

Flexible Intimacies in Three Moves: A Genre Analysis of the Scholarly Book Preface

Huisheng Zhu and Qinyan Cai | Oxford College of Emory University

Scholarly prefaces, preceding the main content of scholarly books, provide a platform for authors to introduce their books. While the genre of the scholarly book preface is stabilized by its recurrent nature, it is simultaneously extremely flexible and less constrained than many other academic genres. Drawing on rhetorical genre studies, this paper examines the stabilities and flexibilities of form and substance in nine scholarly prefaces and the effect that varying the range of target audience has on the flexibilities of the preface genre. Ultimately, this paper concludes that scholarly prefaces not only have conventionalized rules and established moves to establish connections with the readers, but also exhibit notable flexibility of form and substance as a function of situation. Specifically, as the target audience expands, preface authors adjust levels of intimacy to achieve various subsidiary purposes.

The life of thought is a continuous story, like life itself: one book grows out of another as in the world of political commitment one action leads to another.

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*

I started having gastrointestinal “issues” during my senior year of college. Bloating, cramping, gas, and frequent bowel movements made me look constantly for bathrooms that were close at hand.

Judson Brewer, *The Craving Mind*

Philosophy covers an immense range of topics, but part of its concern has always been with mortal life: how to understand it and how to live it.

Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions*

The epigraphs above reflect diverse subjects and tones: the life of the mind, illness, and mortality, through poetic description, personal experience, and academic discussion. Yet diverse as they are, all are excerpts of the same genre: the scholarly book preface. Located at the beginning of a book, the preface may often be skipped by readers who are eager to dive into the main content.

Having persisted over time, however, the genre must serve a purpose for readers and writers and reflects some degree of stability. Carolyn Miller, in fact, defines genres as “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (“Genre” 159). Through repetitive use by authors, the scholarly book preface genre has developed established conventions—it has become regularized

and “typified.” Yet a cursory look at scholarly prefaces such as our epigraphs underscores their diversity rather than their shared conventions. This raises the question of what the regularized features of this often-skipped and extremely diverse genre might be.

Alongside stable features, genres also contain variations, with some genres more flexible than others and allowing a greater range of variabilities for users to adapt to different situations (Devitt). As a secondary genre embedded within the larger genre of the scholarly book or monograph (Bakhtin), the scholarly preface exists to support its “partner” (Freadman)—the main content of the book—and so must follow the main purpose of the whole book. However, this genre still has tremendous flexibility. As Miller argues, “A genre is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence” (“Genre” 163). In other words, a genre exists to fulfill its social users’ needs and embodies a shared social motive. To be its own unique genre, scholarly prefaces must serve a distinct subsidiary purpose that is different from that of the whole book and also distinct from an introduction.

In this paper, we therefore ask what accounts for the notable flexibility of scholarly prefaces and what social purpose this genre serves. To shed light on this question, we selected the prefaces of nine scholarly books from the social sciences and humanities in fields ranging from linguistics, religion, and philosophy to human geography and economics. While these samples were all English-language books published by university presses between 1975 and 2018, targeted audiences varied. Our analysis of these samples demonstrates that prefaces, as one critical “ritual” in what Anne Freadman might call a reading ceremony (40), create a

personal space for authors to build relationships, particularly the relationship between readers and authors, performing a relational social action within the academic setting. Moreover, when we classify the samples by target audience, a perhaps counterintuitive pattern behind the tremendous flexibilities of scholarly prefaces becomes clear: as the target audience expands, the author displays a higher level of intimacy and aims to achieve different subsidiary purposes.

Rhetorical Genre Theory

We begin here with an overview of key concepts in rhetorical genre theory. Contrary to methods of analyzing genres based only on form and substance, rhetorical genre theory conceptualizes genre as also closely connected to situation. Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson, in fact, define the three inseparable elements of genres as form, substance, and situation (18). Situation is an indispensable element of genre that “defines function” (Downey 58). Genres, furthermore, evolve their functions “to remain viable” (Downey 45). In other words, the diversity of genres results from the need to fit different circumstances. In those situations, people produce genres to interact with others and achieve their purposes in mutually recognizable ways. The essence of the founding of genres is “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (Miller, “Genre” 159). The established genre, then, “represents a system of actions and interactions that have specific ... functions” (Miller, “Rhetorical” 70). To sum up, a genre is a shared reality among social actors and a social action that accords with situations.

