersected, producing little cross-dialogue. Just as Frank Farmer (2013) in *After the Public Turn* notes our field’s general inattentiveness to counterpublics despite the public turn, there is a similar inattentiveness to publics and counterpublics in the subfield of RGS, which has primarily focused on genre systems within more defined and delimited institutional contexts, like classrooms and workplaces. With some notable exceptions—for example, Bazerman’s (1999; 1994; 2002) studies of letters, patents, or tax forms; Miller’s (1980) study of environmental impact statements; Campbell and Jamieson’s (1990) study of political speeches; Makmillen’s (2007) study of land deeds; Dryer’s (2008) study of zoning codes; Miller and Shepherd’s (2009) study of blogs; and various studies of journalistic genres (Bonini 2009; Caple 2009; Ramos 2009)—few studies of genre have focused on the more dispersed, dynamic performances of public life and on genres that occasion public deliberation, mediate rhetorical and public interactions, and inform collective public action.

Furthermore, scholars of RGS (who primarily locate themselves within the field of rhetoric and composition) and public sphere scholars (who primarily locate themselves within the field of communication studies) have not been in conversation with one another despite a shared interest in the discursive dimensions and formations of publics and the mediation of public opinion. Genre scholar Charles Bazerman, in his exploration of generic sites for citizen identity and participation, calls for rhetoricians to examine how a public, through its genres, “speaks and inscribes itself into existence” and how “individuals talk and write themselves into citizens” (Bazerman 2002, 34). Similarly, public sphere scholar Gerard Hauser, through his rhetorical model of public spheres, is interested in how “the foundations of publics, public spheres, and public opinions reside in the rhetorical transactions of a society” and how “our understanding of reality is a function of how we talk and write about it” (Hauser 1999, 273). RGS scholars’ view of genres “as both organizing and generating kinds of texts and social actions, in complex, dynamic relation to one another” (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 4)—mediating between what John Swales (1998) has called “lifeways” and “textways”—is further reflected in rhetorical approaches to public discourse. In *Citizen Critics*, public sphere scholar Rosa Eberly argues that the relationship between textual practices and social practices can be

clearly seen by “analyzing the contours of public debate as reflected in the rhetorical strategies of participants’ discourses” (Eberly 2000, 163). Other public sphere scholars have more explicitly acknowledged how a rhetorical approach based in genre analysis would refocus attention on the ways public discourse is embedded in its cultural settings, reflecting its history and ideology. As Stephen Lucas argues, “Rhetorical critics would seem well advised to give more intensive consideration to the interplay of generic constraints and the particular historical situations out of which rhetorical genres evolve and in which they operate. This is one step to producing a more powerful body of scholarship that moves beyond describing what rhetorical genres look like to explaining why they look that way and how they function” (Lucas 1986, 212). Both RGS and public sphere scholars seem to agree that we can gain insight into public cultures by examining the rhetorical interactions that converge around public issues and that construct publics—that is, by examining discursive artifacts such as public genres for the role they play in the performance of publics.

Public sphere scholars have noted that “a rhetorical construction of public opinion begins . . . when a pattern of sentiment—thoughts, beliefs, and commitments to which a significant and engaged segment of the populace holds attachments that are consequential for choices individuals are willing to make and actions they are prepared to support in shaping their collective future—emerges from deliberative exchanges among those within a public sphere” (Hauser 1999, 96). RGS scholars envision these patterns of thoughts and beliefs that emerge from and coordinate collective action as the typifications of situations, goals, or tasks deployed in genres, which “symbolically create social order and coordinate social actions” (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 74). The role genre plays in the formation and shaping of communal knowledge is suggested in Hauser’s rhetorical model of the public sphere, which is defined as “a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them. It is the locus of emergence for rhetorically salient meanings” (1999, 61). While Hauser (1999) does not use the term *genre*, his case studies investigating the rhetorical formation of publics feature constellations of genres that coordinate complex social actions and reflect the emergence of rhetorically salient meanings. For example, in his case study of the controversial Meese Commission Report on pornography, he focuses on how various genres—such as the report issued by the State Department of Justice in 1986 (*Final Report of the Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography*), dissenting opinions to

