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The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre

Strategies for Stability and Change

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Genre and Power: A Chronotopic Analysis

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Anne Freadman (see Chapter 2) describes genres as "uptakes" (p. 40) or appropriate ways to respond to past utterances. The following exploration of genres and their relationship to issues of power is an "uptake" to an important issue framed in Freedman and Medway's (1994) *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. In the introduction both the series' editor, Luke, and the collection's editors, Freedman and Medway, point to a problem and a new challenge for genre researchers.[1]

Luke critiqued most genre research for its acritical tendencies and called for "a new rhetoric tied to an analysis of power." Without such an approach Luke suggested "genre risks becoming simply a new 'unit' of psychological skill, individual competence or cultural virtue" (1994, p. x). He called for genre researchers to develop "some system of analysis that enables normative judgement of genres and texts, that foregrounds whose interests

[1]This chapter owes a great deal to ongoing genre research in Canada and to two important networks of researchers: the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW) and to Inkshed. Both organizations endured various versions of this chapter over the last several years.

they serve, how they construct and position their writers and readers, and who has access to them" (p. ix). In their overview of the multiple traditions that shape genre research, Freedman and Medway acknowledged that North American researchers have tended to be descriptive because of the empirical nature of much genre research. Using qualitative methodologies and good feminist research practices that require respect for participants, genre researchers such as Paré (1993), Smart (1993), Medway (1994), and Forman and Rymer (1999) have produced illuminating, context-sensitive descriptions of the workings of genres among social workers, bankers, architects, and business students. At the same time, linguists, particularly in Australia, have developed genre approaches that attempt to document in a descriptive way the textual practices associated with genres. Yet, as Freedman and Medway admit, both traditions need, a more "reflexive and critical turn" (p. 15) to probe at questions of power so that all genre researchers can explicitly acknowledge the ideological dimensions of genres.

This chapter aims to assist in the development of methodological and theoretical tools that genre researchers can use to explore the ways genres work to reproduce power relations within and between organizations and individuals and to apply this perspective in a limited way to one representative genre—examples of "bad news" letters produced by an insurance company. In effect, this chapter takes up Luke's challenge by developing critical perspectives that genre researchers can use to reveal the resources that genres enact to "construct and position their writers and readers" (1994, p. ix).

From the methodological perspective, I argue that genre researchers need to develop research projects that combine *contextual* and *textual* approaches. We need genre research that provides both participant accounts as well as analytical, close readings of texts that instantiate a genre. Based on such accounts, I believe that we will be able to more closely document the resources available to a genre and interrogate the way agents strategically use genres and their resources in specific contexts. Consequently, we will be able to see more clearly the relationship between genres and issues of power.

Such projects, I believe, could profit from the work of structuration theorists such as Giddens (1993), Bourdieu (1991), and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) who explore the relationship between social structure and agency. From this theoretical perspective genres can be viewed as constellations of regulated, improvisational strategies triggered by the interaction between individual socialization or "habitus" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 139), and an organization or "field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 17). To echo Lemke (1995), as constellations of flexible yet constrained resources, genres function as "trajectory entities" (p. 12) or sets of strategies that we use to mutually negotiate or improvise our way through time and space. Moreover, these constellations of resources, as Bakhtin (1981) suggests, often express a particular relation to space and time, and this relation is always axiological or value oriented. In other words, genres express space/time relations that reflect current social beliefs regarding the placement and actions of human individuals in space and time. Bakhtin calls this expression of place, time, and human values the "chronotope" (p. 84). In each chronotope differing sets of values are attached to human agency. Agents in some chronotopes have more access to meaningful action or power than in other chronotopes.

In an effort once to explain to a class chronotopes or socially constructed time/spaces, I asked them to consider the classroom space which we were occupying. The room was a long rectangle, wider than it was deep. A blackboard covered the front part of the room with the instructor's desk positioned in the center. A single door allowed entry from the side of the room and the opposite side was occupied with windows covered by black curtains. Tables with chairs facing the front of the room were provided for the students. As we considered the room, certain tendencies became evident. The designers of the room evidently believed that all validated information came from the center front of the room. All the sight lines of the room were oriented in that direction; people on the far side of the room could not see people on the other side of the room. More importantly, those located on either side of the room had difficulty hearing each other because of the presence of a ventilator shaft located at the back. Only sound emanating from the front of the room could be heard by all. The placement of the tables and chairs also supported this orientation. It was clear, too, that time had a salient presence in this room. The room itself was spartan, the chairs uncomfortable, and a clock was positioned above the board at the center of the room. Clearly, this was a room in which we were expected to spend little time. We could, of course, try to make this time/space more flexible. We did hold workshops, but inevitably groups had to report their findings from the front of the room, and, of course, the time constraints (as anyone in an educational institute knows) were inescapable. Our access to various forms of action were constrained by the socially defined time/space that we occupied.[2]

Other research projects (Bender & Wellbery, 1991; Fabian, 1993; Schryer, 1999) have also noted the way certain text types are associated with "characteristic time/space formations" (Bender & Wellbery, p. 8). For example, Bourdieu, Passeron, and de Saint Martin (1994, originally published 1965) in their analysis of academic discourse noted the impact of teaching space on instructor and student interaction and more importantly on the genres associated with academia. Describing the instructor as "Physically elevated and enclosed within the magisterial chair which consecrates him, . . . the instructor is in fact

[2]I was not the only analyst who encouraged a critique of this classroom. As I stood in the focal spot that we had identified as the center of validated information, I happened to look up at the ceiling There carved in the ceiling tiles, where only the instructor could see them, were the words "F... You!"

condemned by an objective situation more coercive than the most imperious regulation to dramatic monologue and virtuoso exhibition" (p. 11). They suggested that academia, despite changes towards more interactive teaching, still reflects this "virtual space" (p. 13). More importantly, however, the academic genre par excellence, the essay, is also affected by this time/space. As they noted, "The magisterial lecture from the professorial chair and the student essay are *functionally related*, rather than isolated, acts of communication" (p. 13). Instructors expect to hear in student papers the same kind of rhetoric they use to create distance and authority. In other words, both the lecture and student papers reflect the same chronotope, the same invisible, unacknowledged view of space/time and possibilities of human action.