As a social action, a genre relies on an indispensable element, interactions between people, and its recurrent nature generates

“reproducible speaker and addressee roles” (Miller, “Rhetorical” 71). Therefore, a genre is often imbued with “a sense of addressivity or attitude to ... the audience” (Schryer 213). The users of a genre need patterned genres “as the medium of their [social] action” (Miller, “Rhetorical” 71). On the other hand, Schryer regards “speaking subjects” as addressees who “determine the boundaries of a genre” (212). Anne Freedman also argues that one of the addressee roles is to determine what information is to be included or excluded and “how [information is] represented” in a genre (50). In the case of scholarly prefaces, readers are addressees whose expectations and capabilities need to be catered to by the author. As with most genres, the target audience greatly shapes the writing of a preface by influencing the strategies that the author employs.

The function of a genre, however, is not only based on its relationships with people and the genre’s partners; flexibility also plays an essential role even though genre is often regarded as a relatively stable system of social actions based on the recurrence of situations. One way flexibility is embedded in genre is through “duality of structures” (Miller, “Rhetorical” 70). In Miller’s structuration theory, a genre is shaped by social contexts and real life situations: the recurrence of genres establishes their basic structures under various circumstances, which are gradually stabilized by individuals’ frequent use of those genres to accomplish social actions. Meanwhile, as Miller indicates, as social actors act in a specific situation, they also enrich the established genre structure by “creating” and “reproducing” the “recurrence in their actions” (“Rhetorical” 71). The variety of each individual rhetorical situation bequeaths the constructed genre flexibility

and leads to evolution of the genre’s structures. Thus, a genre’s “structure ... is both means and end, both resource and product” (“Rhetorical” 70). Like Miller’s use of structuration theory, Freedman similarly draws on “etiquette theory” as an analogy to genre that helps explain generic flexibility. Etiquette, rules of manners for situations such as dining, are similar to established structures of genre. Though established rules are present, changes are allowed with respect to each specific situation with different goals to achieve, which suggests that genre is “never a matter of simple conformity with a normative model” (49).

Due to their inherent flexibility, genres also allow conflicts to exist because “complex dialectical relations exist between individuals and their social groups” (Schryer 210). The difference between an established genre and its actual application by different individuals can cause contradictions, and “it is through contradictions ... that change occurs” (Schryer 210). In other words, flexibility of genre allows the presence of contradictions, while conflicts increase the flexibility and evolution of genre. As Schryer concludes, genres are “stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action” (208). Though flexibility is a common feature of genres, its extent is varied with different genres. Schryer observes that although genres “are heavily conventionalized ..., their users [still] have internal options, and thus some freedom of expression, depending on the genre” (208). Our sample scholarly prefaces point to this genre as one that is relatively more flexible than regularized, as authors seem to express themselves with few constraints.

In the ongoing scholarly conversation around rhetorical genre studies, many case

studies have analyzed specific genres in different academic and professional fields. For instance, Charles Bazerman's research reveals the changing features in physics experimental reports. JoAnne Yates has investigated numerous professional genres, including the birth of memorandum for the purpose of written communication in business settings. Among these case studies, María José Luzón has studied the preface, but focused on university textbook prefaces, which she finds are both "informative and promotional" (1). Though scholarly prefaces and university textbook prefaces are related, their target audiences and rhetorical situations differ greatly. Our analysis of scholarly prefaces seeks to contribute new understanding about scholarly written communication.

Form & Substance in the Scholarly Preface

Before examining what accounts for the flexibility of the preface genre with a narrower focus on audience, a general description of the regularized features of its form and substance is necessary to more fully understand its social purpose.