the report, evidence (photos, videos), the commission charter, popular-press stories, magazine features, interviews, news conferences, letters from the public, previous court cases, public hearings, and witness testimony—all interacted to shape public opinion and action and, in this case, to move the terms of public debate from the issue of censorship to the methodologies of the commission itself, thus limiting public discussion. Overall, while public sphere scholars have not explicitly used a genre lens for exploring public discursive interactions, they share a focus with RGS on “the communicative and epistemic functions manifest in the range of discursive exchanges among those who are engaged by a public problem” (Hauser 1999, 109); furthermore, it is this focus on public problems and public exchanges that can inform genre studies by turning scholars’ attention to the varied, multiple, and dispersed interactions within public networks of genres.

Public sphere scholars’ now well-documented challenges to an idealized, normative, and stable Habermasian public sphere⁴ and their exploration of the dynamic discursive engagements within multiple publics (see, for example, Felski 1989; Fraser 1996; Hauser 1999; Warner 2002) parallel RGS’s challenge to conventional definitions of genres as static systems of classification and move to a more dynamic definition of how genres’ formal features “are connected to social purposes and to ways of being and knowing in relationship to these purposes” (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 4). Hauser and other public sphere scholars share the belief that “interrogating the process by which rhetorically salient meanings are created and embedded dialogically helps us decipher the persuasive force of identifications in the process of public opinion formation” (Hauser 1999, 61). RGS scholars, by providing an analytical framework for examining “the persuasive force of identifications” and for examining why and how genres function as “sites of social and ideological action” (Schryer 2002), have contributed to such interrogations. The ideological function of genre has been studied by numerous scholars who are interested in how, as writers reproduce and replicate genres, genres simultaneously work to reproduce and reinforce power relations within and between individuals and social organizations (see, for example, Artemeva 2006; Bazerman 2001; Benesch 1993, 2001; Casanave 2003; Paré 2002; Schryer 2002; Swarts 2006; Winsor 2000; Yates and Orlikowski 2002).

These culturally embedded meanings and identifications, as pointed out by both RGS and public sphere scholars, can function hegemonically in the service of the status quo, leading to the exclusion of particular perspectives from discursive forums. In recognizing genres as

sites of social and ideological intervention, RGS scholars have encouraged a critical consciousness of genres and an awareness of how they both enable and limit access and privilege certain users (Paré 2002; Schryer 2002; Winsor 2000) and have recognized the need for alternative genres, hybrid genres, or “antigenres” (Peters 1997). Similarly, public sphere scholars have studied the emergence of counterpublics, or discursive entities that function as alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants, such as Michael Warner’s (2002) work on queer counterpublics, Rita Felski’s (1989) work on feminist counterpublic spheres, and Nancy Fraser’s (1996) recognition of multiple public arenas, oppositional publics, or “subaltern counterpublics.” Just as the constraints and conventions of genres can lead to the creation of alternatives, the norms of dominant groups within the public sphere can lead to alternative norms of public speech (or what Fraser calls “counterdiscourses”) and styles of political behavior that enable the formation of oppositional identities and uptakes. To illustrate her point, Fraser focuses on the “feminist subaltern counterpublic,” which, through invention and circulation of counterdiscourses (and a constellation of public genres such as books, journal articles, films and video, lectures, meetings, conferences, etc.), is able to invent “new terms for describing social reality” (Fraser 1996, 67). More recently, Fraser has critiqued the correspondence between normative public spheres and existing global realities and has defined a “transnational public sphere” that “overflow[s] the bounds of both nations and states” (Fraser 2014, 8), an idea that has also drawn the interest of media studies scholars, such as danah boyd (2010), who have explored the affordances of global communication across “networked publics.” Indeed, a focus on the multiplicity of publics and on marginalized or oppositional publics within public sphere scholarship can inform critical approaches to genre—expanding perspectives on public genres and their uptakes as emergent and enacted through complex ecologies of publics. Conversely, RGS’s focus on generic sites of articulation—where genres work to reproduce and reinforce power relations within and between individuals and cultures—can inform public sphere scholarship by focusing attention on the ideological discursive sites where multiple publics are enacted and potentially transformed.