In effect, then, I am suggesting that when we address the issue of genre and power, we also need to explore a genre's relationship to time and space. In particular, we need to examine the possibilities for human action that exist within specific chronotopes. Genres are forms of "symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 163) and could be forms of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 139) if they create time/spaces that work against their users' best interests and their users perceive them as naturalized or "just the way we do things around here." One of the purposes of genre research, then, should be to catch a glimpse of the "chronotopic unconscious" or "set of unspoken assumptions about space and time that are so fundamental that they lie even deeper (and therefore may ultimately be more determining) than the prejudices imposed by ideology" (Holquist, 1990, p. 142).

GENRE THEORY AT PRESENT

Before discussing this critical approach to genre theory, it is important to recognize the contributions that various schools of genre theorists have made to our understanding of discourse practices. Two major theoretical approaches—the rhetorical and the linguistic—are producing genre research, although these schools overlap and mutually influence each other.[3]

[3]Another important school of influence is emerging at this time—activity theory. To a large extent, activity theories take the direction of rhetorical theorists, their interest in context, to its logical extreme. An examination of this important school and its advocates is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a good introduction to this area see David R. Russell, "Rethinking Genre in School and Society," *Written Communication, 14* (1997), 504-554.

Rhetorical Approaches

North American genre theory emerged from discussions on texts sharing commonalities of form (Black, 1965), of audience (Mohrmann & Leff, 1974), and of rhetorical situations (Halloran, 1978; Ware & Linkugel, 1973; Windt, 1972). In her seminal article "Genre as Social Action," Miller (rpt. 1994, originally published 1984) shifted the discussion away from discussions of textual similarities towards a more pragmatic understanding of genre—one that understood genres as forms of social action. To make this move, Miller defined genres as typical responses to recurrent rhetorical situations. Of course, the only people who can label a situation as "recurrent" or a response as "typical" are the social actors involved in that social setting. Consequently, Miller acknowledged that the impulse towards genre classification or the tendency for people in social settings to identify text types as the ways they accomplished tasks was inherently "ethnomethodological" (p. 27). In effect, Miller reconceptualized genre theory by bringing to the forefront the issue of social context. To her credit, however, Miller balanced this interest in context with a continuing focus on the necessity that genres have "recurrent patterns of language use" (p. 37). She did not lose sight of the fact that genres are texts in their contexts.

Miller's insight required that genre researchers begin to look at text types as responses to particular social contexts. Bazerman (1988) took up this challenge in his diachronic study exploring how the scientific article evolved strategies in response to specific social exigencies. Bazerman was interested in the "sociopsychological" (p. 319) process wherein the practices involved in such a powerful genre as the scientific article become regularized and part of the production and reception strategies of the producers of scientific discourse.

Although some composition researchers (Devitt, 1993) have brought genre theory into university classrooms, it has been empirical researchers in professional communication who have most profited from and most developed Miller's linking of genres to social contexts. My own work on veterinary medicine (Schryer, 1993, 1994), for example, used insights from Miller, Bakhtin, and Smith (1987) to suggest that genres are evolving, dynamic entities that both shape and are shaped by their users. In order to echo the flexible yet powerful effect of the genres of medical record-keeping and the experimental article, I conceptualized these genres as "stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action" (Schryer, 1993, p. 200). The major contribution of this work was that it revealed both the dynamic nature of genres and their ability to reflect and shape tacit social values, what Williams (1976) so aptly called "common sense" (p. 38). In his qualitative study of a major Canadian Bank, Smart (1993) focused specifically on the "contextual factors" (p. 125) that shaped executives' reading practices and

thus the writing practices of their subordinates. This interconnected set of expectations led to the continual reenactment of certain text types that Smart called genres. In his study, Smart assumed that "a genre can usefully be conceived as a distinctive profile of regularities across three dimensions: a set of written texts, the composing processes involved in producing these texts, and the reading practices used to interpret them" (p. 127). In their comparative study of the predisposition report produced by social workers in a social service agency and the automation proposal characteristic of a large Canadian bank, Paré and Smart (1994) built on Smart's original definition to redefine genres as "a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles performed by writers and readers" (p. 147). This research has resulted in several important contributions: a theorization of the nature of context (defined as production and reception regimes), and a detailed examination of "regularities" between texts and between texts and their contexts.

However, the most important result of this research tradition has been its implications for teaching. Based on her empirical projects investigating the teaching of specific genres and the process wherein neophytes acquire new genres, Freedman (1995) has concluded that genres are, in fact, context-dependent and their features cannot be isolated and taught explicitly. Using her own research results, research derived from second language acquisition (specifically Krashen, 1984) as well as recent work investigating practical cognition (specifically Lave & Wegner, 1991), Freedman made a strong argument for refusing to teach genres explicitly as sets of rules. Rather the teacher's or mentor's task is to create "facilitative environments" (p. 204) in which students can acquire real genres in real contexts. Her work constructed, in fact, a strong case for writing centers and co-op work programs. The recent work of Dias et al. (1999), so aptly titled *Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts*, reflects Freedman's point and makes an even stronger case for the contextual nature of genre production and reception.

Linguistic Approaches

If rhetorical theorists have been exploring genres in their *contexts*, it is fair to say that linguists have been exploring *genres* in their contexts. Linguists such as Kress (1993), Martin (1993), Cope and Kalantzis (1993), as well as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) have been working within theoretical frameworks that allowed them to document the linguistic resources available within different genres. Another important difference between the two approaches is their motivation. From its inception the rhetorical tradition focused on genres from different "discourse communities" such as medicine, banking, and

architecture. Much of the motivation of this research tradition seemed focused on explaining the discursive strategies of professional communication. On the other hand, linguistic researchers were motivated from the beginning for a concern for school literacy. Consequently, much of their research centered on recording the conventions associated with different genres deemed important in school settings or in documenting conventions operating in professional contexts so that English as a Second Language speakers could more easily acquire these genres.[4]

Unlike the rhetorical tradition, the linguistic tradition has experienced much more internal controversy, a controversy that stemmed not only from differing concepts of genre but also from differing views on the pedagogical implications of genre research. The linguistic tradition for the most part derives from the work of Halliday and Hasan (1991) and their theory of systemic functional linguistics. Halliday and Hasan, intent on producing a practical linguistics, one that facilitated a systematic close reading of the ways language works, developed the concept of "register" to describe the way a constellation of linguistic features worked together. Register analysis, as Cope and Kalantzis explained, explores the "interrelation of field, or what a text is about; tenor, which explains the interpersonal relations in text; and mode, which demonstrates how the text interacts with the world" (1993, p. 14). It is important to note, however, that for Halliday and Hasan and later for Kress genre or register analysis had two important characteristics. First, genre analysis was not a way to classify texts into formal categories, but a "tool for analysing texts in their infinite variety and subtle variations" (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 14). Secondly, Halliday and Hasan and Kress argued that an important distinction exists between texts and their contexts. The social context cannot be collapsed into a text—rather they are separate yet related entities.

