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16 Producing genres: Pattern variation and genre development

Abstract: Genres rely on conventionalized patterns of language use, yet at the same time they are not static, ontological entities, but rather socially situated, dynamic and changing artifacts. In this chapter, we discuss genres as cultural artifacts, constituting and reflecting situational and cultural change. We further argue that the values and norms of any discourse community have to be balanced and matched, thus demanding a display on a symbolic level. Genre choice and genre form, i.e. genre style can therefore be seen as key sites for the analysis of culture.

Analyzing television news genres from the 20th and 21st century as well as asylum case histories from the 19th and 20th century, we show how a genre's form, its variation and change can be related to "news cultures" and changing paradigms in psychiatry. We argue that genre change depends on the discourse community's perception and interpretation of contextual factors and therefore cannot be deduced or predicted from changes of contextual factors alone. As genres and genre change themselves are part of this context, genre change itself can induce cultural change. We then discuss different forms of change and turn to genres in new media, showing how the opportunities of watching new genres arise, and discussing the challenge of separating the technological medium from the different genres realized within. We conclude with a summary of the controversial issues pertaining to the initiation of genre change, the role of the individual in this change and finally, the evidence for the emergence of new genres.

1 Two examples from two domains

The definition of genre – be it in the "North American school" (cf. Bazerman 1994; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995; Miller 1984), the "Sidney school" (cf. Halliday and Martin 1993; Martin, Christy, and Rothery 1987; Martin 1993) the "British ESP School" (cf. Swales 1990, 2004; Bhatia 2004: 10, 22–23) or in the "*Textlinguistik*" of German Studies (cf. Heinemann and Heinemann 2002: 129–132; Hausendorf and Kesselheim 2008: 29, 176–185) – is based on the observation that communicative settings and communicative goals are related to certain conventions of language use. As genres include habitualized and conventionalized patterns of language use they enable and facilitate communicative actions. Genres seem for language users to be fixed, almost ontological entities, they seem to emerge as categories out of their own form and content (Mittell 2004). Nevertheless it is common sense in the mentioned new genre theory that genres are not static, essentialistic entities, but are recurrent, socially situated,

and dynamic (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995), varying and changing and thus reflecting situational and cultural changes as well as changes in generic contexts (Devitt 2004: 89). Although genres are socially-typified actions tied to situational contexts (Bazerman 1994), they can also be adapted by persons belonging to different social groups (or discourse communities), to fit their goal-directed rhetorical purposes. Genres are conventionalized responses to recurring situations and at the same time they must be flexible, and because they are flexible, there always is (more or less) genre variation. Genres stabilize situations and social groups by staying identical, adapting flexibly to different communicative needs. If genre variation tends toward a certain direction in many instances and over a longer period of time, genres can be said to evolve, or in some cases become obsolete. Genre evolution can thus be conceptualized as variation, selection and (re-)stabilization (Gansel 2011: 110–120).

Two examples will illustrate genre change and variation and questions that arise within this field: Genre change in television news shows and genre variation in psychiatric case histories in the 19th century.

1.1 Genre change: The television news packages

"Packages" are (at least in US-American television news) the most common way to tell television news stories, and usually combine "voice over" (correspondents narration over footage (White 2005: 107–108)), sound bites (film segments that show someone speaking (Esser 2008: 402)) and a "stand-up" (correspondent on camera (White 2005: 490)). The generic features as well as the stylistic realization of packages in 1960s American television news shows (cf. for the "CBS Evening News" Luginbühl 2009, 2011, 2013) aim at staging closeness to the event by stressing local closeness (use of local deixis, locating the correspondent at the scene of the event, use of close shots), temporal closeness ("and now arriving for the funeral" [in a non-live package], "today", etc.) and emotional closeness (mentally moving and touching the audience by addressing emotions or showing emotional footage). Nevertheless, the prime function of the correspondent is to tell the story.