In the chapters that follow, contributors examine the multiplicity of publics, from the transnational publics that coalesce around a digital campaign to end violence against women; to the networked publics of climate-change blogs, web-based public-health campaigns, and Internet discourse on radiation risk; to the overlapping discursive arenas

(professional, technical, personal, public) within jury deliberations and within a Canadian public inquiry. Contributors also explore the range of ways dominant genres—such as the English-language dictionary, the public petition, or women’s vocational guides—manage public identities and participation and the ways in which marginalized and oppositional groups resist, transform, and deploy alternative genres to perform counterdiscourses—from the interdiscursive, hybrid performances of a news magazine article, to the alternative uptakes within public discourse on Israel-Palestine, to citizens’ interventions in urban planning.

UPTAKE AND PUBLIC GENRE PERFORMANCES

Given that both fields recognize the multiplicity of publics and public interactions as well as the ideological function and effects of public discourse, perhaps most relevant to this discussion of the intersection of RGS and public sphere scholarship is the potential for both genre scholars and public sphere scholars to use genre (or what Hauser [1999] calls “discursive indicators”) to gain insight into and critically analyze public rhetorical performances—the complex, dynamic, situated, normalized as well as improvisational ecologies of uptakes that mobilize public life. Carolyn Miller has argued that a perspective on genre as situated action has methodological implications: “For the critic, genres can serve both as an index to cultural patterns and as tools for exploring the achievements of particular speakers and writers” (Miller 1984, 165). Miller has advocated what she calls an “ethnomethodological” approach, one that “seeks to explicate the knowledge that practice creates” (155)—knowledge rooted in the materiality of circumstances and conditions of actual use of genres. Similarly, Hauser, in his study of the rhetoric of publicness, explains that what sets apart his rhetorical model of publics is this “empirical framework,” which “draws its inferences about publics, public spheres and public opinion from actual social practices of discourse” (Hauser 1999, 275). Through his systematic examination of not only official discourses or genres of institutions, political leaders, or the press but also the everyday or “vernacular” discourses and genres of marginalized publics or counterpublics, Hauser is able to describe the plurality of publics in which participants are engaged in multiple, local, interactive webs of meaning—employing an empirical approach that shares a critical framework with genre analysis, thus illustrating the potentially productive dialogue between RGS and public sphere scholarship that could enrich approaches to studying situated genre uptakes and performances of publics.²

An empirical and ethnomethodological attitude toward genre and public performances (one that pays attention to “actual social practices of discourse” and works to “explicate the knowledge that practice creates”) calls our attention to uptake, a concept first introduced by J. L. Austin in his theory of speech acts and more recently adapted by Freadman to account for the interconnections, translations, and pathways between genres. In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin (1962) introduced the idea of uptake as a way to explain how illocutionary force becomes a perlocutionary effect—how, that is, an intentional utterance (saying “it is hot in here”) helps to produce an effect (one consequence being that someone opens a window) under certain conditions. Within Austin’s theory of speech acts, uptake is offered as a fairly straightforward process secured by the apprehension (and then translation) of an intended illocutionary act. In bringing uptake into dialogue with genre study, Freadman complicates Austin’s causal theory of uptake while offering RGS a way of accounting for the interplays and transactions between genres. In describing uptake as “the local event of crossing a boundary” (Freadman 2002, 43), Freadman draws attention not only to the relations between genres but also to how individuals move and translate across genres. In this sense, uptake can be understood both as a kind of in-between or trans-actional space as well as the effects or performances that result from this trans-action. This dual nature of uptake is captured in Freadman’s formulation of uptake as “the bidirectional relation that holds” between genres (40). By “holding” genres together, uptakes enable meanings that are made possible from that set of relations. The seams between genres that uptakes weave, in other words, make movements and translations between and across genres possible.