Martin, although adopting much of Halliday's theoretical apparatus, broke with these last two points. For Martin, the critical reader, using a semiotic analysis, could locate and describe all the linguistics features of a set of texts or genre and thus the linguistic characteristics of a genre could be codified. Furthermore, for Martin, the critical reader could also discover all they needed to know about social context in the text. Consequently, resources used to address the social context (as if such a thing as "the" social context could exist) could also be identified and codified. These two breaks had important pedagogical consequences. In the pedagogy derived from this position, students were given detailed models to work with as they wrote in school genres such as the report or the story. Furthermore, these models were often viewed as fixed products, not as flexible sets of resources that should vary according

[4]Both John Swales and his school as well as V. J. Bhatia have been particularly important in this effort.

to social contexts. As Hasan suggested, this approach leads all too easily to a "structural formalism which does not reflect the fluid social and textual relations that characterize text in context" (qtd. in Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 14).

To a large extent, then, genre researchers have adopted a "text-in-context" approach to examining recurring linguistic events. However, depending on their orientation, they have emphasized descriptive accounts of either context (rhetorical approaches) or text (linguistic approaches). At this time I believe methodological and theoretical models are needed to allow genre theorists to account for both contextual and textual practices in a more critical way.

METHODOLOGY RECONSIDERED

As is probably evident by now, I believe that we need research studies that bring the insights of both streams of genre research into the same project and that we already have many of the tools from both traditions in order to do so. From the rhetorical tradition the emphasis on ethnographic, qualitative projects (see Dias et al., 1999) has led to detailed studies on the context of genre production and reception. From the linguistic tradition, we have not only the work of descriptive linguists such as Swales (1990) and the many researchers influenced by his school (for example, Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Holmes, 1997; Skulstad, 1996), but also the work of critical discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1989), Hodge and Kress (1993), and Stillar (1998), all of whom provide ways to analyze the linguistic features of specific texts. What we lack is an overall framework in which to conduct such studies.

Bourdieu suggests a methodology that combines both types of analyses in order to undercover the structures that maintain and reproduce power. He called his method "social praxeology" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 11) and indicates that it consists of two crucial steps:

> First, we push aside mundane representations to construct the objective structures (spaces of *positions*), the distribution of socially efficient resources that define the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations. Second, we reintroduce the immediate, lived experience of agents in order to explicate the categories of perception and appreciation. (p. 11)

From the perspective of genre research the first step entails the close reading of texts that instantiate genres in order to describe and critique the strategies that some genres activate in order to represent power. The second step involves acknowledging the practical logic or problem-solving techniques

that social agents employ in different contexts. As Bourdieu makes clear, although both steps are necessary, the first step takes priority. In other words, disciplinary forms of analysis are crucial and lead to what he calls "objective" analysis. It should be understood, however, that Bourdieu is not invoking the objectivist paradigm of truth and validity to which feminist researchers and postmodernists have so rightly objected. Bourdieu sees disciplinary forms of analysis as situated language practices that themselves require reflection to see what values and ideologies they espouse.

GENRE THEORY RECONCEPTUALIZED

Such a program of research, if it is to avoid charges of reductive formalism, needs a theoretical frame that reflects the dynamism of genres and the multiple and innovative ways that their users employ them. Other disciplines, especially linguistic anthropology, have experienced the same dilemma as genre researchers—that is, conducting studies that incorporate both textual and contextual approaches. For example, based on his synthesis of formalist and contextual traditions and his own ethnographic studies of Mayan genres, Hanks (1987, 1996) concluded that "discourse genres" ought to be the unit of analysis for research into communicative practices.[5] He defined discourse genres as sets "of enduring dispositions to perceive the world and act upon it in certain ways" (1996, p. 246). He suggested that, neither "rigid, formal types" nor "formless" moments, genres were "schemes for practice that formulate the habitus" (p. 246). At the same time, Hanks insisted that, like the workings of habitus, genres are improvisational by nature. "They are produced," he observed, "in the course of linguistic practice and subject to innovation, manipulation, and change" (1987, p. 677). However, because they are so routinely used and we become so habituated to them, genres, he suggested, could be powerful instruments of social control because they "make certain ways of thinking and experiencing so routine as to appear natural" (p. 246). These ways of thinking and experiencing are, of course, not "natural"; rather they are ideological and enact the ways of perceiving the world characteristic of some groups rather than of others.

In effect, Hanks linked the formalist and contextual traditions to Bourdieu's theory of practice and Bakhtin's "sociological poetics" (Hanks,

[5]Hanks' *Language and Communicative Practices* (1996) is an essential resource for genre theorists. In this study he reviews the contributions of both the adherents of the "irreducibility" thesis (linguistic formalists) and the "relationality" thesis (phenomenologists or those interested in situated language practices), and concludes that the best work is being conducted in the nexus between the two positions. He produces a model for research that keeps the two position in active tension with each other.

1987, p. 670). Hanks, in fact, suggested that a homology exists between Bourdieu's concepts of practice and habitus and Bakhtin's concept of genre. Quoting Bourdieu, Hanks asserted that "Practice . . . arises out of the interplay between the lasting dispositions to action that comprise 'habitus' and temporality, improvisation, and the constraints inherent in any 'language market'" (p. 670). Habitus, for Hanks, "comprises actors' abilities to produce discourse and to understand it in relatively systematic ways" (p. 671). Hanks then links Bourdieu's insights to Bakhtin's "nonreductive approach to verbal form" (p. 670) or genres. He echoes Bakhtin's observation that form (and this includes thematic and stylistic construction) always has ideological commitments and thus "every genre has its own value-laden orientation" (p. 671).

In order to fully understand and build on Hank's synthesis, it is necessary to review Bourdieu's interrelated concepts of habitus, and field or "language market" as well as the ideological and critical nature of Bakhtin's concept of genre.

