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Academic Writing, Genres and Philosophy

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> Plato had to distinguish what he was doing from all other discursive practices that laid claim to wisdom. It is for this reason that, in dialogue after dialogue, Plato deliberately set out to define and defend a new and quite peculiar mode of living and thinking. This alone, he claimed deserved the title of 'philosophy'.
>
> —Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*

> Philosophy is expressed—and for this reason is fully made real—within a definite literary genre; and it must be emphasized that prior to this expression it did not exist except in a precarious way or, rather, only as intention and attempt. Philosophy is thus intrinsically bound to the literary genre, not into which it is poured, but, we would do better to say, in which it is incarnated.
>
> —Julián Marías, 'Literary Genres in Philosophy'

> Philosophical writing, as a genre, redefined itself in the mid-to-late 17th century when philosophers decided they needed to define words rather than things. Because philosophy then could not be separated from science generally, the 1660 Royal Society helped 'professionalize' language in this way. It stole much fire from literary writing. It also forced literary genres into being because, after all, poets were no longer writing about either things (as encyclopedists did) or words (an expertise philosophers laid new claim to). What was the poet's 'profession', then, but writing 'drama', or 'novels', or 'essays'?
>
> —Ian Lancashire, 'Lexicographical Meditations: A sense of genre'

Genres and Philosophy

Philosophy possesses both oral and written forms of expression. We might as well say it also possesses the practices, norms and rituals that comprise an institution and define the rules of a discourse. It is practiced in a variety of pedagogical contexts whose oral forms have been with us for a long time, remarkably assuming a kind of performative stability: the dialogue, the symposium, the address, and,

perhaps, more recently, the lecture, the seminar, the oral defense, the tutorial. Yet philosophy's pedagogies—at least those parts predominately oral and performative, if it makes sense to separate them—have remained hidden by their familiarity, to make a Wittgensteinian point. Their very familiarity is what makes them difficult to problematize as they are the taken-for-granted forms, hardly recognizable in terms of 'forms' that order our academic and institutional life. This is not to deny the intermingling of oral and written forms or the way that they reinforce each other in various sequences for different purposes, audiences and occasions. The oral forms of philosophy and academic expression have a history that is difficult to chart or even to begin to problematize.

Philosophical texts display a variety of literary forms: there are many different philosophical genres that have developed over the years which are peculiar to and transcend their age: letters, the treatise, the thesis, the confession, the meditation, the allegory, the essay, the soliloquy, the symposium, the consolation, the commentary, the disputation, and the dialogue, to name a few. These forms of philosophy have conditioned and become the basis of academic writing (and assessment) within both the university and higher education more generally. Within pedagogical environments, these forms take on new force as part of institutional and scholarship life, patched together into a set of practices that determines academic rituals and routines of the everyday. Some forms and their associated 'styles' (both written and performative) are 'individual' and some are group styles and truly collective. Since the cultural, linguistic (discursive), and practice turns of the 1970s and in subsequent decades greater attention has been paid to the relations between academic writing, genres and philosophy, and also to questions of style, genre, form and their historicity and materiality. These are themes strongly pursued by some of the leading philosophers of the age, including, Stanley Cavell and Jacques Derrida on the relations of philosophy and literature, and Richard Rorty on post-analytic (narrative) genres in philosophy or 'philosophy as a kind of writing' as he put it in a famous essay on Derrida (Rorty, 1982).[1] There is a certain materiality of writing and of its academic forms that for philosophy and history (and other characteristic forms of the humanities) pose a peculiar relation to time—to its claims to universality and its ability to transcend the local and the particular.