Uptake accounts for and enables researchers to study the movements of actions and meanings between and across genres and publics. For example, returning to Hauser’s study of the Meese Commission report on pornography, the genres serve as nodes within the public network—such as the report issued by the State Department of Justice, dissenting opinions to the report, evidence (photos, videos), the commission charter, popular-press stories, magazine features, interviews, news conferences, letters from the public, previous court cases, public hearings, and witness testimony. But in order to understand how these genres interacted to shape public opinion and action, we must examine the uptakes between and across these genres in ways that allow us to trace how these genres helped to move the terms of public debate from the issue of censorship to the methodologies of the commission itself. The pathways drawn, managed, and trans-acted between and across these

genres facilitated and limited public discussion in ways that enabled certain performances of publics to take place.

Perhaps Freadman's most important contribution to the study of public uptakes is her claim that uptake "selects, defines, or represents its object" (Freadman 2002, 48). Uptake, she writes, "is first the taking of an object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention. This is the hidden dimension of the long, ramified, intertextual memory of uptake: the object is taken from a set of possibilities" (48). By selecting from a set of possibilities, the "holding" that uptakes perform can create a sense of seamlessness between genres that translate meanings and actions in fairly habitual, well-worn paths, especially within systems of genres that exist within institutional settings. At the same time, as Freadman demonstrates, intergeneric uptakes that occur outside of jurisdictional frames can be much more dynamic and unpredictable since it is there "that translation is least automatic and most open to mistake or even to abuse" (44), as Freadman's analysis of the conflict between the executive government and the judiciary in the Ryan death-penalty case reveals. Intergeneric uptakes are much more the norm within public spheres, where the relations that hold between genres are less enforced, where genre translations are more rhizomatic and more subject to mistake, abuse, and recontextualization.

By drawing our attention to what Vijay Bhatia in chapter 1 in this volume calls the "interdiscursive" factors that inform genre performances, uptake challenges us to consider history, materiality, embodiment, improvisations, emotion, and other *agentive* factors that shape genre performances in the spatial and temporal conditions of their use. Anis Bawarshi, in chapter 2, explores the complex material, dispositional, and affective factors that shape routinized uptakes and limit productive public deliberation on contentious topics, while Dylan Dryer, in chapter 3, examines the temporal and dispositional factors that shape various forms of uptakes within urban-planning contexts. Tosh Tachino, in chapter 9, analyzes the constraints and limitations of the "uptake paths" between research and policy genres while Jennifer Nish, in chapter 12, focuses on the distribution of uptakes used to coordinate public action. Uptake compels us to pay ethnomethodological and empirical attention to localized, strategic performances of genres in moments of interaction, an interaction captured in Hauser's claim that the "focus on actual discursive practices of leaders and citizens, borne of real-world experiences, . . . can help us to better understand how publics, public spheres, and public opinion form and function" (Hauser 1999, 281). Both RGS and public rhetoric scholars share an interest in how public

performances, particularly those “borne of real-world experiences,” are shaped not just by the symbolic landscapes but also by the material landscapes, an intersection the next section will further explore.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES, PUBLIC GENRES: NAVIGATING RHETORICAL AND MATERIAL UPTAKES

The intersection between RGS and public rhetoric scholarship continues in recent movements within both areas to focus attention on not just symbolic landscapes but also on material conditions that shape public life and performances. A material approach to the study of public genres can complicate our understanding of the multifaceted factors that position the performances of public actors with genre systems, produce exclusionary uptakes within these systems, and orchestrate citizens’ actions and the multidirectional performances of genre in real space and time. In *Rhetorical Bodies* (Selzer and Crowley 1999), Barbara Dickson defines material rhetoric as “a mode of interpretation that takes as its objects of study the significations of material things and corporeal entities—objects that signify not through language but through their spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality, and tactility” (Dickson 1999, 297). Over the past decade, scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition and related fields have proposed a variety of perspectives on the intersections of multiple discourses and material practices, from ecological views of how “writing takes place” (Dobrin 2001), to spatial views that ground writing theory and practice in the material (Reynolds 2004), to perspectives on writing as an embodied practice (Aronson 1999; Brodkey 1996; Brandt 1995; Haas 1996; Marback 1998), to views on the material location of academic discourse (Horner 2000). More recently, scholars have focused on the material conditions influencing public discourse (Asen 2009; Brouwer 2006) and the posthumanistic relations between human and nonhuman (Hawk 2011).