Habitus and Field

Throughout most of his 40 years as an anthropologist and social theorist, Bourdieu has been exploring the implications that a dialectical relationship exists between structure and agency (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990, p. 1). Bourdieu is, in fact, a structuration theorist and sees that social structures both structure and are structured by human agency. The concept of "habitus" best captures Bourdieu's vision of how agency interacts with structure. As Thompson (1991), quoting Bourdieu, explains:

> The habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are "regular" without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any rule. . . . Dispositions are acquired through a gradual process of *inculcation* . . . the dispositions produced thereby are also *structured* in the sense that they unavoidably reflect the social condition within which they were acquired. (p. 12)

Habitus thus describes the sociophysical and sociocognitive process wherein we all acquire our practical logic, our problem-solving strategies, and our linguistic capacities. Habitus, a product of prior and ongoing social experiences (especially institutional or group experiences—the family, schools, organizations), creates an individual social potential or social trajectory. Wacquant describes the relationship between habitus and practical logic thus: "The 'practical sense' *precognizes*; it reads in the present state the possible states with which the field is pregnant. For in habitus, the past, the present and the future intersect and interpenetrate one another. Habitus may be understood as virtual 'sedimented situations' (Mallin, 1979, p. 12) lodged inside the body waiting to be reactivated" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 23). For Bourdieu, habitus, especially linguistic habitus, affects perception, classification systems, and prepares individuals for more or fewer opportunities as they encounter distinctive fields or linguistic markets (such as disciplines or specific organizations).

Just as Bourdieu has been working towards a dynamic understanding of agency so he has also been working towards a dynamic understanding of structure. The concept of "field" or "market" or "game" is his way of conceptualizing organizations, disciplines, or social systems. For Bourdieu, society is not a seamless totality, but rather an "ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of play" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 17). A game, market or field is a "structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distributions of different kinds of resources or capital" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 14). As Bourdieu explains, agents in each field are in the constant process of attempting to distinguish their field from other markets and thus acquire more symbolic power and a better position vis-à-vis other fields. At the same time agents within fields are also jockeying for positions within their field trying to acquire more recognition (and thus symbolic power) for themselves.

In other words, agents are structured by their experiences within a "field." A field itself is "a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the position they occupy in that space, either to change or to preserve its boundaries and form" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 17). An agent's position within a field is determined by his or her access to three different forms of power or capital: "economic (material wealth); cultural (knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications); symbolic (accumulated prestige or honor)" (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). At the same time as agents are structured by the structures within fields, they also structure or reproduce those fields, but not in purely reductive ways. Rather because agents occupy different positions within their fields (agents have different access to power) and because fields themselves occupy different positions in relation to each other, agents enact different (although only within a specific range) strategies. It is these regulated, improvisational strategies, triggered by the interaction between habitus and field, that Bourdieu called "the logic of practice" (Robbins, 1991, p. 112).

Linguistic habitus or agents' improvisational "feel for the game" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 129) consists, then, of the strategies that agents can access in order to enhance and distinguish their own position and thus play the game successfully. Language, particularly that aspect of language called "style," is deeply implicated in this struggle. Bourdieu observes that "style exists only in relations to agents endowed with schemes of percep-

tion and appreciation that enable them to constitute it as a set of systematic differences" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 39). Furthermore, this process of differentiation or style-production is deeply implicated in the reproduction of symbolic power. Bourdieu (1991) notes:

> This production of instruments of production, such as rhetorical devices, genres, legitimate styles, and manners and, more generally, all the formulations destined to be "authoritative" and to be cited as examples of "good usage" confers on those who engage it a power over language . . . (p. 58)

As instruments of production, some genres, especially those enacted by well-positioned agents in well-positioned fields such as education and medicine, can reproduce forms of symbolic power that can literally shape their receivers' view of the world. These genres are, in Bourdieu's (1991) terms, "symbolic structures" and he observes:

> As instruments of knowledge and communication, "symbolic structures" can exercise a structuring power only because they themselves are structured. Symbolic power is a power of constructing reality, and one which tends to establish a *gnoseological* order: the immediate meaning of the world (and in particular of the social world) depends on what Durkheim calls *logical conformism*, that is "a homogeneous conception of time, space, number, and cause, one which makes it possible for different intellects to reach agreement." (p. 166)

From Bourdieu's perspective, then, genres can be seen as constellations of regulated, improvisational strategies triggered by the interaction between individual socialization or "habitus" and an organization or "field." At the same time, he also opens up the possibility that some genres can function as "symbolic structures" that shape deeply shared world views based on common perceptions of space and time. It is Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, however, that most clarifies this insight.

Chronotope

Bakhtin suggested that every genre expresses a particular relation to space and time, and this relation was always axiological. In other words, every genre expresses space/time relations that reflect current social beliefs regarding the placement and actions of human individuals in space and time. Bakhtin calls this expression of place, time, and human values the "chronotope." The workings of the chronotope become clearer as Bakhtin applies them to text-types. For example, he examined Greek adventure romances in

which two lovers are separated by chance, endure a set of impossible adventures in distant lands, and then are reunited, totally unchanged by their experiences. Bakhtin pointed out that as soon as adventure time begins, time stands still for the protagonists although space expands. This space, however, is abstract; the places the protagonists are sent to are marked only by strangeness or difference; places have no social or cultural connections to specific peoples or groups. Time and change only begin again when the protagonists return to their own place, traditional Greek culture. Individual protagonists have an abstract identity in these novels, and as characters they are totally subject to chance. Their identities cannot change; they remain unaffected by their experiences.

Bakhtin contrasted this chronotope with a very different chronotope at work in metamorphosis stories. In these accounts, protagonists are also subject to chance. Yet they are often responsible for the crisis that precipitates their fate, and they learn from their experiences. In each chronotope differing sets of values are attached to human agency. Agents in some chronotopes have more access to meaningful action than in other chronotopes.

Each genre, then, has a different trajectory, a different potential for producing world views and representing human agency. In my view all genres operate in this fashion. They function as discourse formations or constellations of strategies that instantiate a "commonsense" understanding of time and space that can affect their writers or readers. We can become habituated to these constellations of resources and fail to see the possibilities for the constraints on human action that they enact.

THE CASE: NEGATIVE MESSAGES IN AN INSURANCE COMPANY

This view of genres as regulated improvisational strategies that agents enact to promote certain forms of gnoseological order emerged not only as a result of reading Bourdieu and Bakhtin but also as a result of an empirical research project—a case study of negative letters in an insurance company (Schryer, 2000).