Since Northrop Frye (1957) originally used the theory of genre to differentiate types of literature and to consider whether a work may be considered to belong to a class of related works it has been received in a range of related fields including history, academic writing, and film and television studies.[2] Bakhtin (1986) was an early innovator who formulated an influential theory about speech genres and is justly famous for his account of the *bildungsroman* and its significance in the history of realism. (His works only became available in English translation after 1968.) Only recently has the concept of genre been applied to philosophy and to the question of philosophical form, especially by thinkers like Derrida (1980) in 'The Law of Genre' where he initiates and investigates the uses and limits of genre as mode of classification and analysis. Derrida argues that particular texts participate in rather than belong to certain genres by showing that the 'mark of genre' is not itself a member of a genre or type. He ends his essay by drawing attention to the

act of classification itself and the way in which taxonomies themselves require careful scrutiny as to their history.[3]

Derrida's original dissertation concerned the form of the thesis. He completed his Thèse d'État in 1980 and the work was subsequently published in English translation as 'The Time of a Thesis—Punctuations'. Not only did it self-consciously provide autobiographical insertions in the philosophical tradition as part of the defense of his thesis at the Sorbonne but also his introduction to Husserlian phenomenology at the time of writing. The thesis form itself and the kind of academic writing associated with it quickly became an object of criticism: 'The very idea of a thetic presentation, of positional or oppositional logic, the idea of a position ... was one of the essential parts of the system that was under deconstructive criticism' (Derrida, 1983, p. 35). Inevitably, the thesis form and its historical accretions (and the dissertation) are simultaneously forms of academic writing and knowledge. The materiality of the form becomes central as we begin to reflect on the history of the form and its interrelationships with the doctorate *per se* and with PhD educational practices, with the oral defense, and with acceptable forms of criticism.

Another aspect of Derrida's (1974) work in *Of Grammatology* is also useful, especially the historical and metaphysical principles that determine the place of writing versus speech, and the way in which the speech/writing opposition can be mapped onto a series of ideologically loaded pairs that are constitutive of modern Western culture: speech/writing; natural/artificial; spontaneous/constructed; original/copy; interior to the mind/exterior to the mind; intuitive/learned. I do not have the time to track out all that follows from establishing a science of writing in Derrida's terms or indeed, how scientificity (objectivity, memory etc.) itself is an aspect of writing and a condition of a certain episteme and age of the university. Derrida teaches us that the Western philosophical tradition has denigrated writing as an inferior copy of the spoken word: speech is more immediate and transparent and draws on interior consciousness, whereas writing is dead and abstract. The written word loses its spiritual connection to the self and the written word, untethered from the speaking subject, is cast adrift from personality and intentionality.

In the English-speaking world, Berel Lang's work in the early 1980s was path breaking on the poetics of philosophical discourse. As he says in the Preface to *Philosophy and the Art of Writing* (1983) 'philosophical discourse is a form of making as well as of knowing', 'the process of making ... is a version of praxis or doing', and 'the role of a persona ... within the work is a condition of its intelligibility' (p. 9). As he goes on to explain in the first chapter, while 'the history of Western philosophy is predominantly a history of written texts ... philosophers have lived in that history and looked back at it as if a dependence on such unusual and complex artifacts had nothing to do with the work of philosophy itself' (p. 19).

The recent collection *Literary Form, Philosophical Content: Historical Studies in Philosophical Genre* (Lavery, 2008) is based on these insights and sits within a line of thinking strongly influenced by Berel Lang who provides the Epilogue. In 'The Ethics of Style in Philosophical Discourse' Lang examines forms of writing in which the author addresses the reader as an equal or as an authority. The first two

essays, 'Platonic Preludes' by Dorter and Gallop, investigate by turn skepticism and Plato's student-teacher dramas and the specificity of the Platonic dialogue. The other essays in the section 'Beyond Dialogue' take on Aesop as a form of philosophical biography and philosophy as prayer, commentary, disputation, political manual, miscellany, polemics, lecture and science fiction. As the subtitle suggests this collection provides a set of historical studies in philosophical genre. In one sense, the form of an edited collection ideally suits this topic and this set of essays advances the field considerably by providing a comprehensive demonstration of the variety of philosophical genres. The introductory essay carefully outlines scholarly interest in philosophical genre. As the editors indicate: 'Genre can function as an interpretive tool for elucidating details of a work's meaning and purpose and ... it can function as an analytic tool for unstitching a work at its seams' (p. 6).