During the 1980s we also find cases in which the correspondent is no longer shown at the scene of the event but in a studio or some (quite random) public place. In these cases, it is not the eyewitnessing, but the trustworthiness and authorship that are stressed. And the narrative function of the correspondents shifts from eyewitness to that of an expert. In a new subgenre of the package, the "donut" (cf. Tuggle and Huffman 2001), the correspondent can be seen live at the beginning and the end of the package. This subgenre accentuates the immediacy of the reporting and implies very strongly that the information given could change at any time. As the anchor is giving the word to the correspondent (usually by addressing him or her with his or her first name and thus framing everything as a kind of informal chat (Haarman 2004)), the (local) distance between news studio and "news field" (Montgomery

2007: 89) is reduced as well as the (temporal) distance between the event and the reporting.

Today, correspondents are usually not seen live at the beginning of packages, but are still seen at the end. And in more and more cases, the anchor not only thanks the correspondent at the end, but starts interviewing him or her. The questions asked are not gathering factual information about the event but are expert questions asking for assessments, positioning the correspondent as expert – and conversationalizing news reporting (cf. Fairclough 1995: 10).

The changes of the package over time can be characterized as an increase in speed and thereby an increase in audience attraction, a changing role of the correspondents from reporter and eyewitness to expert, a more intense staging of temporal and local closeness, and a more informal and conversational way of reporting.

1.2 Genre variation in psychiatric case reports

Like the scientific article, the psychiatric case history is a venerable genre with a 260-year history. Its evolution in 18th and 19th century England demonstrates a slow moving set of converging socio-historical factors that resulted in gradual changes in asylum patient histories. Some of these factors include: the 1844 Lunatics Act that standardized the conventions and content of the asylum patient case history; the influence of Freud and the psychoanalytic "thought-style" leading to a "narrative turn" in case history reporting and journal publication; and the influence of the *Diagnosic and Statistical Manual-III* (*DSM-III*), a classification system used in psychotherapists' case reports, i.e. accounts which were required to conclude with a billable diagnosis. These developments occurred gradually from the mid-19th century to the end of the 20th century. After 2000, with the shift from paper to computer-generated case reports, the case history underwent yet another transformation from a narrative structure to a checklist of presenting symptoms accompanied by a brief summary of the patient's problems and *DSM*-based diagnosis. This technological development needs to be viewed in the social-economic context; specifically, the rise of third-party payers (insurance companies, Medicaid) that covered the costs of a the patient's diagnosis and treatment.

Analyzing these changes, we can illustrate different general observations: genres do not come "out of the blue", but usually depend on already existing genres. The television news package is, in fact, a hybrid genre, integrating features of (already common in the 1950s) voice overs, on-camera narrating and interview, which in turn rely on genres of news reels, radio and newspaper news. Of course, all these genres were adapted when they were "mixed" (cf. Bhatia 2004: 73) into the package, fulfilling new purposes and realized in new forms and styles. The emergence of a new genre is thus, in fact, a transformation of one or more already existing genres (Warnke 2001).

When new genres arise in a "genre set" (Devitt 1991: 54–59; Bhatia 2004: 53–55; see Part 3), it is important to look at the question of which new functions and meanings are realized by the new genre, and which already existing genres within this set become marginalized (looking at the genre frequency), or even replaced by the new genre, as these changes can be interpreted in terms of a norm and value change of a community of practice (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995). Changing situations can bring about new communicative needs, and newly arising genres can fill "widening gaps" (Devitt 2004: 93) within genre repertoires. Of course, new genres not only originate as a reaction to new situations; they also create new situations. Genre change can occur slowly and gradually, yet it can also occur at a certain moment when circumstances and/or external pressures arise.

2 Genre change and variation as a reflection and origin of cultural change

In a comparative perspective (be it diachronic or synchronic) genres appear as varying and changing; they can build hybrid forms (by embedding and mixing, cf. Bhatia 2004), they can bend and differentiate over time into genre variants and finally split up in new genres, or they can disappear.