Form of the Scholarly Preface

Form can be understood as the general formal conventions of preface writing, including dimensions such as structure and linguistic style as well as length and location. The common location of a scholarly preface in a book is of course in the introductory section before the main content of the book. Among these introductory materials, the preface is generally located before the introduction and the acknowledgments in a section separated from the main parts of the book through the use of Roman

numeral page numbers, making the preface a special outside space for establishing relationships.

The length of prefaces varies, which may be decided by the topics authors want to cover. As documented in Table 1 below, the length of our sampled prefaces ranged from two to five pages, while the two most common lengths were three and four pages. (Given physical size differences among books, actual word count varied.) Prefaces also have several less obvious conventions. Prefaces, like introductions, start with a heading—"preface." However, unlike introductions, prefaces don't have subheads, which implies that, unlike other academic genres, prefaces are less formal and more personal. To end a preface, authors may follow the style of a letter-closing by writing their names and the date, and sometimes their location while writing. Most in our sample, however, end their prefaces without such information—seven of nine (Table 1). Notably, in our sample, eight of nine had the same authors as their books (see Table 1). In some cases, however, prefaces might be written by people other than the book authors, such as editors, publishers, or colleagues, which could also be influenced by the edition of the scholarly book. For instance, in our sample, the author of *On Nature and Language* is Noam Chomsky; the preface of its first edition, however, is written by Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi, Chomsky's fellow linguists, working at the University of Geneva and the University of Siena. When the authors of the preface are different from that of the book, a letter-closing with the names of the preface authors becomes necessary to ensure readers know who is writing.

Table 1
Summary of scholarly preface genre samples

Book Title	Discipline(s)	Length (pages)	Author	Separate Section	Letter Closing	Moves: Academic	Moves: Personal	Acknowledgements
<i>On Nature and Language</i> (2002)	Linguistics	4	Colleagues	N	Y	Y	N	N
<i>The Craving Mind</i> (2017)	Psychology	4	Author	Y	N	Y	Y	N
<i>Words without Meaning</i> (2003)	Linguistics, Philosophy	3	Author	N	N	Y	N	Y - List of names and events at the end
<i>Language in Our Brain</i> (2017)	Linguistics, Neuroscience, Psychology	2	Author	Y	N	Y	Y	Y - Brief thanks at the end
<i>Linguistic Anthropology</i> (1997)	Linguistics, Anthropology	3	Author	Y	N	Y	Y	N
<i>Everyday Mysticism: A Contemplative Community at Work in the Desert</i>	Religion	4	Author	N	N	Y	Y	Y - Descriptions of events
<i>The Logic of Miracles</i> (2018)	Math, Psychology	3	Author	Y	N	Y	Y	Y - Thanks an inspirational book
<i>Mortal Questions</i> (1979)	Philosophy	5	Author	N	N	Y	N	N
<i>Space and Place</i> (1977)	Geography	2	Author	N	Y	Y	Y	Y - Lists of names and events

Along with the formatting features listed above, language is also an essential element within the scope of form, one that reflects great flexibility. The flexibility of language in scholarly prefaces is demonstrated by variations in tone and diction of the prefaces in our sample. Some prefaces employ a conversational tone, light-hearted description, and relatively informal diction, often to describe the author’s personal experiences. In the preface of *The Craving Mind*, for instance, Brewer use dramatic and emotional diction and phrases, such as “clever me,” “parry,”

and “no way” to vividly show the surprise that Brewer felt when he first heard someone indicating that his physical issues might be caused by mental stress.

Unlike such light-hearted description, the language of prefaces also often includes serious discussions featuring an academic and formal tone. Professional terminologies and depersonalized tones make these discussions seem more objective even though authors might include the first person to indicate that these are their opinions and understandings. A good example of this is

Thomas Nagel's preface to his book *Mortal Question*, which mainly discusses philosophical inquiries and explorations. In the discussion, instead of using conversational language such as "want to" or "fond of," Nagel uses the much more serious and academic "attachment" and "penchant" in his preface, making the description more formal.