RGS scholar Dylan Dryer has recently drawn attention to how uptakes of public genres (in this case, municipal zoning codes) have their basis in concrete, material conditions, noting that “close attention to the materiality of uptake”—to the “specific material conditions through which readers and writers are ‘taken up’ into social relations when they ‘uptake’ a genre”—“helps us better understand the persistence of exclusionary systems of genre” (Dryer 2008, 504). Similarly, public scholar Robert Asen’s recent work acknowledges the significance of the relationship between discourse and its material conditions, noting that scholars should add to their rhetorical study of public and

counterpublic discourses and ideologies “a conception of materiality that places discourse in relation to the material conditions from which it arises and that it engages” (Asen 2009, 268). Likewise, Daniel Brouwer foregrounds a critical approach that would examine the links between material disparities and rhetorical practices, arguing that public scholarship should focus on “how various qualities and quantities of various resources delimit the available means of persuasion” (Brouwer 2006, 201). This potential for a materialist perspective to illuminate how public discourse limits participation—or enables participation in a way that forestalls change—is especially useful as a critical framework for studying publics and counterpublics.

In their recent work, *The Public Work of Rhetoric*, John M. Ackerman and David Coogan note that public rhetoricians often enter into public scenes with a “discursive divining rod”; however, “in most of our narratives we discover a pre-existing conspiracy against the common good in public life that cannot be determined through the intellectual prism of the hermeneutic interpretation” (Ackerman and Coogan 2010, 9). They invite rhetoricians to enter into the political and public life of the street and to study the rhetorical geographies and ways in which discursive acts are “conferred by the cultural economies of actual places” (17). Public sphere scholars and RGS scholars can help each other in this endeavor, public sphere scholars perhaps benefitting from a genre approach to studying situated rhetorical formations and RGS, with its privileging of typification, learning more about the varied material factors that affect the contingent, impromptu, multidirectional genre uptakes within publics.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

The chapters in part 1, “The Interdiscursivity of Public Genres: Dynamics of Uptakes, Agency, and the Performances of Public Life,” advance multiple perspectives on the extratextual and material-historical factors that condition uptakes of public genres and shape public performances. In “Genre as Interdiscursive Performance in Public Space,” Vijay Bhatia demonstrates how the concept of “interdiscursivity” (as appropriation of semiotic resources across genres, social practices, and disciplinary and institutional cultures) can enrich the study of public genres. Drawing on a public-media genre—a BBC news article analysis—Bhatia examines the appropriation of resources across disciplinary and public cultures, across media, and across private and public identities. Bhatia’s chapter makes a compelling case for the value of interdiscursivity for the study of uptake and public genre performances.

Just as Bhatia draws our attention to the extratextual or interdiscursive factors that inform public genre performances, Anis Bawarshi, in “Between Genres: Uptake, Memory, and US Public Discourse on Israel-Palestine,” focuses attention on the historical-material conditions that shape discursive performances, challenging both RGS and public sphere scholars to consider the interdiscursive relations and material, dispositional, and affective factors that may limit productive public deliberation on contentious topics. Bawarshi examines the normalized and routinized uptakes that work to maintain the rhetorical impasse in US public discourse about the Israel-Palestine conflict, in particular the way uptakes, informed by rhetorical memory, can precondition or overdetermine encounters with genres. The chapter suggests how genre and public sphere scholars might more productively intervene in public deliberation about contentious topics.

Further exploring the concept of uptake and an expanded notion of public agency, Dylan Dryer, in “Disambiguating Uptake: Toward a Tactical Research Agenda on Citizens’ Writing,” argues that a more nuanced understanding of various dimensions of uptake can contribute to more productive public participation and, in turn, that studies of public participation can contribute to and expand RGS’s study of agency. Dryer explores various forms of uptake—and the interplay among generic responses—in order to better distinguish among factors that precede and shape encounters with public texts, the responses to public texts and enactments of alternatives, the temporal and dispositional factors that shape these discursive encounters, and the effects of public texts. Drawing on the various forms of uptakes within urban-planning contexts, and with a particular focus on the genre of citizen commentary, Dryer demonstrates a more complex construct of public agency and opens up new, more complex ways of understanding public participation.