Introductions to genre theory or text linguistics usually stress that genres are dynamic, but they usually do not focus on genre change over time. Exceptions include Devitt (2004), Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) as well as Gansel (2011). Discussing different case studies Devitt (2004) shows how genre change reflects changes in cultural, situational and generic contexts and is determined by a combination of individual influence, local situations and cultural context. Bawarshi and Reiff take a similar approach in their discussion of historical studies of professional genres such as the scientific article (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 138–141), and of public genres such as the constellation of texts "inviting" the granting of a patent (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 153–156). Gansel (2011: 110–120) illustrates genre evolution and (drawing on Luhmann's evolution theory) its three modes "variation," "selection," and "(re-)stabilization," with reference to works on marriage and lonely heart ads, and shows how genres evolve based on individual initiatives, genre gaps and sociocultural changes.

Genre studies as a whole developed from a predominantly descriptive manner focusing on aspects of textualization and organization; newer studies took into account aspects of contextualization (cf. Bhatia 2004: 3–26; Fix 2001) and re-contextualization (Linell 1998; Ravotas and Berkenkotter 1998). In studies of genre change that emerged only in the 1990s (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995; Bazerman 1994; Bendel 1998; Fleskes 1996; Warnke 1996; Nickl 2000), contextualization aspects like community goals and communicative purposes, general discursive practices, or community membership were considered from the very beginning, probably because the study of

genre change imposes the question of why genres do change. Nevertheless, in quite a few single case studies, the analysis of the textual surface is focused, whereas aspects of context factors are often only discussed briefly and in a tentative way, given the complexity of influencing variables.

It is important to note on a methodological level that diachronic analyses based on examination of texts alone of the reasons for genre change are the analyst's text-based reconstructions. Since the social significance of genres does not express itself directly (Linke 2003), it is the analyst who must infer the connection between changes in a genre and the influence of cultural norms and values, as well as of historical situations, pragmatic purposes, etc. – unless other kinds of evidence are gathered. As we will discuss later, their significance is rather stabilized, negotiated or established by collective linguistic action itself – processes which make content, form and style features of genres the crucial indicators of their significance. This not only means that a linguistic analysis of genre features reveals cultural factors, it also means that there is a reciprocal relation between cultural and situational changes on the one hand and generic changes on the other (Linke 2009; Devitt 2004).

Central questions of genre variation and change are thus twofold: *why* genres vary and change, and *how* they do so. The first question refers to the driving forces behind genre variation and genre change, focusing on the contextualization of genres; the second question of "how" refers to conceptualizations of different forms of genre variation and change, focusing on textualization and organization. Because context and form are reciprocally intertwined, however, these questions can not be separated entirely.

2.1 Genres as cultural artifacts

Our examples illustrate that genres change as their contexts change. First, we would like to focus on cultural aspects of genre change, as most genre scholars believe culture to be one of the main forces of genre change. Genres always reflect the communicative purposes they are thought to fulfill, which again depend on norms and values of a discourse community. When norms and values change, genre change can be expected. We will also argue that genre change can induce cultural change.

Like genre, culture has for a long time been conceptualized as a static, homogeneous, often nationally defined set of norms and values (cf. Tylor 1871; but already in Herder [1772] 1985). This conceptualization has changed during the second half of the 20th century towards an understanding of culture as entities of heterogeneous norms and values of different discourse communities. These norms and values can be perceived in cultural artifacts and are thus related to the symbolic dimension of human action (cf. Goodenough 1957/1964; Geertz 1983; Barth 1989). Such a change can also be seen in the replacement of the key concept of "*Geist*" by concepts like "culture", "medium" and "symbol" (Assmann 2006: 20–21). In this understanding of culture, all

symbolic action, such as the use of genres, always serve the communitarization (and therefore the differentiation) by expressing norms and values, for example, in genre choice and genre form. So when an individual (implicitly) expresses his or her own norms and values in genre form, these norms and values can be communitarized and matched to become collective norms and values. So against the background of these collective norms and values, habitualized and conventionalized forms of language use – genres – emerge (cf. Linke 2009). Culture thus can be transmitted and changed in and through communicative exchanges.

