

Abstract

Through a genre designation, a literary book can characterize itself and indicate how its sender(s) wants it to be read – e.g. as a novel as opposed to as an autobiography. Thus, the genre designation influences the expectations of potential readers and establishes a space for negotiation. The thesis examines the use of unique, unconventional genre labels (genre signatures) as a tendency within modern Danish literature (1960-2016). Examples of genre signatures is Svend Åge Madsens *uroman* (unroman), Lars Skinnebachs *genrer* (genres) and Hans Otto Jørgensens *Andy Warhol-komposition* (Andy Warhol Composition) used as generic descriptions.

The first of five articles offers a record of genre signatures in the last seventeen years of Danish literature. The phenomenon is then developed theoretically through a definition of the genre label as a genre. It is demonstrated how the genre signature is a metafictional marker of generic awareness and innovation, and how it highlights several salient genre theoretical issues. The two following articles offers a close reading of texts by Madsen and Skinnebach with a focus on the relation between genre signature and the text. It is shown how the genre signature can be seen as a condensed expression of the project of the respective works – and that it plays a part in the reception of them. The fourth article surveys 115 book circle participants' responses to genre signatures, and it is suggested that the interpretational potential of the signature is not always fulfilled. Finally, a large quantitative survey (n=539) explores the effect of genre signatures and conventional genre labels effect on expectations towards and the audience appeal of selected (unread) books. A significant effect of both labels and signatures is demonstrated. However, the effect is established in interaction with other signals on the book covers.