Hayden White (2003), the US historian strongly influenced by Foucault who worked out of a narratology perspective, has worked on genre ambiguities in relation to history and literary theory, and the problem of its 'resistance to theory': 'Genre', he argues, 'is a construction of thought more metaphysical than scientific in its founding formulation' (p. 600). Genre and genre-fication are open to change and destabilization as new hybrids flower.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) use the term 'genre knowledge' to refer to 'an individual's repertoire of situationally appropriate responses to recurrent situations—from immediate encounters to distanced communication through the medium of print, and more recently, the electronic media'. They argue:

> Our thesis is that genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can he manipulated according to the conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary activities. (p. 3)

Their combined intention is to study 'the textual character of disciplinary communication' by examining both 'the situated actions of writers, and the communicative systems in which disciplinary actors participate'. They state:

> From this perspective we propose that what microlevel studies of actors' situated actions frequently depict as individual processes, can also be interpreted (from the macrolevel) as communicative acts within a discursive network or system. Genre is the concept that enables us to envision the interpenetration of process and system in disciplinary communication. (p. x)

Their theoretical view is based on grounded theory in the sense that they have engaged in the systematic observation of the professional activities of individual writers. But they also explain that their theoretical framework is informed by Gidden's structuration theory in sociology, rhetorical studies, interpretive anthropology, ethnomethodology, Bakhtin's theory of speech genres, Vygotsky's theory of ontogenesis, and Russian activity theory 'as it has shaped the movement in U.S. psychology called situated or everyday cognition' (p. 3).

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995, p. 4) highlight features of the genre concept as follows:

1) *Dynamism*. Genres are dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give its coherence and meaning. Genres change over time in response to their users' sociocognitive needs.

2) *Situatedness*. Our knowledge of genres is derived from and embedded in our participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life. As such, genre knowledge is a form of 'situated cognition' that continues to develop as we participate in the activities of the ambient culture.

3) *Form and content*. Genre knowledge embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point of time.

4) *Duality of structure*. As we draw on genre rules to engage in professional activities, we *constitute* social structures (in professional, institutional, and organizational contexts) and simultaneously *reproduce* these structures.

5) *Community ownership*. Genre conversations signal a discourse on community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology.

Their approach in terms of situated cognition provides the means for the investigation of 'the recent evolution of the scientific journal article, the primary genre for the dissemination of new scientific knowledge' (p. 27). They conclude.

1) During the past half century, scientists have come under increasing pressure from the information explosion and, therefore, have been accessing and reading specialized journal articles in an increasingly selective manner, searching for the most newsworthy information; this reading behavior is not unlike that of ordinary people accessing and reading newspaper articles.

2) To accommodate this reading behavior, the genre conventions used in scientific journals have undergone gradual changes.

3) The dynamism that can be observed in this diachronic textual evidence of the past half century reflects changes in the way the scientific community goes about its work. (p. 42)

They investigate novelty and intertextuality in a biologists' experimental article suggesting 'You are what you cite' (chapter 3), and 'Sites of Contention; Sites of Negotiation: Textual dynamics of peer review in the construction of scientific knowledge' (chapter 4) as well as scientific forums (chapter 5) and gatekeeping at conventions, before focusing on 'An Apprenticeship Tale of a Doctoral Student' (chapter 7). In a subsequent chapter Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) apply their method to learning to speak and to write and to special classes of genres known as curriculum, pedagogical, or classroom genres. Their approach to genre knowledges as forms of mediated cognition thus provide a method and approach to understanding practices of academic writing (see also Bhatia, 2004).

These themes and related questions have been pursued in relation to geopolitics of writing (see Canagarajah, 2002) and to new hybrid electronic forms of academic discourse. This book takes these questions, in part, as central and significant

to understanding and investigating pedagogy, and the history and future of its institutions.