2.2 The television news package as a cultural artifact

As genres are influenced by many different interacting and reciprocal variables, the impact of cultural change can hardly be characterized generally, but is best illustrated by looking at an individual genre. If we think of our first example of television news, the concepts of "news culture" (cf. Esser 2008) and "journalistic culture" (Hanitzsch 2007; Djerf-Pierre 2000) can be helpful. The changes observed in television news can be related to changes of dimensions of journalistic culture (Hanitzsch 2007: 371) such as *institutional roles* or *epistemologies*. Institutional roles include (among other aspects) the degree of intervention and of market orientation. Comparing the "CBS Evening News" and the Swiss "Tagesschau" (cf. Luginbühl 2009, 2011, 2013), we can see that both shows aim at staging objectivity and neutralism; however, the "CBS Evening News" with its often evaluative classification of events tends to play a more active role than the "Tagesschau". These differences can be related to different structures of the public sphere in the United States and Switzerland (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 143–248). Regarding market orientation, the more dramatized, more personalized and "closer" narrations of the CBS packages clearly differed already in the 1960s from the 1960s "Tagesschau", in which no packages at all were made at that time, rather there were film items with an anonymous voice reading the voice over. So there seem to be different norms and values at work at that time, while the "Tagesschau" journalists seemed to adopt similar norms and values during the 1980s. At first sight, this phenomenon can be related to different media markets; however, the film items of the 1950s "Tagesschau" were made in a very entertaining manner and thus demonstrated a much stronger market orientation than in the 1960s or 1970s. The different and changing forms of the package also reflect different conceptualizations of *objectivity* and *empiricism*, both aspects of epistemologies. CBS tend to mark their packages as medial representation that is always selectively influenced by professional, but individual interpretation, and they do so by showing and naming an individual reporting, by more clearly showing that the package is a crafted product and by emphasizing the temporary status of the information given; truth is conceptualized as something fluid. In the "Tagesschau" the rise of the package in the late 1970s and above all since the 1980s reflects a change in epistemologies. So far, a distanced

"proclaiming" of a seemingly unchangeable, static truth was realized by the invisible, anonymous news reader, an almost unremarkable camera work and no obvious perspective of a reporting individual. With the package, a new form of empiricism was realized, which came together with the desire to emphasize transparency regarding news sources and to make the entire show more attractive. In the newest format introduced in 2005 the package changed again, partially returning to the "old" forms of empiricism.

2.3 The psychiatric case history as a cultural artifact

The asylum case histories in 19th century England and the United States were narratives documenting a patient's symptoms and behaviors over time. As cultural artifacts, they were closely tied to the professionalization of psychiatry as this branch of the medical sciences moved out of the asylum and into the clinics of Vienna, and shortly thereafter spread throughout Europe and across the Atlantic to the United States. Freud's clinical case histories have been much studied for their literary conventions (e.g. Bernheimer and Kahane 1990; Lehman 1995). During the period that psychoanalysis was the profession's reigning paradigm – from the end of the 19th century until the biomedical counter-revolution in the United States in the 1970s–1980s – psychiatry's case histories with their narrative unfolding of the underlying signification of the patient's symptoms was the dominating genre. By the 1970s, however, in the United States, a counter-revolution was fomenting, as the division between the psychiatrist practitioner and his research-oriented colleague became increasingly pronounced. By the early 1980s two of the main psychiatric journals – *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (*AMJ*) and *The Archive of General Psychiatry* (*AGP*) were publishing studies whose authors had rejected narratives of a single patient's case, in favor of the highly standardized (scientific) article format of Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion (IMRD). The battle for epistemological supremacy was fought out during the late 1970s in the *AMJ*; however, the fate of the narrative case history with its "n of 1" was sealed with the publication of the American Psychiatric Associations third edition of its "charter document" (McCarthy and Gerring 1994), *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III (DSM)* (1984). This third edition of the *DSM*, had been stripped of all its psychoanalytic categories and lexicon (Berkenkotter 2008), and replaced them with "research-based diagnostic classifications" (RDCs) of mental disorders. Based on field trials of diagnostic categories among hundreds of practitioners, this newest iteration of the *DSM* putatively insured the reliability and external validity of its classifications. Following the publication of the *DSM-III*, the editor of *AJP* announced that the journal would no longer publish single subject patient histories. In their place would appear large "n" (population) studies showing the soundness of new diagnostic classifications of disorders, or field trials of a new treatment or drug protocol – again among a large number of patients. This shift in the

editorial policy and its generic instantiation in the IMRD article form, signaled a sea change in the norms and epistemology, and subsequently over time, the professional culture of psychiatry as a branch of the medical sciences.

