

The End of Genre: Curations and Experiments in Intentional Discourses, Brenton Faber. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022. 244 pages, \$99 eBook, \$129 softcover; \$129 hardcover. Publisher webpage: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-08747-9>

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Brenton Faber's *The End of Genre: Curations and Experiences in Intentional Discourses* (2022) provides an interesting exploration of intentionality that challenges the "long held disciplinary prohibition against viewing a writer's intention as anything but distraction and suspicion" (p. 3). For Rhetoric of Health and Medicine scholars (RHM), Faber's focus on intentionality could have a direct implication on research where the author is intentionally both a patient in the study and the researcher conducting the study. Faber's illness experiences become an autoethnographic case study by which he argues that intentionality still has a much needed—and often overlooked and undervalued—place in the research process, from design to delivery. An ancillary audience for Faber's text would be anyone in a STEM discipline interested in working with the humanities programs as the text may explain the humanities' reticent stance against explicit statements of intentionality. Faber does not dismiss the power and role of genre, but rather attempts to reinstate the need for intent to have due consideration. By revisiting the importance of intention to rhetorical studies, Faber moves out of the habitual familiar groves of traditional humanistic studies that often dismiss textual and authorial intention. Further, Faber reintroduces intentionality as another way of engaging rhetorical discourses in and around health and medicine.

In chapter one, Faber explains the "autoethnographic" nature of the text derives from his personal journey to arrive at a medical diagnosis that took over five years to obtain and an additional three years to be overturned and corrected. It is the impetus to understand the first diagnosis that leads Faber to revisit the power of intention. Faber realized that, despite his scholarly tools for analyzing his experience, he lacked the practical tools to effectively deal with and respond to his diagnosis. He felt his training lacked practical methods to move from theory to practice, unlike the experts he interacted with. As a scholar in textual studies, he envied other disciplines that had a more applied approach. He began seeking out and working with the more applied disciplines associated with STEM noting the importance of intention in these fields which highlighted the lack of a focus on intention within his own field and humanities more broadly (p. 4). Faber explains that scholars in the humanities need to engage with intention at various stages of the research process and not doing so ultimately makes us ill equipped to be 21st century problem solvers. The autoethnographic approach that Faber takes with this initial chapter emphasizes the importance of understanding the role intention has in shaping the world in and around us.

Chapter two explores the history of intention in academic scholarship and its more notable, long-term absence from "generations of textual scholarship" (p. 4). There is a robust history of

intention but one that is “oddly cyclical” and “has not been durable” (p. 26). This chapter attempts to explain the strange relationship between textual scholarship and intention and lays the foundation for exploring the “intersections of intention and rhetoric” and related analytic approaches (p. 27). Faber’s work in healthcare and other STEM disciplines highlight the way in which these disciplines in particular conduct research that is “designed and intended to be used for problem solving” and highlighted “the extent to which [his] own humanities training seemed unprepared for such challenges” (p. 27). He acknowledges that intention is studied within textual studies but often as “descriptive critique over positive action” (p. 28). The third theme he introduces in this chapter is a *discourse of intention* that is “both a way to methodologically examine intention as a topic of textual study and a more deliberate acknowledgement and awareness of a researcher’s own intentions as a productive motivation when conducting textual research” (p. 28). In this Chapter, Faber identifies the key questions that inform subsequent chapters: “We question genre and its role in suppressing intention; we reconsider how we teach writing; we form our own discourses of production; we investigate our own motivations when we act, we try integrating critique with production/action, and we engage in reflection as a way of learning” (p. 55). Chapter two unwinds the rich history that informs Faber’s understanding of intention and highlights the need for a deeper connection between humanistic and scientific inquiry where each informs and shapes the other.

Chapter three explores the tension between intentionality and rhetoric. Faber discusses how intentionality and rhetoric have not always been at odds with one another, pointing to Wimsatt and Beardsley’s pivotal 1946 essay “The Intentional Fallacy,” where the two posited that the “design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable” (p. 75). For almost 80 years now, rhetoricians have used the work of Wimsatt and Beardsley’s intentional fallacy. Faber posits that “*truth* (or empiricism) was exchanged for *meaning*, a slippery term that eventually and problematically became measured as *significance*” (p. 70). The intentional fallacy had a stifling effect on how scholars engaged textual questions and empowered the critic’s voice. Faber explores how the intentional fallacy has influenced rhetorical and textual studies and reviews the scholarship that opposed the idea of abandoning intention. Faber argues that the concept of intention is essential for having a comprehensive discourse that addresses both empirical and subjective aspects of issues. Moving past the academic arena, Faber reminds us that *how* the general public responds to text cannot be ignored.

Subsequent chapters provide situations where intention is integral to the understanding the surrounding discourse. In chapter four, Faber further highlights the usefulness of intentions in knowledge production and accountability. He argues that a focus on genre theory creates tension between the public and public discourse and lead to “alienation, suspicion and cynicism about public discourse” (p. 99). While the humanities may have abandoned intention, those in STEM related fields had not. STEM disciplines “operate according to protocols designed specifically to evoke and accentuate intentional and replicable forms and events” (p. 100). The subordination of authorial intention within the humanities is widely accepted as a norm but not so within physical and natural sciences.