Academic Writing and a Brief History of the Essay

> 'Tis the custom of pedagogues to be eternally thundering in their pupil's ears, as they were pouring into a funnel, while the business of the pupil is only to repeat what the others have said: now I would have a tutor to correct this error, and, that at the very first, he should, according to the capacity he has to deal with, put it to the test, permitting his pupil himself to taste things, and of himself to discern and choose them, sometimes opening the way to him, and sometimes leaving him to open it for himself; that is, I would not have him alone to invent and speak, but that he should also hear his pupil speak in turn.
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> —Montaigne, 'Of the Education of Children', 1575

Academic writing takes many different standard forms based upon the ubiquitous essay, and research paper. The academic essay now most often takes the form of the journal article that includes an abstract and key words and varies in length anything from 5–10 thousand words with one or more authors. The concept of the essay and its form comes from the French *essai* and derives from the French infinitive *essayer*, 'to try' or 'to attempt' but also from the Latin *exigere*, 'to drive out, to try, or to examine'. Montaigne's *Essais*, published in two volumes in 1580, are often held to be the first and definitive examples of the form.[4] Montaigne, inspired by Plutarch's *Moral Works*, used the term to characterize these essays as 'attempts' or 'trials' to express his thoughts adequately in writing. Montaigne certainly popularized the genre of the essay as a literary form. His stated goal in 'The author to the reader' is to describe man and himself with total frankness:

> *I desire thereun to be delineated in mine own genuine, simple and ordinarie fashion, without contention, art or study; for it is myselfe I pourtray. My imperfections shall thus be read to the life, and my naturall forme discerned, so farre-forth as publike reverence hath permitted me. For if my fortune had beene to have lived among those nations which yet are said to live under the sweet liberty of Nature's first and uncorrupted lawes, I assure thee, I would most willingly have pourtrayed myselfe fully and naked.*
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> (http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/montaigne/)

The essay is an elastic form at least before its mutation into the primary academic genre. It has referred to works in verse such as Alexander Pope's *An Essay of Man* and as such its philosophical content precedes its literary form as a brief, concentrated and systematic reflection on a single topic written in a formal register. The form that flowered in the Renaissance under Montaigne was adopted by Francis Bacon as quintessential of the new science adequate to expressing new knowledge and truths of the new empirical science.[5] Bacon's essays are, as he says, basically 'civil

and moral counsels' that express current views in an epigrammatic, assertive and aphoristic way. In the golden age of rationalism Robert Boyle utilized the essay form as a basis for reflecting on the relations between religion and science. His *Certain Physiological Essays* (1661) was seen as adopting a new form of discourse suited to the contents of the new science. Later the form at least in title was adopted by Locke and Malthus in their extended reflections—*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Essay on the Principle of Population* culminating in the two important periodicals established by Joseph Addison & Richard Steele in the early decades of the 18th century. *The Tatler* (1709–11) and *The Spectator* (1711–12) discussed the range of current events mingled with snippets of literature, and gossip and often written in a highly ironic style.

The literary form became a pedagogical form with its adoption as a formal means of evaluating student's comprehension and writing where they are asked to explain or comment on a topic or proposition in the form of an essay. In this process of institutionalization the form of the essays underwent a pedagogical formalization, moving away from its literary characteristics to emphasis a logical and factual treatment of a topic in an objective register that until recently discouraged the voice, views or identification of the identity of the author and, in particular, the use of the first person singular. There is more pedagogical history revealed in the transmutation of the essay genre from its literary to its formal pedagogical form than can be imagined.

The academic article based on the essay cannot be separated from the institutions of the academic periodical or journal which has a relatively short history beginning (to all intents and purposes) with *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in 1665 with Henry Oldenburg as its first editor and featuring his correspondence with Europe's leading scientists. The academic journal article, which is still the main form of scientific communication, is also defined in part by a set of evolving academic practices that includes peer review. With the Internet the future of the journal is undergoing a huge transformation especially as databases, manuals, reference works, guides, indexes, and full-text articles became available in public knowledge banks.