Yet a third language style we identified in our sample is a relatively formal-while-sincere tone coupled with descriptive language, which might be used when authors address those who helped in the process of writing. In the preface of *Everyday Mysticism*, for example, as Ariel Glucklich refers to her professor's approach to religion, she writes, "we must leave behind the distraction of congealed concepts postulating entities different from the living person before us" (ix). Here "congeal", "postulating", and "entities," not commonly used in spoken language but conveying a poetic sense, indicate that obstinate ideas should not guide our assumptions about unfamiliar groups of people, presenting an academic and formal description of an approach to the study of religion. By mentioning the approach developed by her professor, Glucklich expresses her gratitude and appreciation to him.

Substance of the Scholarly Preface: Three Rhetorical Moves

The formal features described above set some basic conventions for preface writing, and language analysis shows common tones used in preface writing, giving scholarly prefaces their recognized format and language. Meanwhile, a preface's substance or content aims to build relationships between readers and writers before the actual academic discussion of the book. Generally speaking, the substance of scholarly prefaces includes three

rhetorical moves, each associated with a corresponding focus. While a move may include a formal, structural dimension, we found these so closely tied to their corresponding focus and typical ideas that we have classified these as the typified substance of scholarly prefaces. The three rhetorical moves we identified each have their own focus and purpose: (1) academic interest, (2) personal anecdotes, and (3) acknowledgements.

The first of these, the *academic interest* move, usually consists of an academic discussion or direct description of the author's field of interest, mainly focusing on one or two academic questions or concepts at the core of the scholarly book. In the preface to *Words Without Meaning*, for instance, Christopher Gauker uses a discussion about basic linguistic concepts to reflect the core thesis of the book—the relationship of words and their meaning as well as the role those meanings play in foundational language study. In this discussion, Gauker first shows the interpretations of other scholars: "linguistic communication involves" both "the meanings that speakers express" and "the meanings that words possess" (ix). Gauker then continues his academic discussion by opposing these conventional interpretations with his distinct approach: "it is a mistake to try to explain linguistic communication in terms of meanings of these two kinds" (x). The topic of this academic discussion reflects Gauker's key theory that the propositional meaning of words has no role in foundational language theory. Meanwhile, the theory as the foundation of the book is also reflected the title of the book. As the example above illustrates, the "academic interest" move in a preface summarizes the essential ideas of a scholarly book, offering a concise

introduction to key academic topics discussed in later chapters.

Unlike authors' discussions of their academic interests, the second move we identified, the *personal anecdote* move, includes authors' crucial life stories as their content because the goal of this move is to interest readers and to emphasize the value of the books through real life stories. For instance, the preface of Angela Friederici's *Language in Our Brain* starts with a description of the first day during her student internship: "On one of my first days in the clinic I was confronted with a patient who was not able to speak in full sentences. He seemed quite intelligent, was able to communicate his needs, but did so in utterances in which basically all grammatical items were missing—similar to a telegram" (xi). With this brief story, the reader's attention is drawn. Thus, Friederici directly links this personal experience to the value of her academic interest: "it immediately occurred to me: if grammar can fail separately after a brain injury, it must be represented separately in the brain" (xi). This brief life scenario interests readers, effectively helping those who haven't had similar experiences to see the possible connections between the brain and language. Moreover, by mentioning the existence of such phenomena after brain injuries, Friederici demonstrates the value of the book for enhancing people's understanding of how the brain handles languages and for advancing the possibility of developing treatments for those patients based on the fundamental connections between brain and language.