Expanding part 1’s focus on the extratextual, material, and affective factors that inform public performances, in “Part II: Historicizing Public Genres: Invention, Evolution, and Embodiment of Public Performances,” the authors examine the historical-material factors and bodily dispositions that condition uptakes and challenge and complicate understandings of genre invention, genre evolution and change, and embodied genre performances. Examining a genre with wide public use and circulation, the dictionary, Lindsay Russell in “Defining Moments: Genre Beginnings, Genre Invention, and the Case of the English-Language Dictionary” draws our attention to a defining historical moment in which the early dictionary moved outside of highly

restricted academic spaces to circulate broadly and serve a variety of publics, thus complicating and challenging RGS scholars' understanding of the "social typification" of genres and focusing instead on the multiple, variegated strategies used to invite public uptake. By focusing on the genre formation and invention of the dictionary as well as on the public debates surrounding the conception of the genre prior to its systematized uses, Russell demonstrates how the study of public genres within their historical and material conditions opens up spaces for reenvisioning genre invention as a form of public participation and generically mediated action.

The historical study of public genres not only enables a reconceptualization of genre invention as a rhetorical, strategic process but can also highlight the interaction between rhetoric and materiality and between rhetorical actions and public actions. Mary Jo Reiff, in "Geographies of Public Genres: Navigating Rhetorical and Material Relations of the Public Petition," examines the process of public engagement through petitioning—and the material location, production, distribution, and circulation of petitions—as a particularly rich site for studying rhetorical interventions in publics. She demonstrates that by grounding historical inquiry in the material, we can better understand the conditions that work to undermine public participation and preclude change and can productively complicate our conventional understanding of genre evolution and change.

Further focusing on the material-historical factors that condition genre performances, in "Bodily Scripts, Unruly Workers, and Public Anxiety: Scripting Professional Embodiment in Interwar Vocational Guides," Risa Applegarth examines how the public genre of the vocational guide—operating in a context of massive economic and cultural shifts after WWI as well as shifting labor and gender relations—manages professional spaces and women's performances in them. In particular, she explores the role vocational guides played in renegotiating public norms and public anxiety as women in the 1920s and 1930s entered professional work spaces, linking embodied performances of the "bodily scripts" provided in vocational guides to professional suitability and competence. Through her examination, we learn more about how genres perform an intermediary function—mediating between domestic and professional spaces and translating public anxiety into discursive practices that get taken up as embodied performances in the public sphere.

The intermediary function genres perform is the subject of "Part III: Intermediary Public Genres: Mobilizing Knowledge across Genre

Boundaries.” In “Uncovering Occluded Publics: Untangling Public, Personal, and Technical Spheres in Jury Deliberations,” Amy Devitt examines the genre of jury deliberations and their participation in a complex web of personal, technical, and public spheres. Devitt demonstrates that jury deliberations, while publicly consequential acts, are an occluded genre, with exemplars of the genre hidden from public view. While demonstrating how genres can fall short of accounting for the complexities of public participation, the chapter also reveals how genre study can give us access to occluded publics and explores the role of intermediary genres in managing the complex negotiation of shifting relations among personal, technical, and public spheres.

Exploring the interaction between intramedial and intermediary genres, Graham Smart, in “Discourse Coalitions, Science Blogs, and the Public Debate over Global Climate Change,” examines how the interplay of uptakes performed via science blogs maintains entrenched positions within discourse coalitions in ways that limit public understanding and engagement. Drawing on concepts from rhetorical genre studies, he examines the discursive relationship between discourse coalitions focused on climate change and analyzes how the use of scientific blogs among these coalitions helps to reproduce and maintain a paradox of exclusive interaction. At the same time, he also demonstrates an alternative set of uptakes that can engage wider audiences and invite more productive public participation.

