



**LIBOR PAVERA**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6916-8483>

Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej, Wydział Humanistyczno-Społeczny, Instytut Neofilologii  
ul. Willowa 2, 43-309 Bielsko-Biała  
e-mail: lpavera@szcznam.cz

## The Meaning of Genre Studies in the Genre Situation of the 21st Century

### Abstract

Genre studies are an essential part of literary studies since they provide scholars and readers with a framework for analyzing and appreciating literary works. Genre studies are crucial (since the times of Paul Van Tieghem, the founder of genre studies) because they aid in the categorization and interpretation of texts, giving readers a road map to the text's meaning and purpose. They also had a significant impact on 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary movements, especially those that emphasized the aesthetics of communication and reception. Those 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary institutions, teams, and researchers who failed to recognize the importance of genre studies lost out on a golden chance to better comprehend the complexities and subtleties of literature. Literary studies are incomplete without the inclusion of genre studies, which serve as a foundation upon which to build a knowledge of and appreciation for literary works by both academics and general audiences. By publishing studies in professional journals and other specialist magazines, researchers may share their newest results and ideas with other academics in the area and participate in fruitful debate to advance genre studies. Projekt (from The Czech Academy of Sciences' — "The Genre Metamorphosis in a Central European Context") initiative, which has been praised for its innovation and high-quality execution, has helped scholars see genres not as fixed classifications but as living, breathing systems and the link between art and society. The study of literary genres has historically concentrated on written or printed literature, but there is a rising interest in other types of literature, such as folklore and internet communication. Indicating the connection between literature and folklore, Ferdinand de Saussure's notions of *lang* and *parole* call attention to the presence of oral literary genres and, more recently, genres of technological (electronic) communication. Some forms of online communication have been compared to folklore and oral literature due to their collaborative and co-creative processes, which eschew individual authorship. This is a topic worthy of more investigation. Electronic communication genres have many similarities with folklore, including community authorship and a constantly changing, adaptable character. Because of its novelty and rapid development, this phenomenon is of great interest to literary and communication experts. To better comprehend texts, communication dynamics, social movements, and ultimately ourselves in the digital era, it is important that we share information about electronic communication genres and place greater attention on this issue in the academic setting, particularly in schools.

genre studies (genology); comparative studies; Paul Van Tieghem; Stefania Skwarczyńska; literary genres; spoken (oral) genres

### **Basics of genre studies and genres**

The question of whether or not certain genres are dying out has become very contentious in recent times. On the one hand, critics of electronic publication point out that it has increased the amount of texts accessible to readers, making it more challenging to wade through the ocean of data and more likely that essential works will be overlooked. Furthermore, many contend that genres are losing their relevance in today's times due to the rise of more diverse, eclectic forms of expression.

However, there are many who believe genres have a promising future. Scholars, for instance, keep digging into the history of genres and writing articles on their development. In addition, teaching pupils how to read and evaluate texts by focusing on certain genres may be a significant tool in the classroom. Students may get a deeper appreciation for the ways in which writers utilize tropes and conventions to accomplish these ends in their writing by learning to recognize these features in a variety of genres.

The abundance of written works accessible to modern audiences is one factor maintaining the relevance of genres. Online textual resources have mushroomed with the explosion of electronic publication. As a result, it's becoming harder for readers to zero in on the texts that are most relevant to their interests or requirements. For readers to make their way through this mountain of data, resources like genre encyclopedias are invaluable.

It is a very debated topic whether or not genre studies will survive. Despite claims that the proliferation of electronic publishing has increased the number of texts available to readers and rendered genres irrelevant, others argue that genres have a bright future in academia and the school environment as a powerful tool for teaching students how to read and analyze texts more effectively. Since there are so many titles available today, reference works organized by category are more vital for readers.

Genre analysis and genre studies are a vital part of literary criticism. A case for keeping genre studies alive is that it is fundamental to the study of literature in general. Since genres provide a foundation for textual analysis, scholars may abstract and classify works according to their own unique rules and qualities. Because of this, academics may conduct controlled, rigorous studies of literature, yielding more reliable findings.

Saving genre studies is important because it paves the way for a more rigorous, scientific method of studying literature. To be recognized as a "genuine" science, an academic dis-

cipline has to provide reproducible, precise findings. Genre studies provide scholars with a methodical framework for extracting meaning from texts by codifying the norms and strategies that may be used to do so. One way that scholars might get a more nuanced knowledge of literary works is by honing down on the norms of a particular genre.