The third rhetorical move we identified in our sample, *acknowledgement*, treats readers as those who witness the author's final success in the creation of the book. In this move, authors share their gratitude to helpers in the process so that the

relationship between author and reader is not limited to communication of knowledge, but also to communication of emotions and feelings outside the strict purview of the academic discussion. In our example, five of the nine books included different styles of acknowledgements. One common style was to end the prefaces with a list of the names of those to whom the author is indebted. At the end of the preface to *Space and Place*, for example, Yi-fu Tuan shares, "I do have specific debts, and it gives me pleasure to acknowledge them. I am deeply grateful to J. B. Jackson and P. W. Porter for their encouragement of my fumbling efforts" (v). The method Tuan employs to acknowledge others begins with listing out the names of the people whom he is indebted. Then, Tuan briefly summarizes the specific events for which he feels thankful. The other common approach is to address a particular person in the body of the preface. For instance, the preface of László MÉRŐ's *The Logic of Miracles* also mentions that "[his] impulse to write this book came when [he] read Nassim Nicholas Taleb's bestseller *The Black Swan*" (vii). While reading, MÉRŐ struggled to understand the mathematical models Taleb described by but was also "impressed by Taleb's interesting and profound ideas" (vii), a statement which clearly indicates the importance of *The Black Swan* and implies MÉRŐ's gratitude to Taleb in his praising words.

The three rhetorical moves vary in their focus and purpose, but they all aim to build connections with readers ahead of the main content of the book by introducing the topic and emphasizing the value and significance, whether personal or academic, of the book. While the three moves are relatively

stable in preface writing, the selection and the arrangement of the three moves are relatively flexible. For instance, the preface of *Space and Place* employs two moves—academic interests and acknowledgement—while Friederici in *Language in Our Brain* combines personal anecdotes and acknowledgement. However, the combination of moves is not the only possible strategy. In the preface of *Mortal Questions*, for example, Nagel only uses academic interest throughout the preface. The sequence of the moves is similarly variable. The prefaces of both *Space and Place* and *Language in Our Brain* place the acknowledgement move at the end, while academic interests and personal anecdotes often start the preface. Sequential appearances are also not the only possible employments of the three moves: the mixture of two moves are also possible. For instance, the preface of *The Logic of Miracles* integrates the author’s experience of reading a book with an academic discussion about the idea of “Extremistan.”

In sum, the conventions of form and substance identified in our sampling reflect the stable, regularized features of scholarly prefaces, such as their typical location in books, their typical lengths, their common uses of language and their three common rhetorical moves. These conventions also point to a relational function for the genre, specifically between authors and their readers. At the same time, the wide variations across prefaces also underscore the genre’s flexibility without fully answering why it should be so.

Intimacy as a Function of Audience

Describing the general features of prefaces in terms of form and substance suggests that the main goal of writing a preface is to provide a “preamble” before the main content of the book and to establish a connection

with readers. Nevertheless, as we noted earlier, among the three elements of genres, which are form, substance, and situation (Campbell and Jamieson), rhetorical genre theory tends to regard situation as the most important (Miller, “Genre”). Inspired by this insight, we transition here from analyzing form and substance to investigating situation—specifically audience—and addressing the second part of our research question, namely what contributes to the tremendous flexibility of this genre?

Our analysis, in fact, points to authors’ varying relationships with their audiences, and specifically their levels of intimacy and social purposes with those audiences, as an explanation for the notable flexibility of this genre. In this study, we define the term “intimacy” as the incorporation of personal disclosure rather than pure academic discussion in a scholarly preface. As shown in Figure 1, we find that as the range of audience expands from a narrow range of scholars out to the general public, preface authors paradoxically display higher levels of intimacy. These different levels of intimacies attract appropriate readers by intriguing them, and drive away readers who are less relevant. Moreover, as the range of audience changes, the social purpose of scholarly prefaces changes as well.

