

Bawarshi, Genre and Invention Ch. 5

things to keep in mind

- Bawarshi is interested in invention, and the way that invention (the beginning of writing) is not fully located in the individual, but also exists in the genre. So we write and are written by genres; our actions, responses, writing are shaped by the genres we locate ourselves within
- He uses uptake explicitly, but also implicitly throughout the chapter
- This chapter is good for thinking through power relations and how they are articulated through genre; you might ask yourself:
 - what are the desired uptakes of the genres that make my genre possible?
 - what are the consequences for failing to conform to the desired uptake (on accident? on purpose?)

quotes and examples

“Invention, as such, was not so much an act of turning inward as it was an act of locating oneself socially, a way of participating in the shared desires, values, and meanings already existing in the world” (113)

“Genres are the conceptual realms within which individuals recognize and experience situations at the same time as they are the rhetorical instruments by and through which individuals participate within and enact situations” (113)

- genres are topoi in this formulation — “sites of invention”

“The writing prompt not only *moves* the student writer to action; it also *cues* the student writer to enact a certain kind of action” (127)

- “The prompt situates student writers within a genred site of action in which students acquire and negotiate desires, subjectivities, commitments, and relations before they begin to write”
- This is Bawarshi’s more complex notion of uptake — the writing prompt does more than *prompt* a response, it also reflects and “reinscribes desires and assumptions” embedded within it.

“The prompt is a genre whose explicit function is to make another genre, the student essay, possible” (130)

- this is uptake
- but it also tries to make only certain student essays possible; it desires specific uptakes that coerce students into compliance with consequences for failure (i.e. poor grades)

“To a great extent, students have to accept the position(s) made available to them in the prompt if they are to carry out the assignment successfully. As all genres do, the prompt invites an uptake commensurate with its ideology” (133)

- this is a way to understand how power is articulated through genres; think of how a job advertisement can force you into a certain articulation of yourself (through genres of applications); this reflects the power differential between those doing the hiring and those doing the applying.

“interiorized uptake” — a sleight of hand that makes the desires articulated by the prompt appear to be their own self-prompted desires to write (140). This is a rhetorical sleight of hand that many students struggle with

“One way teachers can help students reposition themselves within such spheres of agency is to make genres analytically visible to students so that students can participate within and negotiate them more meaningfully and critically.” (141)

- sounds like this class....coincidence?

“Writing is not only a skill, but a way of being and acting in the world in a particular time and place in relation to others” (141)

- this could be the motto of our entire class

key terms and definitions

- *invention* — in classical rhetoric, the process of creating a speech or text that responds to a particular situation; for Bawarshi, invention is not a process that begins in one’s own head, but rather is a process of locating (inventing) one’s self within genres; we both write and are written by genres
- *topoi* — in classical rhetoric, means “commonplaces.” They are the sites in which rhetors (writers, speakers, communicators) could “locate the available means of persuasion for any given situation” (112-13).
- *uptake* — see Freadman for definition; for Bawarshi, crucially, uptake accounts for the values, beliefs, and assumptions of a given genre
- *occluded genres* — “genres that operate behind the scenes and often out of more public sight, yet play a critical role in operationalizing the commitments and goals of the dominant genre” (think of Spinuzzi’s ‘unofficial’ genres like post-it notes and annotations on lists).