Although clinical psychiatrists continued to write traditional case history narratives, the rise of third party payers in the 1980s required that the *DSM* classifications be used for billing; thus the lexicon of the case history began to change, as psychotherapists needed to translate their patients' narratives into institutional diagnostic classifications (see Berkenkotter and Ravotas 1997; Ravotas and Berkenkotter 1998). The above brief history of the forces that came to bear on the case history narrative in psychiatry demonstrates how the case history narrative can be analyzed as a cultural artifact, subject to "selection pressures" wrought by changes in cultural (in this case, professional) norms, values, as well as the profession's epistemology.

2.4 Other studies of cultural influence on generic variation

Studies in other generic fields also show that changes in cultural norms and values lead to genre change: in the field of German Studies Fleskes (1996) illustrates how company reports changed as the institutions became more anonymous; Hödl (1999) shows how cooking recipes changed under the influence of successful, exemplary books (e.g. of Paul Bocuse) and under the influence of foreign examples; Bendel (1998) illustrates how changes in customer expectations can explain genre changes in ads. In the field of English Studies, Devitt (2004) discusses three examples illustrating the cultural influence on genre change; Yates (1989) shows how changes in management philosophy and technology led to changes in genre sets and genre styles; and Campbell and Jamieson (1990) examine how the new Constitution of the US required new generic functions and thus led to new genres. Finally, the creation of the so-called "rhetorical modes" is an example of how an entire genre set has been created and changed over time, reflecting different interests (Connors 1981; Kitzhaber 1990; d'Angelo 1984; cf. Devitt 2004: 99). Bazerman (1988) explores genre changes that occurred in the scientific article from the 17th through the middle of the 20th century. He demonstrates how such factors as the innovations of individual scientists (Newton), the appearance of the scientific forum (e.g., *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society)* the need for virtual witnessing and varying disciplinary ideologies, and theory change contributed to the socio-cognitive-textual formation of the research article. Gross, Harmon, and Reidy (2002) published a diachronic study tracing changes in stylistic and rhetorical conventions of the scientific article in journals from three countries (England, France, Germany) from the 17th to late 20th century. Gross and his colleagues conclude that the structure of the scientific article followed (cognitive) conceptual changes in the sciences, and that various, economic and political "selection pressures" led to an information-dense, highly compressed genre that functions as a "master finding system" (Gross, Harmon, and Reidy 2002:

215–216). Linke (2001) shows how changes in the conceptualizations of the public and the private sphere change patterns in obituaries. But she also emphasizes that genre variation and change cannot be attributed as an effect of cultural change alone; genre variation and genre change can also cause cultural change, as in the instance of Swiss German obituaries, where a shift between public and private sphere is co-created by a change in generic forms. Genres are not only varied and changed in reaction to changing situations; they also create new situations and thus can initiate cultural change (Devitt 2004; Linke 2001, 2009).

How genres are varied and change does not depend directly on changing factors of the setting, but on different and changing perceptions and interpretations of changes that occur. This again can be illustrated by looking at television news shows. The factors defining this setting are numerous and complex: the mass media system and market (e.g. commercial or public television), the political system (e.g. majoritarian vs. consensus politics (cf. Hallin and Mancini 2004: 50–53)), the professionalization of journalists, mass media genre traditions, technical equipment, to name just a few. If, for example, mass media systems get commercialized, generic resources will likely be exploited in order to make the genre style more attracting to the consumers. But which resources will be exploited and in which way (more informal style, more conversational style, more emotional style etc.) can hardly be deduced from the context. The same is true for technical possibilities: new technologies (like live reporting) are not always implemented, and if they are, the main question is how they are used. The key site for the "how" are the journalists and their norms and values, which are based on their interpretation of the changes in context factors. While the "Tagesschau" tried to attract audiences by emphasizing source transparency in the early 1980s, audience appeal has been achieved by close and live reporting in the 1990s and conversation in this millennium.