The History of Scientific Communication

The history of scientific communication demonstrates that the typical form of the scientific article presented in print-based journals in essay form is a result of development over two centuries beginning in the 17th century with the emergence of learned societies and cooperation among scientists. *Journal des Sçavans*, the first journal, was published in Paris in 1665 (Fjällbrant, 1997) as a 12 page quarto pamphlet, appearing only a few months before the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, the oldest journal in continuous production.[6] The development of the journal and scientific norms of cooperation, forms of academic writing and the norm of peer review was part and parcel of the institutionalization of science, first with the development of the model of the Royal Society that was emulated elsewhere in Europe and the US, and then later institutionalization received a strong impetus

from the emergence of the modern research university beginning with the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1810 in the reforms of Humboldt. This institutionalization of science necessarily also was a part of the juridical-legal system of writing that grew up around the notion of a professional scientist and academic, the notion of the academic author, the idea of public science or research, the ownership of ideas and academic recognition for the author who claimed originality for a discovery, set of results or piece of scholarship (Kaufer & Carley, 1993).

The history of scientific communication, even in the post-war period, is a mammoth undertaking where technological developments and the new paradigm of open knowledge production seem to outstrip our capacity to give an adequate account of them. There is so much experimentation by way of new electronic journals launched and new projects being established that it is near impossible to document even the range in its diversity let alone theorize its main characteristics and implications for modes of scientific communication. One source, perhaps the most comprehensive, provides a bibliography on scholarly electronic publishing that runs to 1,400 items in English under such categories as: economic issues; electronic books & texts; electronic serials; general works; legal issues; library issues; new publishing models; publisher issues; repositories, e-prints and AOI (Bailey, 2006; see also 2001).

The history of electronic scientific communication itself is now nearly 20 years old if we date the process from the appearance of the first electronic journals. The electronic revolution of those first utopian years in the early 1990s with predictions of the collapse of the traditional print-based system, the demise of academic publishers, and the replacement by electronic journals has not yet come to pass. As Valauskas (1997) argues 'electronic scholarly journals differentiate themselves from printed scholarly journals by accelerated peer review, combined with mercurial production schemes ... The sheer interactive nature of digital journals ... and the ability to access the complete archives of a given title on a server make that sort of publishing a significant departure from the long established traditions of print'. He concludes 'Electronic scholarly journals are indeed different from traditional print scholarly journals, but not as radically different as some would argue. They are different in terms of process, but not in terms of the ancient traditions of peer review and verification'.

The form, style and economics of scientific communication were to undergo another set of changes to their socio-technical ecology and infrastructure. The pre-history of the emergence of electronic forms of scientific communication can be traced back at least to Ted Nelson's notion of 'hypertext' which he coined in 1963 and went on to develop as a hypertext system. Some account of the impact of computers on writing is required including the shift from: literacy to orality and the way that computers re-introduce oral characteristics into writing; linearity to connectivity; fixity to fluidity; and passivity to interactivity (Ferris, 2002). Jay David Bolter's (1991) *Writing Space: The computer, hypertext and the history of writing* is the seminal text that explores the computer's place in the history of symbolic (textual) media. The consequences of the networking of science and culture have yet to be worked through fully yet certainly as Bolter points out the

new definition of literacy is synonymous with computer literacy and while it is the case that the computer signifies the end of traditional print literacy it does not signify the end of literacy. The Web has now spawned a whole set of new media genres and forms and the Internet has been accepted into education enthusiastically and in a way that previous technologies like television were not. We have not begun to identify systematically the way these new media forms and the development of visual literacy have and will impact upon scientific communication but already there have been some telling signs (see Woolgar, 2000; Nentwich, 2003).