I was called in as a consultant for this company, as managers believed that assessors were experiencing difficulty with the "grammar" and "tone" of letters refusing Long Term Disability (LTD) benefits. Originally the company just wanted some workshops for the writers focusing on grammar and style. However, I convinced them that a study of the correspondence was needed. Little empirical research exists on negative correspondence (see Locker [1999] for an overview), and I could not offer worthwhile workshops until I understood this correspondence and what it was trying to accomplish.

The study consisted of an analysis from various perspectives of a set of 26 negative letters selected by management as representative of both "successful" and "less successful" letters as well as interviews with some of the assessors. In collecting the example letters, I asked the managers to label three or four letters as either "effective" or "ineffective" and to leave the rest uncategorized and in a random order. In an effort to enact Bourdieu's "objectivist" methodology I analyzed these letters from a number of different analytic perspectives in order to determine some of the strategies that writers were using and to determine the difference between more or less successful letters from the perspective of local standards within this organization. I then tried to enact Bourdieu's "subjectivist" methodology by consulting the agents' practical knowledge or "phronesis" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128) in order to understand what passed for "common sense," or "decorum" in this company. I conducted interviews with three writers, Bev, Karla, and Iona, identified by management as "successful."[6] During each interview I presented the writers with contrasting sets of letters: one I believed was "effective" and the other less so. I asked the writers to identify the letter that they viewed as more effective and to explain the difference between the two letters. I also enquired into the system of production that produced these letters—the availability of software, templates, boilers, models—as well as information regarding training and the role these writers occupied in the company. The project was an attempt to see these texts in their contexts and to provide an account of the constellation of improvisational strategies that these agents had access to as they enacted this genre.

In this brief chapter I cannot provide a detailed account of all my findings.[7] Instead I will focus on a brief analysis of a few letters (see examples in Appendices A and B) from rhetorical and critical discourse analysis perspectives in order to reveal some of the strategies present in these letters and to catch a glimpse of the chronotope at work in the genre. Throughout I will balance my analysis with the writers' accounts of their own practice.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

In his work on genre, Coe (1994) points out that genres have formal or structural properties. They function as "incipient actions" or "potential actions waiting for an activating situation" (p. 183). The structure of these negative

[6]This research project could have profited from interviews with a range of writers. However, the company was reluctant to allow me to interview any participants, and I did not want any of the participants to be labeled by the company as "less effective" or "inexperienced."

[7]See Schryer (2000).

letters supports Coe's insight that genres function heuristically; they provide moves that writers follow. In this correspondence, for example, all the letters followed the traditional, "commonsense," pattern of negative messages: a neutral buffer opening, the explanation for the decision, the decision, and a closing section. In these letters the explanation was divided into two sections. The writer first explained company policy and then explained why the medical evidence did not support the reader's claim for disability under company policy.

From the interview data, it was clear that both the assessors and management believed that this pattern was the only way to compose these messages. As Bev explained, after the introduction, "All we do is go over the contractual definition, explain the medical evidence and then say sorry that you didn't like the decision." The other writers all agreed that this structure was the only way to write this correspondence. Yet paradoxically, the writers also believed that their readers did not follow this pattern. As I reported to the writers, no research study exists that actually tests this organizational structure on readers (Locker, 1999). In fact, anecdotal evidence (Brent, 1985) suggests that readers skim down to the decision and then return to struggle through the explanation. Oddly enough the writers in the company also believed that readers read this way. As one reported, "The clients get these lengthy letters that are to them filled with technical material. They quickly look over the letter, looking, looking for the decision. They have to figure out difficult contractual and medical language. Finally they find the decision in the middle of the letter. And it's not what they wanted to hear. They get angry." Evidence also suggests that alternate structures do exist for negative messages. As Scott and Green (1992) reported, British negative letters tend to be far more direct than their American counterparts. Yet at this insurance company both writers and managers believed that the buffer, explanation, decision, closing structure was the only way to compose these letters, even though management admitted that the company had never tested its letters on readers.

So why, then, does this structure remain unchallenged in this organization? Interview data revealed that several social practices are maintaining this heuristic. The assessors worked within an email "shell" or template that generated the traditional structure of the "negative letter" and they were required to follow that structure. From their perspective, the existence of the template made their lives easier, as they did not have to make any decisions regarding form. Ironically, past workshops and career development courses also played a role. As Karla noted:

> I took a letter writing course when I first got here and they told us to put in a neutral opening, then explain the bad news and then express sympathy. The system at least gets readers to read over the whole letter before reacting.

The irony here is that our own pedagogy might be maintaining an outmoded system. Many professional writing textbooks are still advocating the traditional pattern (Locker) despite a glaring lack of evidence as to its effect on readers and writers.

However, it is clear that the chronotopic orientation of this genre has important implications for both its readers and writers. In the North American setting it seems we share a common belief that readers of negative messages need to be kept waiting. Implicit within the genre is the strategy of attempting to force anxious readers to "listen" to the explanation first and await the writer's decision. Paradoxically, the writers of this genre, at least in this one instance, know that the structure itself is one factor that generates anger and ill will and, as they report, they dread receiving phone calls questioning their decisions.

A close reading of the letters as well as reports from the writers also disclosed that a range of other strategies was associated with this structure. The writers whom I interviewed and the writers who participated in the workshops agreed that a letter that simply regurgitated the structure in its purest, barest form was ineffective. Instead, letters needed to prove to readers that their case had been taken seriously. Consequently, in the opening "buffer" section it was important to include details of the case such as claimant's physician's name, and in the medical explanation section it was important to be logical and detailed. As one writer reported:

> I always refer to all the information that I have reviewed. I say that I have this and this piece of evidence. I try to let them know that I have looked at everything. If you don't do that, they get back to you saying—What about the file that Dr. Jones sent you?

In other words, the underlying strategy was to argue that "we have read your file carefully" so that the claimant had no grounds for a future response.

Another writer explained what logical meant in the context of this correspondence. While examining a letter that she considered more effective, she noted

> This letter is more logical because it sets up the criteria and then explains them. It also acknowledges that we know that the claimant does have some restrictions (just not enough to warrant long term disability benefits). It's important to acknowledge this because if you don't the claimant will get back to you suggesting that you haven't noted his restrictions.

So a major strategy for writers is to include enough information to, as one writer put it, "ward off an argument with the claimant." At the same time these writers could not include too much information. Not only might too much information prove confusing to claimants, but they also had another group of readers to satisfy—the claimants' physicians. The assessors were not in a position to provide too much medical analysis because many lacked medical training. Also, they could not appear to be critiquing the claimant's medical treatment. As one writer observed,

> We have to be careful about our treatment of the doctors. We can't be judgmental about them. Sometimes we know that the doctor could have provided better treatment, but we can't say that. We have to walk a fine line in this area.

