

# SUMMARY

## *THE RHETORIC OF GENRES. CRITICAL ANALYSIS PROJECT*

The book *The Rhetoric of Genres. Critical Analysis Project* is a proposal of an original, author's approach to research on genres in social communication, embedded in the tradition of rhetoric and, at the same time, open to contemporary interpretative humanist methodologies. The author asks how genres function as forms organizing human activities, ways of thinking and cultural practices. She proposes a new research project – rhetorical genre criticism, combining theoretical reflection with analytical sensitivity to specific communication practices.

The book consists of two main parts. The first part is theoretical and interpretative and guides the reader through key contexts of contemporary genre research, placing them within rhetorical reflection. The author invokes classical tradition – from Aristotle and Cicero to contemporary researchers such as Carolyn Miller, Charles Bazerman, Amy Devitt or Anis Bawarshi – to show how the understanding of genres as a form of social action has evolved. The genre is understood here as a dynamic system of relationships between communication participants, institutions, media and cultural values. In this sense, it becomes a rhetorical category, since it always participates in the processes of persuasion, negotiating meanings and shaping the community.

This part of the book also includes an analysis of concepts which have broadened genological reflection in recent decades: *genre systems*, *repertoires*, *colonies* and *genre ecologies*. The author refers to these concepts to show genres as networks of mutual dependencies and not autonomous text-based entities. She develops this idea in her own conceptual proposal – a *genosphere*, that is, a genre ecosystem appropriate for a given communication culture. The

genosphere provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of complex systems of practice, such as political debates, media discourse or institutional communication.

An important element of this part is a **3P model**, which organizes the complexity of the genre phenomenon by distinguishing three of its dimensions: *product*, *procedure* and *process*. The product is a genre established in tradition and cultural knowledge (e.g. definitions in dictionaries or textbook typologies); the procedure - the knowledge of communication participants how to operate within a given genre; the process - specific, individual implementations in which the genre updates itself in practice. This three-dimensional approach allows us to better understand how genres stabilize and, at the same time, transform our communication practices.

The second part of the book is methodological in nature and develops the project of rhetorical criticism. A two-pronged way of studying genres is proposed here:

1. the analysis of the rhetorical potential of the genre - i.e. what possibilities of persuasion, action and community meaning are inherent in it,
2. the analysis of the implementation of this potential – i.e. how specific communication artifacts (texts, speeches, media forms) use or modify this potential.

To enable this type of research, the author develops a four-dimensional model of genre description, which entails:

- ◆ the communication and teleological dimension, taking into account communication goals and intentions and their social meaning,
- ◆ the spatial and temporal dimension, taking into account the situationality of the genre and its cultural embedding in time and space,
- ◆ the compositional and stylistic dimension, including structure and means of expression,
- ◆ the discursive and subjective dimension, focusing on the relationships between communication participants and their identities and social roles.

**The communication and teleological dimension (WKT[CTD])** in the project of rhetorical genre criticism is a starting point for analysing the relationship between communicative intentionality and social meaning of activity. It is pointed out here that each genre determines and, at the same time, limits

the way participants can pursue communication goals - both individual and communal. This dimension is about understanding *why* a given genre exists and what aims and functions it attributes to communication in a particular cultural context.

The author emphasizes that the analysis should not confuse individual goals (e.g. self-promotion or protection of image) with communication aims assigned to the genre itself. The latter are of a communal nature and are part of the cultural rationality of action. Their existence means that even individual sender strategies are subordinated to genre framework of meaning and the expectations of the audience.

At the centre of this dimension is the concept of *the universal audience* – understood, following Chaïm Perelman, as a symbolic cultural instance, which serves as a moral and rational measure of expression. Recourse to this instance makes it possible to distinguish between effectiveness and responsibility of communication. The author interprets the universal audience as a mechanism of internal rhetorical control, which allows you to recognize whether a genre serves the common good of communication or is subordinated to particular interests.