The realization of genres is always based on stylistic choices, which are not mandatory and therefore could have been made differently. What seems to be – in retrospect – a "logical" consequence of contextual factors are, in fact, stylistic (and therefore generic) decisions. This again means that the (changing) features of the packages are cultural "positioning".

We even have to take into account the possibility that language use can change before the corresponding changes in interpretations and goals become conscious to the language users (cf. Linke 2001). When asked why the correspondents' stand-ups in the "Tagesschau" packages have almost entirely disappeared in the newest format of 2005, the editor-in-chief just commented: "This is over" (cit. in Luginbühl 2010a). It seems to be an intuitively felt trend, which in fact is connected to a long tradition of reporting and world representation in the "Tagesschau": the detached declaration of an unambiguous truth.

Discourse communities have to negotiate their values and norms, their world view. In order to do so they have to balance their norms and values, which is only possible if these norms and values are displayed on a perceivable and thus semiotic level.

Common norms and values emerge like this in a process of joint semiotic action. Of course, individuals and groups react to changes of context, but their reaction manifested in the form and style of genre always reflects their perception and interpretation of the context, creating and shaping with varied and changed genres a new context.

3 Forms of change

We have already mentioned that genre change can occur in many different ways. It can occur slowly or quickly; it can be heterogeneous regarding different local areas or different communities of discourse; it can be the result of genre bending, mixing or embedding; and it can also be the result of a change in a surrounding genre set, changing the significance of a single genre without changes in form or style of that particular genre.

Gaberell (2000) distinguishes in a first step three kinds of change: emergence, continuity, and extinction. If a new genre emerges, it can replace another genre within a genre set or it can lead to a differentiation within a genre set. In a second step, Gaberell looks at three different aspects of genre change: what does change, where do the changes come from, why do the changes occur. The first aspect refers to changes in name, content, form, and purpose. The emergence of a new name for a genre probably is a good indicator that a genre has become more than just a genre variation for a specific group. But genres can also change when their names stay the same as names usually are more conservative than textual features (cf. Eckkrammer 2010). Changes in content, form and purpose are, as we have elaborated above, reciprocal.

We would like to focus in this part on the second aspect: where do the changes come from. Gaberell (2000) roughly differentiates partial or entire transfer from own or a foreign culture. This leads to three different categories:

- reactivation (entire transfer from own culture);
- model (partial transfer from own or foreign culture);
- take over (entire transfer from foreign culture).

If we see genres as artifacts related to social groups, specific purposes, communicative functions and cultural significances, a simple reactivation of a genre is hardly ever possible. A case in point would be the headlines in the "CBS Evening News", which can be found in a show of 1947[1] and then again in the shows from the 1980s until today, but with a very different form and purpose (cf. Luginbühl 2009). The same

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[1] Paley Center for Media in Los Angeles and New York, signature T82:0129.

is true for the third category, the (direct) take over. Genres usually are not transferred without a change, and even if they were, the transferred genres would have to be inserted in their own genre set and in culture-specific situations, so that at least the purposes do not stay the same.

So the most common form of genre change is the model: a genre is established by referring to one or more already existing genres from its own or a different culture. If a genre from a foreign culture is appropriated, it is usually "localized" (Clausen 2004), i.e. adapted to the groups' own needs. We can find the following forms of genre change:

- – expanding of variation range within a single genre;
- – shrinking of variation range within a single genre;
- – extinction of a genre;
- – branching of a genre into two or more genres;
- – hybridification of two or more genres;
- – partial reactivation of a genre;
- – partial take over of a genre.

Of course these forms can occur combined: an existing genre can build a hybrid form that has been taken over from another culture (as in the case of the "Tagesschau" package, taken over from the US) or from its own culture (as in the first television news shows, adopting genres from radio and news reels).