These comments reveal aspects of the "logic of practice" among these writers. Many had discovered strategies that their managers deemed "effective." However, these strategies also revealed a chronotopic orientation. Experienced assessors carefully read claimants' letters and files looking for their readers' future arguments in order to prevent responses. As Iona observed, "It's a challenge to write a letter that doesn't generate fifteen phone calls." In effect, these writers were caught in an almost impossible rhetorical dilemma. They were working with a constellation of resources that attempted to close off future correspondence with their readers, and yet, at the same time, these same readers remained clients of the company.

The comment regarding the assessor's attitudes towards physicians was also salient, as it revealed aspects of the assessors' ambiguous position within the organization. In fact, most of the assessors were women, many worked part-time, and most only stayed in the position for about three years. Most lacked a completed university education. Some had medical experience as nurses, but many lacked that background as well. After six weeks of training, they were expected to take on a full case load. Each case consisted of between 100 to 300 pages of documentation that had been scanned into computer files. As far as I could ascertain, their actual letters were rarely reviewed (although their decisions were reviewed). They were discouraged from seeking assistance from each other in terms of difficult cases. Collaboration seemed out of the question. As noted earlier, they also worked within an email program that contained a template for their decision as well as already preformulated sections (boilers) regarding policy that they simply imported into their letters. They did not, however, have access to a wordprocessing package, as management felt that it would take too long for the assessors to master the required skill set.[8] In other words, despite having the power to make decisions that profoundly affected their reader, these writers had little

[8]This situation has now changed, partially as a result of this study. The assessors now have fully functional systems.

power in their organization. Instead these writers had power, as Bourdieu suggests, only as "authorized spokespersons" (Thompson, 1991, p. 9) by virtue of their relationship to the organization and their ability to use the genre.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Besides submitting the letters to a general rhetorical analysis, I also submitted a subset of six to a form of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Hodge and Kress (1993) summarized a main insight of CDA when they noted, "The grammar of a language is its theory of reality" (p. 7). In other words, an analysis of the related set of categories and processes of any language provides insights into the commonsense or deeply embedded beliefs characteristic of the social system and its users that constitute and are constituted by that language and its grammar.

One of the more interesting CDA tools is transactive analysis. Transactive analysis looks for all subject (agent), verb (process), and object (patient) constructions because such constructions represent subjects (agents) as directly affecting objects (patients), and therefore as having some form of power. So, for example, in the sentence "We will be terminating your claim file effective September 16, 1994," the company (we) is represented as capable of terminating a claim file.[9] In nontransactive constructions, as in "Mary runs away" or as in "However, in view of the fact that you are currently involved in a rehabilitation program . . . ", only one entity—the subject or agent—is involved. Thus, nontransactive constructions represent agents as acting but not as acting on the world. These constructions can be representations of a lack of power.

I also looked for relational constructions (agent, process, attribute as in "Mary is good"). These constructions fundamentally involve classification and often involve evaluation or judgment. In the following clause from a policy section, "total disability means that the member has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment . . .", the agent "total disability" is equated or classified as meaning a person with a disability. In the clause "your depression is not totally disabling" (see appendix B) an attribute, in this case a negative attribute, is assigned to the agent. Hodge and Kress indicate that classification is a form of power. "Classification," they suggest, "imposes order on what is classified. So classification is an instrument of control in two directions: control over the flux of experience of physical and social reality . . . and society's conception of that reality" (1993, p. 63).

[9]In this case the writer has tried to soften the impact by declining the "claim file," as if a file folder were being refused.

In this set of letters I also looked for evidence of nominalization, passive constructions, and negations. As Hodge and Kress suggest, nominalization is a particularly interesting formation (pp. 21-24). In the sentence "We have received and reviewed the additional medical documentation requested from Dr. Smith and Dr. Taylor" (Appendix B), for example, the nominalization "documentation" has three important effects. The original process might be represented in this way: someone (doctor) documents something (records, tests results, signs, symptoms). But in the transformation we lose sight of the specific identities of the actor and the affected. We do not know exactly who documented what. Secondly, this transformation directs our attention only to the "verbal version of the action which was performed" (Hodge & Kress, 1993, p. 21) and away from the process wherein the information was constructed. And finally, nominalizations deprive processes of an orientation to specific times and places. This stabilization has the effect, Hodge and Kress suggest, of creating "a world of thing like abstract beings or objects, which are capable of acting or being acted on" (p. 24). This kind of alternate world can have two effects on readers: first, these alternate linguistic worlds can prevent readers from seeing or believing in the world of physical events and processes; secondly, these shadowy words of abstract entities can lead to ambiguity and confusion, especially for readers who cannot undo the transformations, a set of abilities that is probably related to class and education level.

These tools of CDA were applied to six letters ranging from least effective to most effective in order to locate patterns of usage, but more importantly to describe the chronotope or patterns of human action available to participants. The focus of the analysis was always on what "we" the organization were represented as being able to do, what "you" the reader were able to do, and what "other" entities were able to do. The intent was not only to locate some of the linguistic "rules and resources" (Giddens, 1993, p. 118) or "member resources" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 140) available to these writers, but also to see if the more effective letters had a different profile than the less effective letters.

The results of this analysis were surprising (see Schryer, 2000, for the full results). Overall the letters were composed of more transactional and nontransactional constructions then passive and negative constructions. Furthermore, there was a high percentage of nominalization across all the letters. The analysis also revealed some possible different linguistic resources between more effective and less effective letters. More effective letters employed generally more transactive and nontransactive constructions and far fewer relationals as well.

This results, however, did not really tell me very much until I looked at this data through the lens of a chronotopic analysis in which the participants' access to action and thus power was represented. Consequently, I re-examined the set of letters from the perspective of what "you," the reader

could do, be, or have; what "we," the writer/organization, could do, be, or have; and what other entities (doctors, files, documents) could do, be, or have. In this analysis, if nominalizations were proceeded by a possessive pronoun, they were assigned to one of the three categories according to who owned them. So, for example, "our belief" was assigned to the "we" category.