While Devitt and Smart explore how genres cross boundaries of personal, technical/professional, and public spheres, Tosh Tachino, in “Multiple Intertextual Threads and (Un)likely Uptakes: An Analysis of a Canadian Public Inquiry,” explores the knowledge mobilization across boundaries of research genres and public-policy genres as expert knowledge is moved from formal research (in scientific articles) to active use in the process of public-policy decision making; he also examines the constraints and limitations of the “uptake paths” between research and policy genres. Within the intertextual network of public inquiry, this chapter enriches a networked understanding of uptakes and knowledge mobilization within public discourse, providing valuable insights into the ways expert knowledge can be brought into and work to influence public networks of genres.

This focus on the mobilization of knowledge across networks continues in “Part IV: Digital Public Genres: Mediating Public Engagement and Expanding Public Participation” with a focus on digital networks and the performance of genres within networked publics. In “Appropriating Genre, ‘Taking Action’ Against Obesity: The Rhetorical Work of Digital

Genre Systems in Public Discourse,” Monica Brown focuses on a web-based public-health campaign and explores how a promotional site’s appropriations of a government health site lend authority to the web campaign while simultaneously undercutting public action. This focus on public discourse within a web-based context contributes to an understanding of how public genres function within and intervene in networked systems of activity and usefully complicates our understanding of web-mediated public engagement.

Further focusing on public discourse within a web-based context, in “Exigencies, Ecologies and Internet Street Science: Genre Emergence in the Context of Fukushima Radiation-Risk Discourse,” Jaclyn Rea and Michelle Riedlinger examine the Canadian Internet-based discourses that informed public discussions about the risks of radiation from the Fukushima nuclear incident and the public’s active online engagement in creating and distributing risk-assessment information. Through their exploration of how Internet street scientists create/repurpose the multimedia genres they need to intervene in public discourse, their study sheds light on what happens when publics, enabled by new media platforms, legitimately participate in domains that, until recently, have been considered the domains of experts. Furthermore, they demonstrate how changes in technological affordances influence public exigencies and how Internet-based genres become sites of even greater public activity and public participation.

The powerful role new media platforms play in giving agency to particular publics is also the focus of Jennifer Nish’s chapter, “Spreadable Genres, Multiple Publics: The Pixel Project’s Digital Campaigns to Stop Violence Against Women.” Nish explores the rhetorical tactics of an online global organization working to raise awareness of and stop violence against women. Drawing on the concept of spreadable media and taking into consideration the affordances of digital media, she examines the impact of what she calls “spreadable genres” on the formation and coordination of an activist public, with a focus on the genres of tweets and video interviews and their work in distributing messages to multiple publics. Her analysis of spreadable public genres and their multiple uptakes has implications for how we understand genre performance as distributive action and provides insights into the role of genre in the formation of activist publics.

Overall, contributors to this edited volume draw on scholarship in rhetorical genre studies in order to explore how genres shape the formation of publics and counterpublics, including how public genres mediate rhetorical and social interactions; define social exigencies;

inform public opinion, identity formation, and collective action; and serve as sites of resistance and change. At its core, this collection is interested in how genres, as typified rhetorical ways in which individuals recognize and respond to recurrent situations, contribute to the interconnected and dynamic performances of public life.

Notes

1. For comprehensive overviews of critiques of Jürgen Habermas's bourgeois public sphere (as described in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*), see Frank Farmer's (2013) introduction to *After the Public Turn: Composition, Counterpublics, and the Citizen Bricoleur* or Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer's introduction to *Counterpublics and the State* (Asen and Brouwer 2010). Both works identify key challenges to Habermas's conception of the public sphere, from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's conceptualization of a proletarian public sphere (Negt and Kluge 1993), to Nancy Fraser's (2014) and Michael Warner's (2002) widely known and oft-cited critiques.
2. A framework for exploring processes of public engagement—based on the concept of modalities—was recently introduced by public sphere scholars Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer. Moving beyond the traditional definition of mode as a conduit for a message, they align modality with the rhetorical concept of *techne*, a productive art and domain of “intervention and invention” that envisions public engagement as “an active purposeful process” (Asen and Brouwer 2010, 19). The modality approach foregrounds purposive action and the “productive arts of crafting publicity,” emphasizes *how* publicity is constituted rather than whom or what is publicized, and emphasizes dynamism and fluidity, which is more fitting for an increasingly pluralized public arena.

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