Of particular importance to rhetoric of health and medicine scholars, chapter five considers the relationship of intentionality to medicine. The chapter is framed by Burke’s concept of *terministic screens* to “trace how intention is interpolated within the American healthcare

system” (p. 134). Faber relies on Burke’s concept of the terministic screens as a means of making “‘action’ an identifying term for the confluence of morality and motion” (p. 136). In doing so, according to Faber, Burke remediates intention “from retroactive explanation (interpretation) to production (action)” (p. 136). Faber builds chapter five along the lines of Burke’s pentad. The chapter is subdivided into “Act,” “Scene,” “Agent,” “Agency,” and “Purpose.” The first section of chapter five is “Act: Intention in Medicine—Retraining.” In this section, Faber once more acknowledges the intimate role his personal life played in this professional endeavor. He explains that he chose to seek credentialing as a paramedic for several reasons not the least of which was to “evoke some recognition among my science colleagues that I was making an effort to meet them, if not half, perhaps somewhere around a third of the way toward their own expertise” (p. 137).

In the second section, “Agent 1: Intentional Heroism,” Faber explains that seeking the paramedic credentialing was also a means for him to experiment with the boundaries of humanities and sciences. He discusses the classes he created after the rollout of the Affordable Care Act noting that he had created a heuristic that challenged his “department’s topical, thematic and purposeful boundaries” (p. 138). He then recounts a case study involving cardiac patient data to show that systemwide policies that govern basic and advanced out of hospital care such as that administered by EMT’s and paramedics are developed based on “‘small, poorly controlled, and mostly positive’ studies” (p. 141) that are rarely updated even after subsequent studies show the practices and policies are contra-indicated. The third section of chapter five is devoted to the “Scene: The Intention of Unsustainable and Dysfunctional Health Systems”. Faber references the COVID-19 Pandemic as an example of the way in which “stories of medical heroism are being overshadowed by a health system in trouble and transition” (p. 144). Relaying relevant statistics related to the overall health of American citizens compared to other countries, Faber shows that “clinical heroism may be inspiring, but it does not appear to be working” (p. 145).

In the next section, Faber deviates from Burke’s Pentad by introducing a second agent, “Agent II: The Antihero—Intentional Preventative Care.” In this section, Faber draws us back to intention, explaining that as noted in the previous sections the clinicians have the tools and yet the outcomes are not favorable. He uses these stories to force the reader to ask about the “systematic intentions, intentions oriented and incentivized by large and complex systems” (p. 149). Faber explains how payment for services drives how patient care is ascribed and billed in part due to the Affordable Care Act introducing alternative payment policies where the individual patient encounter was supplanted into a “big picture” comorbidity approach to treatment.

Subsequent sections of chapter five continue to examine the complex relationship of healthcare facilities, physician payment systems and patient care. Notably Faber draws attention to the patient – physician relationship. The physician’s “biomedical activity” aims to “identify an objective pathophysiological fact” (p. 159), but “if a clinician’s diagnosis is to become meaningful for the patient, the disease must be told not as an objective fact but in terms of the patient’s lived experience” (p. 159). Utilizing examples for his own encounters with those in healthcare systems, Faber gets into the inherent discrepancies not just for patients but also within the health structures that differentiate a specialist and non-specialist doctor. He ends chapter five with an exploration of the role the electronic medical record (EMR) has had on the patient

narrative. Like many other systems, electronic health records were designed to serve administrators and number crunchers over clinician's and patients.

Chapter six explores the relationship of intention to data sciences. Faber “situates analytics as a heuristic process, the intentional curation of data to evoke change in systems” (p. 173) and discusses how analytics is rhetorical. He also explains what he perceives as the relationship of analytics to heuristics in that both are “concerned with the efficient transformation of raw and unstructured data into quantitative forms for problem solving and content creation” (p. 177). His goal with this chapter is to demonstrate analytics can “provide the humanities with opportunities to experiment with their own heuristics of intention” (p. 195). The humanities require innovative tools, methods, and collaborations to better integrate natural, human, and technological sciences, fostering a more intentional and holistic approach to humanism. Scholars face a significant challenge that extends beyond merely integrating natural and physical sciences with the human condition or encouraging textual studies to move past retrospective critiques. Faber suggests that analytics is a potentially new tool for humanists scholars to address 21st century problems.

In chapter seven, the final chapter prior to the postscript, Faber presents his possible solution to reintroduce intention to the humanities. In a word, curation as related to genre. He compares his role as a paramedic to that of a scholar, noting that “Protocols, like genres, work best in relatively stable, conventional situations” (p. 200), when exigence is known. However, when some element goes awry, when a patient doesn't respond as expected and consequences are dire, it could become necessary to go against the norm. Here, curations would work best. Genre exists before and after the moment; curations are moment specific where the needed decision (act) is unique and not pre-defined. Throughout this chapter, Faber provides relevant examples of rhetorical curations and their impact on concomitant professional discourse of those curations. Faber emphasizes that intention should be clear and transparent in professional discourse, rather than being something hidden or obscure. He also makes a relevant connection to the “post-truth” discussions and the way in which the pandemic response has been framed as a “culture war”. Throughout his text, Faber provides a clear argument and a clear need for a more intentional humanities that can more succinctly address modern problems. Faber admits that this textbook has grown out of his own desire to better engage with STEM fields and to study the points where humanities and sciences intersect. He reminds us that how scholars enact these collaborations “will mark and reveal our intentions and our willingness to work in actual partnership with other disciplines” (p. 231).

Author Bio

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