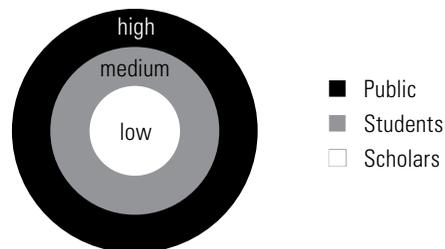


Figure 1
Audience and levels of intimacy in the scholarly book genre

1. Scholars: For the Purpose of Peer Communication

Intuitively, the audience of scholarly prefaces always includes scholars. When the target audience is solely scholars, people with limited background knowledge are excluded and the preface acts as a platform for scholars to realize peer communication by exchanging thoughts and comments. In our sampling, three of the nine prefaces had a target audience limited to scholars. In *Words Without Meaning*, Gauker starts the preface, as well as the whole book, with the sentence, “This book presents a critique of, and an alternative to, the received view of the nature of linguistic communication” (ix). Similarly, Méré notes in *The Logic of Miracles* that the purpose of writing this book is to challenge Nassim Nicholas Taleb’s work named *The Black Swan* by providing correct mathematical concepts (vii). In a third example, the preface to *Mortal Questions*, Nagel explicitly refutes “ethical theory” in philosophy and stresses the importance of philosophy in theoretical settings instead of pragmatic ones (xiii). Based on these three examples, we observed that scholars often take a stand when writing to peers. Specifically, the author often expresses doubt about another theory, which is either put forward by another scholar, or acknowledged by the majority of other scholars, and then offers alternative methods or explanations. It is not uncommon to see conflicting ideas and heated debates in academic fields: according to Miller, a rhetorical community is characterized by “both agreement and dissent” and is “fundamentally heterogeneous and contentious” (“Rhetorical” 74). Schryer also notes that “discourse (and consequently genre) is itself a site of . . . contradiction and consequent transformation” (210). Without

contradiction, knowledge cannot be modified, and society becomes stagnant.

In this circumstance, scholarly prefaces act as a platform to initiate peer communication among scholars studying the same topic and to facilitate transformation in their focused discipline. The preface serves to draw the attention of the specific group of scholars involved in advancing knowledge on the subject, and the author anticipates that they will respond through formal written works, such as research articles or scholarly books, after finishing the whole book. Such specialized talk between scholars excludes others and creates barriers for those who lack background knowledge.

In all three examples, the lack of personal disclosure and the mention of other scholarly work without detailed explanation represents a relatively low level of intimacy. Yet such conversation—among a small circle of peers—we might have predicted to favor a high level of intimacy. Why then are the people who are included treated with a less intimate attitude? We suggest that scholars are presenting counterarguments that could be potentially divisive if they were framed personally. For instance, in *The Logic of Miracles*, Méré uses straightforward terms such as “incomprehensible” and “implausible” to describe Taleb’s ideas (vii). A more personalized intimacy would probably create an effect of personalizing the argument itself; the author likely feels able to make a more powerful argument by not employing an intimate attitude toward those whom he or she is responding to.

2. Students: For the Purpose of Pedagogy

Somewhat counterintuitively, when the target audience for scholarly prefaces expands to include students, we found authors more

likely to display a higher level of intimacy than with their peers. This was especially apparent when examining authors' usage of personal anecdotes, such as those in the prefaces to *Linguistic Anthropology*, *Language in Our Brain*, and *Everyday Mysticism*.

In the preface of *Linguistic Anthropology*, Duranti explicitly mentions the target audience of the book—students who are taking “upper-division undergraduate courses and introductory graduate seminars” (xvi). By spending a whole paragraph talking about his innate and everlasting thirst for linguistics at the very end of the preface, Duranti encourages students to look for things that they are truly passionate about so that they, too, can be motivated to keep digging deeper into their chosen academic field. A similar example comes from the preface of *Language in Our Brain*, which is mentioned above in the section focus of the three moves (Friederici xi). Friederici's inspiration for her insights on the relationship between brain and language was sparked by her seemingly tedious and repetitive work. In this way, students are encouraged to be patient and observant so that they, too, will discover novel phenomena in their field of study one day. In addition, in the preface of *Everyday Mysticism*, Glucklich shares the story of how she gradually developed novel ideas when she was studying at Harvard, reading other scholars' works, doing research in Neot Smadar, and so on (ix-xiv). It is worth mentioning that when narrating her story, Glucklich employs a series of rhetorical questions. For instance, “[she] wondered: what might such an approach [of studying religion by encountering persons] look like in practice? How does one translate [this] insight into a ‘method?’”, as well as “So what might I take away from [this

encounter]?” (x). The reason to include those rhetorical questions becomes clear as she subsequently describes how she ruminated, investigated, and found the answer. These rhetorical questions not only contribute to the flow of the article, but also emphasize the importance of self-inquiry and spontaneous exploration woven throughout the gradual development of her perspectives. It is clear that critical thinking skills and the thirst for knowledge are the essential takeaways Glucklich sees as relevant for students' developmental stage before they become scholars.