Standardizing Academic Writing

Academic writing also employs standard pedagogical forms of the dissertation and the thesis and the normal fare of academic life is based upon the conference paper. Also in this regard we can mention the book chapter, book review, the translation, the resume, the explication, as well as the academic monograph itself. In addition, pedagogical forms of academic writing include the reading list, the 'handout' as well as numerous forms that include encyclopedic works and other summaries of knowledge, anthologies, catalogues, experiments, and even forms of data collection.

'Academic writing' as a theme, topic or field most often appears in manuals, guides, or programs that purport to teach its various forms or genres through the stipulation of general rules or tips focusing on essay writing. In this form of pedagogy the emphasis falls very much on 'the practical' or practice, offering advice about stages of the writing process (planning and organizing the essay through to final copy), sometimes focusing on its constituent elements of paragraphs or sentences. Sometimes it includes a preliminary introduction to types of academic writing, the development of a 'writing style', grammar, punctuation and composition, and advice on following a system of referencing. On the whole this pedagogical tendency is very much 'hands-on' and directed toward a number of values concerning clarity, access, elegance, simplicity, economy and communication that are implied though rarely questioned or even considered. The emphasis falls squarely on developing technique through examples, checklists, exercises, samples, the exposure of fallacies, practice workshops, and guidelines that often include implicit reference to the extra-textual: the nature of scientific objectivity, impartiality, and truth; argumentation and the rules of evidence; documentation and the provision of examples; the institution of quotation, citation and referencing; the legality of the writing system especially in relation to plagiarism.

In the best programs there is an 'integrated' approach that combines writing with 'foundations of discourse', rhetoric, reading, criticism, and creative as well as academic writing. These programs may also be based upon 'oral and written communication' emphasizing its various forms, especially its newer media forms that mix image, text and sound. A number also pay close attention to a research-orientation, thesis or dissertation writing in relation to publishing generally yet without much discussion of the history of academic publishing, the emergence of journals, or the contemporary political economy of publishing. In these programs and within academia generally there are competing standards of what constitutes

'good writing' that refer to a set of values and assumptions on the relation of language, truth and logic that go largely unquestioned.

As David Russell (2002) demonstrates, before the 1870s writing was taught as ancillary to speaking, and that, as a result, formal writing instruction was essentially training in handwriting, the mechanical process of transcribing sound to visual form. Russell examines academic writing, its origins and its teaching, from a broad institutional perspective investigating the history of little-studied genres of student writing such as the research paper, lab report, and essay examination and tracing the effects of increasing specialization on writing instruction. Today writing, especially in the US, has burgeoned into 'college composition' with a huge range of courses devoted to specialties like 'developmental writing', 'college composition', 'English composition', 'report writing for ...', and writing in various disciplines. Certainly, as Russell notes, two new ideals of academic life, research and utilitarian service, shaped writing instruction into its modern forms.

'Bad Writing'

The issue of 'bad writing' within academia has become a feature of the attack on postmodernism and the culture wars. Denis Dutton (http://www.denisdutton.com/), an American-born New Zealand academic and philosopher of art who teaches at the University of Canterbury and is the editor of *Philosophy and Literature* and the web-based *Arts & Letters Daily* (http://www.aldaily.com/), holds an annual bad writing contest sponsored by his journal. As Dutton (1999) explains in *The Wall Street Journal*:

> Having spent the past 23 years editing a scholarly journal, Philosophy and Literature, I have come to know many lucid and lively academic writers. But for every superb stylist there are a hundred whose writing is no better than adequate—or just plain awful. (http://www.denisdutton.com/language_crimes.htm)

People are encouraged to send in a sentence or two from a published work and typically some seventy entries are sent. Dutton himself and his co-editors of *Philosophy and Literature* are the judges. Round Three (1997) announced Fredric Jameson as the prime sinner; Round Four (1998) nominated Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha as the main culprits. (The competition, it seems, was an annual event from 1996 to 1999.)