The communicative and teleological dimension therefore allows us to study genres as forms organizing social teleology of communication – the structures in which specific ways of speaking and acting acquire the status of rational, trustworthy and culturally accepted. In this sense, the genre is not only a tool of communication, but also a carrier of values and norms that shape the horizon of community thinking and action.

**The spatial and temporal dimension (WCP[STD])** answers the question when and where the genre works and organizes the analysis of time and space as the material and mental framework of artifacts. The author adopts two classic time categories: *chronos* (quantitative dimension, rhythms and cycles) and *kairos* (appropriateness of the moment), which combines with a critical procedure for examining a genre.

The author distinguishes five layers of genre temporality in the communication circuit:

1. **Situation time** – repeatable circumstances of genre launch (e.g. religious and state rituals; cyclical inaugural speeches; election campaign and typical leaflets, spots, statements). This is where the exigence

(Bitzer) or – in another approach – the rhetorician's creative contribution (Vatz) is revealed. Exceptional situations favour genre hybridization (Jamieson, Stromer-Galley).

2. **Creation time** – conceptual and production period of the artifact whose rhythm (deadlines) and design decisions influence the use of kairos in a later presentation. The author also describes kairos in creation as the moment of making strategic decisions and readiness to modify the form.
3. **Interaction time** – presentation/meeting time with the recipient; it can be synchronous (debates, live conversations) or asynchronous (comments, e-mails). It affects the dynamics of the argument and the response style.
4. **Artifact time (internal time)** – the temporal structure of the message (sequence, rhythm, dramaturgy; manipulating past/present/future)
5. **Reception time** – model and actual reception conditions (instantaneous, delayed, cyclical; individual vs collective), along with an assessment of the influence of the moment and rhythm on the effectiveness.

Simultaneously, the physical, institutional, media and cultural space in which the genre starts is analysed. The author proposes four complementary categories (in two parallel terminological approaches):

- ◆ Meeting space (chosen) – act initiation site (studio, hall, platform); decisions about choosing a place and its symbolism shape expectations and relationships.
- ◆ Interaction space (shaped) – physical/relational system (lecterns, scenography, distances), which lays out rhetorical forces.
- ◆ Recording/image space (transformed) – recording medium (print, video, screen), in which material and symbolic transformations of the message take place.
- ◆ Reception space (perceived) – real reception conditions (mobility, focus, online/offline mode) and their impact on the persuasive effect.

The author includes sets of questions and procedures as well as a tabular distinction between potential and action updated in both axes (time/space), which organises diagnostics and evaluation.

**The compositional and stylistic dimension (WKS[CSD])** in the genre criticism project focuses on the structure and linguistic organization of the genre

artifact, so how the *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* process is carried out in a given form. The author emphasizes that this dimension of analysis does not come down to describing the formal features of the text, but concerns the way in which composition and style contribute to the persuasive function of the genre and allow you to recognize its rhetorical potential. Composition is understood here as an order and internal logic of expression resulting from both culturally established and individual decisions. Within its framework, the arrangement of parts, the hierarchy of arguments, the use of figures, the rhythm of expression, and how the recipient is guided through the text structure are analysed.

The author points out that in the study of composition, it is crucial to distinguish between a genre pattern and its updating in a particular artifact. The pattern ensures predictability and recognition of the genre, whereas the update allows for its creative transformation, adaptation to the context and to the individual style of the sender. In this sense, each genre is a field of tension between repeatability and innovation, and the compositional analysis allows you to capture the degree of this balance. The effectiveness of the genre often depends not so much on the accuracy of the convention but on its skilful use, which allows you to surprise the recipient without violating the expectations resulting from genre cultural competence.