Genres of inquiry also provide researchers with greater agency over the findings of their studies. Genre studies, for instance, allow researchers to control and narrow the scope of their research by focusing on the conventions that are specific to that genre, like the use of certain themes, motifs, or stylistic elements. This makes it easier to identify patterns and trends that are specific to that genre. Consequently, researchers can provide higher-quality findings.

It is important to note that the study of genres provides scholars with a framework for comprehending and analyzing texts, making this area of study crucial to the field of literary criticism. Studies benefit from an emphasis on genre norms since it allows them to see trends and patterns that would otherwise go unnoticed. A more precise and scientific approach to literary research is made possible via abstracting and controlling research outcomes, making this field of study essential and worthy of protection.

Genre studies is a field of research that focuses on the classification and analysis of literary and non-literary texts based on their structural, functional, and contextual characteristics. In the 21st century, genre studies have become increasingly important for understanding the diverse forms of communication that shape our society and culture.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new techniques and methodologies emerged in literary criticism with the intention of applying greater scientific rigor to the study of literature. Paul Van Tieghem, a Belgian literary critic and scientist, was a leading player in this trend because of his innovative approach to comparative literature, which aimed to build a scientific foundation for the study of literature (literary criticism).

The theory of evolution, which became the prevailing paradigm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, did not have an effect on Van Tieghem and he did not agree with it. He, unlike many critics of his era, thought that this approach (the evolutionary theory), despite seeming more scientific and methodical, was not accurate and could not be trusted. In contrast to other evolutionary theorists, Van Tieghem based his comparative studies on a careful and thorough analysis of literary materials, which is what sets him apart.

There were several original aspects to Van Tieghem's strategy. To begin, he remarked on how important it is to examine literature from several perspectives. He set out to find the universal features shared by literature from many cultures and time periods by analyzing and contrasting works of literature from each. He was therefore better able to grasp the nature of literature as a whole and recognize its many manifestations.

Van Tieghem aimed to bring to light revisions and critical analysis of earlier works, that had been missed by previous critics. Van Tieghem was able to show how literature develops through time by comparing works from different eras and genres. By taking this tack, we were able to push back against the idea that earlier works are simply out of date and obsolete, and we were able to pave the way for future investigation and analysis by other critics.

It's worth noting that Van Tieghem's comparative literary method has lasted the test of time, in contrast to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which is now widely regarded as erroneous by many scientific fields, including archaeology. This approach of literature analysis is generally recognized as reliable and rigorous.

The method of comparative literature advocated by Paul Van Tieghem had a profound effect on 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary criticism. Van Tieghem was able to get a more all-encompassing and nuanced knowledge of literary works by creating a scientific foundation for comparative research, and his method has since been extensively expanded and further studied by other literary critics. By reworking literary criticism to take a more scientific viewpoint, and by demonstrating that literary science is not fixed but may grow, his work helps open new lines of inquiry and emphasize the significance of studying earlier works.

He developed the concept of “genre” in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as a way to classify and analyze different types of literature. Van Tieghem’s work laid the foundation for the study of genre in literature and other fields, such as film and media studies. Stefania Skwarczyńska, a Polish scientist, also made significant contributions to the field of genre studies through her work on the Polish journal “Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” (“The Problems of Literary Genres”), which was dedicated to the study of classical genres. Skwarczyńska’s research focused on the study of poetics and rhetoric, and how these disciplines can be applied to the analysis of literary texts.

Skwarczyńska was well-respected for her roles as both a researcher and a professor. She taught at the University of Lodz for many years, influencing generations of students and faculty alike. Her three-volume work, *Introduction to the Science of Literature (Wstęp do nauki o literaturze)*, is widely regarded as one of her most important contributions to the field of literary studies. The third and final volume, released in 1965, is dedicated fully to the study of genre (genre studies). It was heralded as a “summa genologiae,” or “a thorough study of genres,” when it was first published. In addition to advancing our understanding of classic works, this book also introduced several novel concepts to the study of literary genres, earning it the title of “groundbreaking.”

Skwarczyńska’s book is more than a collection; it’s a literary masterpiece. It not only synthesizes what we know about genre studies so far, but it also contributes new insights, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches. Not only academics and researchers, but also students and casual readers, consider her work a must-read for anybody interested in the science of literature.