The choice of employing these personal experiences is well grounded as long as it serves a purpose, which we argue is in these cases pedagogical. In addition to the main relational social-action purpose, prefaces can also achieve subsidiary purposes, such as pedagogy. When the target audience includes students, these personal anecdotes are valuable because students should understand why they are reading this book before they start reading it. Although students are mainly responsible for acquiring knowledge, at the same time, they should also think critically to develop their own understandings. Even peer academics are lifelong students, and learning how other peers generate ideas can potentially help them think differently and spark new ideas. Therefore, by providing personal anecdotes, the authors are encouraging readers to be curious and learn actively while reading the remaining chapters, just as what they have kept doing throughout their scholarly lives.

It is worth mentioning that the preface of Chomsky's *On Nature and Language*, which is also aimed at students, exemplifies an exception. In most cases, the preface is written by the author of the book, and the foreword

which precedes the preface is written by an editor or colleague. *On Nature and Language*, though, is an unusual book: it is transcripts of three lectures given by Chomsky and of an interview conducted with Chomsky by the book's editors, Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi, along with a significant introductory essay by the two editors. The book's preface is written by the editors rather than by Chomsky. The fact that the users of this genre are not completely constrained reinforces the flexibilities of genres again. Since the editors could not speculate about Chomsky's motivations for the gradual development of his unique argument and writing, they limited themselves to facts such as outlining the structure of the book, listing the content of each chapter, and providing background knowledge. Though it may seem less intriguing than stories, it is sufficient for educating students and equipping them with the necessary concepts to finish the rest of the book.

In all of these four examples, authors put more focus on pedagogy as they intend to guide student readers on their learning journey and to help them develop critical thinking skills. We argue that this higher level of intimacy results from authors being willing to share their own learning experiences so as to inspire students and even other scholars.

3. General Public: For the Purpose of Relaxation

Although a scholarly book written for a general audience seems like a contradiction in terms, within the samples we collected, several prefaces were clearly aimed at broader audiences despite being published by university presses. When the range of target audience continues to expand and includes the general public, some readers now have

no background knowledge and may quickly lose interest if given too much specialized information at once. As the audience determines the "boundaries of the genre" (Schryer 212), it is critical for a genre to meet the audience's "expectations and predictions" (Freadman 45). For the general public, the purpose of reading the book is for recreation and relaxation. They expect to find the experience pleasurable.

Writing to the general public, Judson Brewer notices this phenomenon as he employs a rather casual tone when starting the preface. He provides a vivid and intriguing personal anecdote about how he erroneously self-diagnosed his symptoms of frequently going to the bathroom and contributed it to a specific bacterial infection. Instead, it turned out that his physical symptoms were due to mental illness. When narrating the story, Brewer uses a conversational tone, light-hearted description, and relatively informal diction such as "I [need] to get a bathroom quickly if nature called." and "Clever me, I self-diagnosed my issues" (xxi). Then, when he went to the doctor, the doctor asked if he was stressed. He replied: "No way! I run, I eat healthy food" (xxi). This dramatic and emotional diction and phrasing shortens the distance between Brewer and his readers, creating a relaxed interaction. The author's experiences may resonate with the audience since many people do the same thing when they are feeling sick by searching on websites, and the results usually frightens them. Thus, such a compelling story hooks readers' interest. Hence, we believe that the author who writes to the general public displays the highest level of intimacy to fulfill the audience's expectations and to encourage them to keep reading.

While it is counterintuitive that the broadest audience made up of the most strangers is treated with greater intimacy than a small audience made up of peers, our analysis suggests that as the author incorporates a greater extent of personal disclosure, the more likely he or she can attract a broader audience and welcome less professional addressees.