Again some trends emerged in the data. The most interesting pattern was that relationals never appeared associated with the writer/company. The company (we) did not classify or judge itself, although it did judge readers and sometimes harshly. Better letters had a generally higher level of activity and much of that activity was assigned to readers, even if only at the nontransactive level. Another interesting strategy in this discourse concerned the use of nominalizations assigned to other entities. Most nominalizations fell into this category as in this example: "As you aware (*sic*), as of May 15, 1994, in order to be considered 'totally disabled' the Member must have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment. . . ." Several nominalizing structures such as "totally disabled" and "impairment" occur in this instance, but it was striking that they were not assigned to "you," the reader, but to the "Member," a third-person entity that existed in the company's legal documents. In fact, the strategy here seemed to be that the reader (you) could never be allowed to see himself or herself as associated with a debilitating condition.

A clearer view of the world being enacted in this genre can be glimpsed by an individual analysis of specific letters. The attached sample letter (see Appendix A) was identified as effective by management and the writers. This example has a higher than average number of transactive units. In this letter, "we" the company can inform you, conclude that you are capable, terminate your claim, base our decision, receive documentation, and decline your claim. So "we" are represented as active agents who can both receive information and make decisions that affect the reader's future. "You" the reader can appeal your claim, make a request, give reasons, and obtain documents. So "you" are represented as an entity basically limited to speech acts. "Other" entities in these documents typically include doctors, files, medical conditions, and other nominalizations. These nominalizations were often represented as powerful, and they often appropriated actions that could pertain to the reader. For example, in this letter an "impairment prevents her" (the member), and "occupations provide income." In another chronotope the reader could possess the impairment, and the reader could provide income.

The role of nominalization, in fact, was particularly compelling. It is "our" decision but "your" claim, condition, improvement, clinical findings, and return to work. Other entities control benefits, duties, occupation, education, training, experience, provision, information, and determination. The typical strategy across all the letters was that these other entities support the decision of the "we," the authorized voice of the letter. In fact, a whole world of inanimate documentation is ranged against the reader.

Of all the examples that I examined, this letter, however, is the most positive in that the writer used resources available to her to construct a world in which the reader has improvement, can return to work, and has access to a range of nontransactive actions.

Other letters deemed less effective deployed a slightly different range of linguistic resources to create an even more restricted trajectory for their readers. In the attached letter labelled "ineffective" (see Appendix B) "we" receive and review documents, decline your claim, and receive evidence. "You" claim benefits, appeal your claim, make a request, and give reasons (all speech acts). Even other entities have more power than you do: medical information can or cannot support your condition and reasons can or cannot support your appeal. And all these nominalizations are ranged against the reader: information, decision, impairment, education, training, experience, provisions, treatment, diagnosis, and so forth. Furthermore, "you," the reader, are judged pretty harshly: you have signs and symptoms, you are overweight, and you have hypothyroidism. In this letter the reader not only has little future action but is almost blamed for that very limited future.

Most of the letters resembled the second letter. The set of linguistic strategies available within the genre, I contend, created a trajectory in which the reader's control of time/space was severely constrained at the level of linguistic representation. Most often readers did not even own their own medical conditions, and certainly they had few future choices. The better letters had, however, figured out strategies that left readers with some limited freedom of action—particularly the freedom to improve and get better. The writers who had hit upon the use of nontransactives and avoided the use of relationals, particularly negative relationals, seemed to produce the kind of letter that both management and the effective writers themselves identified as having a good tone. This account of the logic of practice dramatizes the very fine line around which these writers maneuver. Built within their linguistic and technological resources was a whole set of practices that attempted to reproduce a chronotope that constrained the future actions of readers. Supporting these practices were the writers' own beliefs in the necessity of mandated sections and the rhetorical structure of this genre. And yet room to maneuver did exist. Some writers had located strategic ways to avoid blaming readers, and some had located ways to represent readers as getting better, even if they were deprived of the LTD benefits they requested. At the same time the chronotopic orientation of the genre severely limited options open to the writers.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that several forces are working to maintain the trajectory of this discourse formation. Our own disciplinary belief in the efficacy of the traditional "bad news" letters is one of those forces, despite the fact that this traditional structure has never been tested. Ironically, this structure is now built into the models and templates that shape this discourse in this company and will prove difficult to challenge and reconsider. The structure is now part of the "rules and resources" or "common sense" of both assessors and managers.

This limited case study also suggests that genres function as "congealed events" (Morson & Emerson, 1989, p. 22) or "symbolic structures" (Bourdieu) that attempt to reproduce certain kinds of "gnoseological order" or "a homogeneous conception of time, space, number, and cause" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 166). Genres seem to function chronotopically in that they represent worlds of human action or movement. In the case of this discourse formation, a critical examination of the linguistic resources present in the letters reveals a world in which readers are kept waiting, a world in which their movements are restricted often to speech acts, a world in which they are not encouraged to respond, and a world in which they are often judged harshly. At its heart, this genre attempts to freeze its readers in space and time and reduce them to passivity and nonresponse.

And yet this same analysis also suggests that some room for change does exist.[10] The "better" writers at this company have figured out ways to remain within the trajectory of the genre and yet treat their readers as both clients and claimants. Their resources included more nontransactive constructions, far fewer relationals that judged readers, a future orientation in which the reader could improve, and sometimes expressions of regret.[11]

At the same time, the contextual information gathered during the interviews revealed a network of power relations. The rhetorical form being reproduced within this correspondence operated both as a constraint and resource and demonstrated the complex and contradictory operations of power within organizations. These writers were enacting and reproducing this set of discursive practices while at the same time these discursive practices were affecting the writers' own habitus or regulated improvisational strategies. It is possible to argue as well that some of the discursive practices were against the writers' best interests. All the writers mentioned the difficulties

[10]It is tempting to call these strategies forms of resistance. However, I believe such a labelling would be naive. Certainly, these writers would not see what they are doing as forms of resistance. In fact, they called it "developing a good tone."

[11]The possibility of expressing regret came as a surprise to many writers in the workshops. Some writers felt quite ambivalent about expressing regret in that it was "phoney." In the end, we decided that expressing regret was a resource that writers could use if they genuinely felt regret and felt comfortable expressing it.

they faced trying to explain their decisions to their readers and the intense frustration that they experienced. These writers made decisions that profoundly affected their readers' lives, and yet, paradoxically, to a large extent these writers were in turn constrained by their organization's discursive practices as embodied in this one genre. To echo Bourdieu, these writers exercise power only in relation to their organization. They are "like the Homeric orator who takes hold of the *skeptron* in order to speak" (Thompson, 1991, p. 9). To echo Smith, we have here an example of institutional discourse rather than the discourse of individual subjects, a discourse that is now embedded in institutional practices such as computerized templates.