As an added bonus, one of Skwarczyńska’s students went on to become the editor of the biggest dictionary of genres in the world. This is a reflection of Skwarczyńska’s influence on her students, since several of them went on to make important contributions to literary studies. In sum, Stefania Skwarczyńska was a groundbreaking figure in literary studies, both as a researcher and professor at the collegiate level. Scholars of literature now look to Skwarczyńska as an exemplar in terms of her work, ideas, and teaching (see *Dictionary of genres* edited by Grzegorz Gazda, 2012).

To be sure, there were several 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary institutions, movements, and scientists that did not care much about the study of genre. It is a shame that this is the case, as studying genres may aid in not just categorizing but also interpreting works of literature. Through an examination of genre norms and traits, researchers and readers may better comprehend the texts they are analyzing and spot trends and patterns that would otherwise go unnoticed.

Genre studies aid readers and scholars in finding their bearings within a text, which is one of the field’s primary benefits. Genre may be referred to as the “habitus” of a book or manuscript, illuminating its defining features and norms. The genre of a text is like a road map that helps the reader or researcher go around the text and figure out what it is about

and what it means. This is because when a text is provided to the reader or researcher, the reader or researcher is instantly put on a specific trip.

Genre studies are also important because of their significant effect on 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary movements. Foremost among them is the aesthetics of both transmission and reception. Literary critics are able to better understand how literature is produced, consumed, and interpreted by examining the traditions and features of various genres. In turn, this has provided literary critics with an opportunity to investigate the connections between various literary forms, to pinpoint the ways in which they overlap and affect one another, and to build a more holistic picture of literature's role in contemporary culture.

An essential part of literary studies, genre studies provide the groundwork for scholars and readers to analyze and make sense of literature. Genre studies may only advance with the help of in-depth research published in academic publications like "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" ("The Problems of Literary Genres") and others of a similar kind. Researchers may have a fruitful conversation with other academics in the area by publishing their work in scholarly publications.

Genre studies have been advanced in the Czech and Slovak context by scientists like Frank Wollmann of Brno, who has used the so-called eidological approach. In this view, literary genres are not seen as fixed categories but rather as living, changing systems. Genre studies had their start in the Slovak context in the 1960s, especially in places like Prešov and Košice. Brno still uses genres and comparisons, particularly in Ivo Pospíšil's writings. The author of this essay and I. Pospíšil are among the researchers at the forefront of a new initiative (in the project at the Czech Academy of Sciences to examine genre studies — "Žánrové metamorfózy v středoevropském kontextu" — "The Genre Metamorphosis in a Central European Context"). This research endeavored to learn about genres historically and to look into the future of genre studies in the age of digitalization. Over 65 publications emerged from the initiative, several of which were published as workshop studies. These analyses demonstrated that genres do not vanish but rather undergo periodic transformations in response to shifting cultural conditions. The project was "fulfilled at an exceptional level," according to the committee that assessed it, and was deemed a success by Slavomír Wollman, a leading Czech comparatist. Research has shown that literary genres do not like analogies with human life— they do not have a beginning, adolescence, (golden) middle and end, but go through stages of development and change over time. So, beware of using evolutionary theory in the case of genres!

The investigation also confirmed the existence of two platforms for genres: the first group comprises of genres that have a stable foundation and have changed little over time. Genres that are more fluid, adaptable, and open to change are part of the second category, which is known as "quicksands." These genres are reflective of the social and cultural milieu in which they originate. This knowledge is useful for putting into context the development of various genres and their connections to one another and the culture they portray.

### **Genres of electronic communication**

Historically, literary genre studies have concentrated on printed materials, dividing them into discrete categories like poetry, prose, and drama. However, in recent years there has been a rise in the appreciation for the study of folklore and other types of literature. The concept of folklore as "solidified lava" is a suitable metaphor for the way in which an

incomplete, in-progress mode of expression gets frozen in time via the medium of writing. This method draws attention to the fact that there are distinct forms of oral literature, and the development of technological means of communication in recent decades has added even more of these forms to the canon.

Lang and parole were concepts used by Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of linguistic structuralism, to characterize the structure of language. Literature and folklore have the same heritage, yet there are important differences between the two that may be highlighted by this distinction. It is possible to compare the two forms of written expression by thinking of literature as lang, or the underlying set of norms and regulations that control written texts, and folklore as parole, or how language is really used in daily life.

The issue of whether electronic communication styles are most similar to lang or parole is prompted by this difference. The online book, the chat log, and other forms of electronic communication have been compared to folklore by some critics (based on the opinion of the author of this study). This is because many “opuses” start with a renowned author, and then regular people fill in the gaps with their own chapters, either independently and enthusiastically or under the guidance of a supervisor who steers the plot in a predetermined direction. Folklore, which is characterized by its emphasis on cooperation and co-creation, has many features with traditional oral literature.