The stylistic dimension, on the other hand, reveals an individual way of shaping statements – the tone, rhythm, selection of linguistic means and rhetorical figures – but also cultural style, i.e. the way in which a given genre manifests its social and axiological roots. The author emphasizes that style is not only a matter of the aesthetics, but also of the ethics of communication: through style, the sender's ethos, their attitude towards the recipient, topics and values are revealed, which are expressed using the genre. The compositional and stylistic dimension is therefore not limited to the level of the text, but it also includes symbolic decisions that shape the relationships between the participants in the act.

The analysis of this dimension is dynamic – it allows you to track how a genre perpetuates certain ways of speaking and arguing, and how its structure and style are transformed as a result of media, institutional and technological changes. Modern genres, especially media and digital – require extending the concept of style to visual, sound and interactive elements, which perform functions analogous to rhetorical figures of words. In this way, the compositional and stylistic dimension becomes a space for multimodal analy-

sis, enabling recognition of how formal and aesthetic means are subordinated to rhetorical goals.

Finally, the author proposes that the compositional and stylistic dimension be treated as a place in which the relationship between the linguistic structure and the rhetorical meaning of action is most fully revealed. The genre here is not only a set of compositional rules, but also a form of cultural rhythm in which the style, tone and order of expression co-create a communal way of thinking and feeling. The analysis of this dimension allows us to understand how rhetoric is realized in language – as the art of creating meaning, not just as an ornament of expression.

**The discursive-subjective dimension (WDP[DSD])** is the last of the four elements of the model of rhetorical genre criticism and focuses on the relationships between communication participants – their roles, identities and the ways in which they are constructed within specific discourses. The author assumes that each genre is a form of social action, which not only conveys content, but also shapes the positions of the sender and the recipient, defines the scope of their competences and the method of participation in the public sphere. In this sense, the genre is not a transparent communication tool, but a structure, in which the play of forces between institutions and individuals, between the official order of discourse and the practices of everyday language use is revealed.

The author points out that this dimension enables the analysis of genres as places of constructing communication subjectivity, i.e. those in which participants negotiate their right to vote, define their own ethos, and establish relationships with other participants in the discourse. The subject in rhetorical terms is not understood here as an autonomous individual, but as a dialogic and relational entity – always immersed in social and cultural networks. The genre is therefore a framework that enables the existence of this entity in public space, giving it the form of expression and a repertoire of acceptable speaking strategies.

The author also emphasizes that discursive-subject analysis allows us to examine the institutional and ideological framework of communication, in which genre entities are formed. Every discourse – political, media, scientific, religious – imposes specific rhetorical patterns, ways of legitimizing statements and rules of authority. Rhetorical criticism, in this dimension, is therefore about revealing how genres stabilize certain forms of subjectivity by

marginalizing others, and how moments of resistance, transformation and emancipation of speech can be recognized within them.

In this context, the author refers to contemporary theories of discourse and subjectivity, pointing out that a rhetorical perspective allows for a balance between structure and agency. A genre is both the result of discursive forces and space in which an individual can creatively transcend convention by giving an individual tone to their own statement. This dialectic – between subordination and expression, between social frame and personal gesture – it is the essence of the discursive-subject dimension.

The analysis of this dimension leads to the conclusion that genres are not only communicative forms but also tools for constituting communities. Within them, trust relationships, voice hierarchies, and inclusion and exclusion mechanisms are created. A rhetorical critic, when examining a genre, should therefore ask who is speaking, on whose behalf, from what position and towards which audience. In this dimension, the rhetorical nature of the genre as an act of cooperation and common action is revealed. A genre is understood here as a medium between individual experience and a collective order of a discourse, and the analysis of subjectivity becomes a way of examining how culture communicates itself through repetitive but constantly vivid forms of expression.

The presented project of genre criticism is not only a methodological proposal but also a kind of intellectual manifesto that fits into the trend of contemporary rhetorical humanities. The author argues that rhetoric – as the study of symbolic forms of action – can become a common language for linguistics, media studies, sociology and cultural studies. Genres, in this view, are both objects of study and keys to understanding the world, in which communication becomes a space for constant negotiations of meanings.

*Translated by Bożena Lesiu*