The issue is an important one. What constitutes 'good' academic writing is a critical issue that *implies* a theory of literature. Unfortunately Dutton and his editors treat the topic with irony—the competition in reality is a thinly-disguised ideological attack upon the influence of postmodernism and poststructuralism on literary theory and by contrast, also a reactive defense of modernism, rationalism, humanism and 'plain writing'. It is interesting that of the criticisms against 'theory'—read 'poststructuralism'—a number of attacks have resorted to 'humor', satire or irony rather than a full theoretical or argumentative engagement. This is true of the so-called Sokal affair and 'the postmodern generator'.[7] The same intensity and

acrimony was directed against Derrida in May 1992 when 20 analytic philosophers from ten countries wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* (published 9 May) to protest and to intervene in a debate that occurred at Cambridge University over whether Jacques Derrida should be allowed to receive an honorary degree.[8] The signatories, none of whom were faculty at Cambridge, laid two very serious charges against Derrida: that his work 'does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour' and that he is not a philosopher. In elaborating these two charges, they argued, first, that while Derrida has shown 'considerable originality' (based upon a number of 'tricks' and 'gimmicks') he has, at the same time, stretched 'the normal forms of academic scholarship beyond recognition', employed 'a written style that defies comprehension', brought contemporary French philosophy into disrepute, and offered nothing but assertions that are either 'false or trivial' in a series of 'attacks upon the values of reason, truth and scholarship'. Second, they submitted, the fact that the influence of his work has been 'almost entirely in fields outside philosophy' was sufficient grounds for casting doubt on his suitability as a candidate for an honorary degree in philosophy.

How much of this blind prejudice is bound up with a lack of understanding of Derrida's project and his writing? The signatories did not seem to realize that 'clarity' in philosophical discourse also has its history and that 'normal forms of academic scholarship' have become 'normalised' or institutionalized and are in the process of changing again, especially in response to the rise of the electronic journal. The use of 'normal' here betrays a politics of philosophy writing and a deep history of the politics of writing in philosophy that stills embraces the false dichotomy of analytic and Continental philosophy in its material forms and perpetuates the myth of a universal form of writing and the dream of a universal form of language called philosophy.

Notes

1. See also Rorty's 'Philosophy as a Transitional Genre' at http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chapters/0262025671chap1.pdf.
2. For an account 'Development of the Genre Concept' see Leon Breure (2001).
3. See Daniel Chandler's *Introduction to Genre Theory* which while oriented to fiction and film, provides a series of nice observations of the philosophy of taxonomy.
4. See Montaigne's *Essays* (1575) translated by Charles Cotton at http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/montaigne/m-essays_contents.html. See also the original translation by John Florio of the three books at http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/montaigne/ first published in 1603. The e-text is prepared by Ben R. Schneider, Lawrence University, Wisconsin.
5. See *The Complete Essays* of Francis Bacon at http://www.westegg.com/bacon/
6. See the journal's website http://www.pubs.royalsoc.ac.uk/index.cfm?page=1085 where it is recorded 'The Royal Society was founded in 1660 to promote the new or experimental philosophy of that time, embodying the principles envisaged by Sir Francis Bacon. Henry Oldenburg was appointed as the first (joint) secretary to the Society and he was also the first editor of the Society's journal *Philosophical Transactions*'. The first issue appeared in 1665 and included Oldenburg's correspondence with some of Europe's scientists as well an account by Robert Boyle of a Very Odd Monstrous Calf. Subsequent early issues include 'articles' by Robert Hooke, Isaac Newton and Benjamin Franklin. The entire archive is available online.

7. See Sokal's webpage at http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/. It includes the original paper published in *Social Text* and Sokal's explanation of why he wrote the article published in *Philosophy and Literature*. The Postmodernism Generator was written by Andrew C. Bulhak and modified slightly by Pope Dubious Provenance XI using the Dada Engine, a system for generating random text from recursive grammars.

8. See also the list of Collector's Items complied by Peter Krapp at http://www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/coll.html

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