Due to the widespread use of digital media, research into electronic communication genres has blossomed in recent years. A lack of a single author, communal authorship, and a dynamic, developing nature are all features often cited as evidence that these genres have much in common with folklore.

A common compositional technique in both electronic communication genres and folklore is the usage of a composition of beads (in Czech “korálková kompozice”). It is common practice in folklore to weave together display elements in this way. Chat, blogs, and online literature all use this method by stringing together messages and comments to create a bigger story for the reader to experience. Since the genres of electronic communication are relatively new and are constantly developing, they represent a significant topic of research for students of literature and communication. It is through the study of these forms that we may learn more about ourselves and our place in the modern digital world.

Nonetheless, understanding of the many forms of electronic communication is still a specialized field. There is a need for greater resources and attention on the issue of genre studies, particularly in the area of teaching literature and other “soft skills,” despite the non-existence of a few publications and platforms devoted to the study of genres. This is particularly crucial in the classroom, where students may gain critical knowledge about digital literacy and the evolving nature of communication via the study of electronic communication genres.

A large quantity of information is exchanged and created every day thanks to electronic communication and media, which has had a major influence on the subject of literary studies. However, it is important to keep in mind that the accuracy shown in these digital sources is not always spot-on. Employees at social media platforms, for instance, have the capacity to alter the format and content of communications in ways that might significantly alter its meaning or purpose. This might severely damage the credibility of digital communication as a research tool in the humanities.

The issue of data analysis arises in addition to this one. In today’s era of big data, massive datasets may be analyzed and inferences drawn from the results. However, the results will

be invalid if the data is inaccurate or skewed. Due to the influence that erroneous or misleading information may have on literary studies, this can have major repercussions for our understanding of works and their meanings.

Elon Musk's Twitter posts are a prominent illustration of this phenomenon. Based on the recently released Twitter Files, it has been found out employees of social media platforms have been shown to have the power to make changes to content, potentially changing their intended meaning. They also had the ability to edit how many views posts would get and whether they would be promoted in places such as the front page. This has major implications for the trustworthiness of electronic communication as a research tool in the field of literature.

As you can conclude from above, unfortunately, digital resources do not always reflect the truth. Since they do not account for the possibility of communications being altered in transit, they often misinterpret the intended meaning of texts. This is especially worrisome when considering the massive influence social media has on how we process and understand information.

Scholars and researchers in the area of literary studies must be aware of the inherent biases and limits of electronic sources if this problem is to be solved. You should take precautions to ensure the accuracy of the information you get by using many sources and remembering that communications might be modified or changed.

The trustworthiness and validity of online resources is a major issue in the field of literature. In order to guarantee that our research and analysis is based on accurate and objective facts, we must be cognizant of the possible biases and limits of various sources and take measures to verify and confirm material. This is crucial for preserving the academic honor of literary studies.

## Conclusion

Genre studies (in Czech literature and Czech science of literature) play a crucial role in both education and research, providing valuable insights into the various forms and conventions of literature, as well as the ways in which these have evolved over time. By examining the characteristics and conventions of different genres, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and societal contexts in which they were produced, and the ways in which they continue to influence contemporary literature and communication. This is *sensu stricto* a scientific method, therefore a method that can be easily checked and reviewed.

The subject of scientists' contributions to scientific progress is extensive and nuanced. It is generally agreed that only educated and competent scientists should engage in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, since they possess the requisite knowledge and abilities to engage in rigorous study and experimentation. Various scientists may "leave behind" some fields of study owing to a lack of funding or social interest, which is a problem that has been discussed in this context. For the sake of scientific development as a whole, this may slow down progress in certain specific fields or prevent new knowledge from being gained.

Concerns have also been voiced concerning the possibility of non-scientific actors, such as government officials or bureaucrats, influencing or shaping scientific research and knowledge. The idea that non-scientific actors might try to impose their own interpretations or

explanations onto scientific research, which might lead to a distorted or inaccurate understanding of the topic, is likely alluded to in the example of humor being explained by a several-page file of European officials.

It is crucial that studies in the scientific community be done without any outside influences or biases. One way to do this is via the process of peer review, which checks the work of other scientists to make sure it is up to standard.