Conclusion

Using the theoretical lens of rhetorical genre studies, our analysis has investigated the stability and flexibility of scholarly prefaces in order to enrich our understanding of written scholarly communication. Specifically, we have focused on the general form and substance of the genre of the scholarly book preface, and the role of target audience in determining its tremendous flexibility. In general, we found that the formal and substantive features of the genre performed a relational social action, with the genre acting as a bridge that connects readers with other parts of a book by inviting them into the author's personal experience, academic thinking, and critical moments in his or her career. Such connections effectively address the value or significance of the scholarly books' academic topics, both personally and more broadly, and simultaneously introduce readers to the core content of the scholarly book.

To make these connections, authors develop their prefaces based on a conventionalized form and three established rhetorical moves. Specifically, personal anecdotes reveal the relationships between authors' academic research and their lives; academic discussions display the focus of the books and authors' approaches to academic questions or concepts; and acknowledgments let readers "meet" those people who participated or inspired the

creation of books, highlighting helpers' insights and expressing authors' gratitude. To sum up, the preface becomes an important section which contains the essential background information about the author and the book. Thus, prefaces are more than a piece of writing, but a relational social action based on the intertwined flexibility and the stability of form and substance.

Beyond these general functions of introducing readers to the books and connecting with the main content of the book, scholarly prefaces, as a relational social action, represent dynamic interactions between readers and the writers. Specifically, we found that preface writers paradoxically display higher levels of intimacy when facing broader audiences. Differences in levels of intimacy are due to distinctive purposes of scholarly prefaces subsidiary to their general relational social purpose. These additional goals can be categorized into peer communication for scholars, education for students, and engagement for the public. To realize those specific purposes, authors employ different strategies to meet the target audience's needs and expectations. This idea is supported by the inclusion of personal anecdotes and the usage of a more casual tone when the target audience includes students and the general public, which seems less conventional for scholarly prefaces. The preface, however, is the perfect place for authors to share personal stories since they can use a different stance and voice than the book itself—the preface stands apart from the book, something its Roman-numeral page numbers reinforce. The inclusion of those individual lives is also a reflection of the flexibility of genres. Based on those distinctive strategies aiming for different purposes, readers will also alter their reading approach to match

the communicational goals they identify from the prefaces.

Users of a genre typically share a central goal: in this case, to provide a transition into the main content of the book and to discuss the author's new scholarly perspectives. However, what we have found is that the defined target audience creates subsidiary purposes and gives users of the genre new roles. In the genre of scholarly prefaces, when writing to scholars, the author acts as a peer who merits professionalism and credibility to promote more effective academic communication. When writing to students and the general public, however, the author acts as a mentor or fellow traveler, trying to attract readers' interests. It is important for users of a genre to identify their roles and to accomplish the corresponding tasks by employing appropriate strategies. Thus, the variation of sub-purposes in accordance with the target audience reflects the flexibility of scholarly prefaces as authors choose their own strategies of "what is said, not said, and how represented" (Freadman 50). Not all genres possess the same level of

flexibility as scholarly prefaces. Such a high level of the flexibility is grounded in the need of prefaces to build relations with readers both personally and academically.

Not only do sub-purposes reflect the flexibility of the preface genre, the essence of scholarly writing as a social action based on interactions between people also points to the flexibility in scholarly writing. Indeed, given the purposes of scholarly writing, exchange of academic ideas is crucial. However, the genre's social actors are individuals from diverse backgrounds, and scholarly writing is an interaction between groups of people with distinctive past experiences. Thus, the personal aspect of author is an inalienable element in his or her academic development. Meanwhile, understanding an author's critical personal experience may even better help readers to reflect on their own academic ideas. When viewed through this lens, the persistence of a scholarly genre that includes personal stories in a scholarly context seems not only justified, but essential to academic communications.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Gwendolynne Reid for her extraordinary support, patience and encouragement throughout this challenging research project. She guided us to think critically, collaborate effectively, and grow progressively as writers.

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