In conclusion, when we examine genres as trajectory entities or flexible constellations of improvisational yet regulated strategies that agents enact within fields it is probably useful to think of genres as actions or verbs. As discourse formations or constellations of strategies, genres provide us with the flexible guidelines, or access to strategies that we need to function together in the constant social construction of reality. They guide us as we together and "on the fly" mutually negotiate our way from moment to moment and yet provide us with some security that an utterance will end in a predictable way. They are, as Lemke (1999) suggested, "trajectory entities," structured structures that structure our management of time/space.

At the level of organizations or fields genres also represent sets of paradigmatic choices. We genre all the time in the sense that we classify possible sets of paradigmatic choices. People in organizations can tell researchers as part of their "logic of practice" whether they are writing reports, user reference guides, or appeal letters.

Finally, at the level of individual human agents, we are genred all the time. We are socialized through genres and acquire our linguistic capital through our exposure to various genres. It is through the genres associated with different fields that agents acquire the "habitus" or practical logics that they need in order to negotiate their way through their various fields or linguistic markets. Genres are, in fact, local and in a constant state of construction; they are dynamic; they are structured structures that structure; they are strategy-produced and driven and produce strategy. Constellation like, they function as strange attractors, creating patterns of connected content, form, and style. They create gnoseological systems—systems where commonsense visions of time/space and the possibility of human action exist. Consequently, they are profoundly ideological. But we need to look at the schemes of order we are negotiating and in particular at the ideologies they create and especially at the subject positions they create and maintain. Some genres that control will function at all levels as discursive sets of practices that construct space/times against some of their participant's best interests. These genres—such as the negative letter—will more often consist of authorized

APPENDIX A

A More "Effective" Letter According to Managers and Writers

Dear Ms. J.

We are writing to inform you of our decision regarding your claim for Long Term Disability (LTD) benefits.

As you aware (*sic*), as of May 15, 1994, in order to be considered "totally disabled" the Member must have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment due to injury or illness which prevents her from performing the duties of ANY occupation:

1. for which she is or may become fitted through education, training or experience, and
2. that provides an income that is equal to or greater than the amount of monthly disability benefit payable under this provision, adjusted annually by the Consumer Price Index.

The availability of work for the member does not affect the determination of totally disabled.

On March 11, 1994 we wrote to your physician, Dr. Smith, for an update on your medical condition.

This medical information has been reviewed, along with your entire claim file. We have noted that you have had some recent improvement in the symptomatology of your condition, ie. grip strength, stiffness and joint assessment.

We have concluded that based on your current clinical findings, you would be capable of performing a light sedentary occupation as of May 15, 1994 and therefore we would not consider you to be totally disabled for ANY occupation.

However, in view of the fact that you are currently involved in a rehabilitation program and attempting to return to your own occupation, we are willing to continue your claim on a rehabilitation basis only for a further period of time.

Providing you do not return to work on a full-time basis prior to September 15, 1994, benefits will be released until this time to assist you with your return to work plans.

We will be terminating your claim file effective September 16, 1994

If you believe the evidence on which we have based our decision is incorrect, or if there is other evidence which is not known to us, you may appeal your claim. If you decide to do so, please make such a request in writing, as soon as possible, giving reasons to support the appeal. Medical reasons must be accompanied by supporting documentation from your specialist at your expense. Until we receive such evidence, your file will remain closed.

Sincerely

Paula Jones

Disability Claims Assessor
DISABILITY CLAIMS DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX B

A Less "Effective" Letter According to Managers and Writers

Dear Mrs. S.

We have received and reviewed the additional medical documentation requested from Dr. Smith and Dr. Taylor.

This information, as well as your entire file, has been reviewed and a decision has been made about your eligibility for disability benefits. Our decision of whether or not to grant benefits must take into consideration both the terms of the group plan and the medical evidence received. The group plan states, in part:

During the two-year period immediately following the date the member becomes totally disabled, total disability means that the member has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment due to injury or illness which prevents her from performing the regular duties of the occupation in which she participated just before the disability started.

After the two-year period, totally disabled means that the member has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment due to injury or illness, which prevents her from performing the duties of ANY occupation:

1. for which she is or may become fitted through education, training or experience, and
2. that provides an income that is equal to or greater than the amount of monthly disability benefit payable under this provision, adjusted annually by the Consumer Price Index.

The availability of work for the member does not affect the determination of totally disabled.

You are claiming disability benefits due to reactive depression, morbid obesity, hypothyroidism, and fibrositis.

While it seems that you have some signs and symptoms that are compatible with depression, by the level of treatment being suggested and received, it would seem that your depression is not totally disabling. Apparently you have been overweight and have had hypothyroidism for some time and have still been able to work. While mention is made of fibrositis as a diagnosis, there is minimal information on file to support this condition.

It is our belief that the medical evidence provided does not support your being totally disabled and unable to perform your own occupation. Therefore, we must decline your claim for long term disability benefits.

If you believe the evidence on which we have based our decision is incorrect, or if there is other evidence which is not known to us, you may appeal your claim. If you decide to do so, please make such a request in writing, as soon as possible, giving reasons to support the appeal. Medical reasons must be accompanied by supporting documentation from your specialist at your expense. Until we receive such evidence, your file will remain closed.

Sincerely

Mary Jane Evans
Disability Claims Assessor

DISABILITY CLAIMS DEPARTMENT

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5

Genre Systems: Chronos and Kairos in Communicative Interaction

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Since Miller's (1984) important proposal that genres be seen as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations," considerable work in rhetorical studies (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995) has used this framing to identify and investigate communicative interaction in scientific and professional communities. This view of genre has also informed studies of communication, and especially electronic communication, in organizations (Crowston & Williams, 1997; Orlikowski & Yates, 1994; Schultze & Boland, 1997; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Yates & Sumner, 1997). Recently, the focus of genre research has also broadened to examine not only single genres, but also the relationships among genres within a community. Such an expanded focus recognizes that although understanding the individual genres used within a community sheds significant light on particular norms, practices, and ideologies, understanding the interactions among genres and the communicative phenomena that emerge over time and space from genre interdependence gives us access to additional, larger insights.

Various concepts for describing interactions among genres have been proposed, including *genre set* (Devitt, 1991), *genre repertoire* (Orlikowski &