It is also necessary to help researchers who are having trouble with their studies and to increase funding for underfunded but crucial areas of study. This may be accomplished via raising public awareness about the significance of specific fields of study, supporting scientific research, fostering a culture of scientific inquiry, and promoting multidisciplinary studies.

To guarantee the growth and development of science, it is crucial that scientists persist in their rigorous pursuit of knowledge in all fields, and that society supports and values their efforts.

---

## Bibliography

- Gazda Grzegorz (2000), *Słownik europejskich kierunków i grup literackich XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Genologia dzisiaj* (2000), eds. W. Bolecki, I. Opacki, Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, Warszawa.
- Genologia i konteksty* (2000), ed. Cz. Dutka, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego, Zielona Góra.
- Hernadi Paul (1972), *Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca – London.
- Hunter Cornelius G. (2001), *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*, Eugene, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Oregon.
- Lausberg Heinrich (2002), *Retoryka literacka. Podstawy wiedzy o literaturze*, trans. A. Gorzkowski, Homini, Bydgoszcz.
- Le Goff Jacques (1998), *Středověká imaginace*, Nakladatelství Argo, Praha.
- Levý Jiří, ed. (1971), *Bude literární věda exaktní vědou?*, Československý spisovatel, Praha.
- Lichačov Dmitrij Sergejevič (1975), *Poetika staroruské literatury*, trans. L. Zadražil, Odeon, Praha.
- Pavera Libor, Pospíšil Ivo (2004–2015), *Žánrové metamorfózy v střeoevropském kontextu*, VII. sv., Istinis, Brno, Praha.
- Pospíšil Ivo (1992), *Rozpětí žánru*, Sprint Print, Brno.
- Pospíšil Ivo (1998a), *Genologie a proměny literatury*, Masarykova univerzita, Brno.



- Pospíšil Ivo (1998b), *Ruský román: Nástin utváření žánru do konce 19. století*, Masarykova univerzita, Brno.
- Pospíšil Ivo (2014), *Literární genologie*, Masarykova univerzita, Brno.
- Remak Henry H.H. (2002), *The Crisis of the Humanities in the United States* [in:] *Nadzieje i zagrożenia: Slawistyka i komparatystyka u progu nowego tysiąclecia*, ed. E. Tokarz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, p. 71–85.
- Román a "genius loci": Regionalismus jako pojetí světa v evropské a americké literatuře* [1992], Praha, sine.
- Rose Michael R., Burke Molly K., Shahrestani Parvin, Mueller Laurence D. (2008), *Evolution of ageing since Darwin*, "Genet" no. 87, DOI: [10.1007/s12041-008-0059-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12041-008-0059-6), p. 363–371.
- Rutkowski Wolfgang Victor (1968), *Die literarischen Gattungen: Reflexionen über eine modifizierte Fundamentalpoetik*, Francke Verlag, Bern.
- Skwarczyńska Stefania (1959), *Diskussionsbeitrag zu Problemen der genologischen Systematik*, "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" vol. 2(2), p. 115–122, HANDLE: [11089/41445](https://hdl.handle.net/11089/41445).
- Skwarczyńska Stefania (1965), *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, PAX, Warszawa.
- Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* (2012), ed. G. Gazda, II. ed., Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Theories of Literary Genres* (1978), Pennsylvania State University, University Park–London.
- van Tieghem Paul (1938), *La Question des genres littéraires*, "Helicon" vol. 1(1–3), p. 99–105.
- Wollman Frank (1928), *Slovesnost Slovanů*, Vesmír, Praha.
- Wollman Slavomír (1988), *Porovnávací metóda v literárnej vede*, Tatran, Bratislava.
- Wollman Slavomír (1989), *Česká škola literární komparistiky*, Univerzita Karlova, Praha.
- Zelenka Miloš (1999), *Teorie manuskriptologie v postmoderní perspektivě* [in:] *Intertextualita v postmodernom umení*, UKF, FF, Ústav literárnej a umeleckej komunikácie, Nitra, p. 61–72.
- Zelenka Miloš (2000), *Srovnávací literární věda z pohledu XIV. a XV. kongresu AILS (in margine problematiky)* [in:] *Literární věda na prahu 21. století — Nauka o literaturze u progu XXI stulecia*, Slezska univerzita, Opava.
- Ziomek Jerzy (2000), *Retoryka opisowa*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków.
- Źródła wiedzy teoretycznoliterackiej w dawnej Polsce: Średniowiecze — Renesans — Barok* (1999), eds. M. Cytowska, T. Michałowska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
-