Looking at hybrid forms we can find "genre embedding" (Bhatia 2004) that embed features of other genres, referring to the mixed genres at all points of the text (Bhatia 2008; Brock 2009; Janich 2008), like the mixing of product promotion and reviews (Bhatia 2004; Fix 1999). If the hybrid product is more sequentially organized, we speak of "genre montage" (Fix 1999). In a diachronic perspective, packages can be considered as montages, putting parts of voice over, sound bites and stand ups in a specific order. Usually this kind of hybridization happens in order to exploit the genre features to fulfill individual and social needs, a process Bhatia (2004) calls "colonization". A special case of genre montage would be the quotation of a genre pattern, e.g. part of a commercial within a package.

3.1 Genre change in the digital age

Nowhere does our understanding of processes though which genres change become more of a challenge than in the context of digital communication (Berkenkotter 2012). Much has been written on Internet genres (see, for example, the essays in Giltrow and Stein 2009; Crystal 2006, 2011; Myers 2010). Indeed, the question of how Internet genres come into being and how they change, given the selection pressures and affordances of online media is so large, that here we can do no more than point to

some major questions raised by recent research (Herring et al. 2005; Herring and Pao-lillo 2006; Miller and Shepherd 2004, 2009; Myers 2010; Segal 2009).

How is a genre's stability or dynamism altered by Internet technology? If existing genres such as blogs quickly differentiate into species (i.e., "speciation"), in view of such rapid evolution i.e. diversification, or "speciation" (Miller and Shepherd 2009) how relevant are such concepts as "stability" and "dynamism?"

Or do some researchers mistakenly conflate genre differentiation with the soft-ware development through which such differentiation is produced?

Is the term "genre" appropriate to apply to the various forms of Internet discourse, such as e-mail, blogs, chats, and tweets? Crystal notes, "They are often described as genres, but that [usage] suggests a homogeneity, which has not yet been established," and he urges linguists to "demonstrate linguistic coherence, not assume it" (Crystal 2011: 9–10). He makes the further point that systematic studies of the varieties of Internet communication are still at a very early stage.

Questions concerning the variation of these protean forms arise when researchers study their rapid changes over time, and there appears to be a tendency to conflate the rhetorical form with the affordances of the medium in which that form appears. For example, in a 2004 essay, Miller and Shepherd concluded that the blog is a genre "that addresses a timeless rhetorical exigence in ways that are specific to its time. In the blog, the potentialities of technology, a set of cultural patterns, rhetorical conven-tions available in antecedent genres [e.g. the commonplace book], and the history of the subject combined to produce a recurrent rhetorical motive that has found a con-ventional mode of expression [...]. The blog as genre is a contemporary contribution to the "art of the self"" (Miller and Shepherd 2004).

However, in a later essay (Miller and Shepherd 2009) in which the authors reexamined many of the assumptions that they made in their (2004) article, Miller and Shepherd recanted, concluding, "*The* blog, it seems clear now is a technology, a medium, a constellation of affordances – and not a genre [...]. The genre and the medium, the social action and its instrumentality, fit so well that they seemed coter-minous, and it was thus easy to mistake the one for the other – as we did" (Miller and Shepherd 2009: 283). Orlikowski and Yates (1994) too suggest to make a difference between a "medium" (like e-mail) and different genres realized within; Herring et al. take up this difference and write of the blog as a "socio-technical format" (Herring et al. 2005: 163) with different genres. Dürscheid (2005) suggests a tripartite distinc-tion; she speaks of a technological medium (like the computer), a communication form ("*Kommunikationsform*" like chat, as a frame for genres that takes into account the sign systems used, the monologicity/dialogicity, space and time dimensions etc.) and genres as language use patterns that can arise within one communication form.

Miller and Shepherd's (2009) article is marked by their use of a set of concepts and lexicon, and hence a conceptual framework borrowed from evolutionary biology, e.g. "speciation", "affordances", "niche". One problem in applying concepts from biology to the technological context in which "texts" such as blogs arise, is that it is

too easy to bracket the psycho-social, economic, and political needs that gave rise to the communicative impulses in the first place, thus slipping into the epistemological pitfall of technological determinism.

If, however, the analyst begins her research with the assumption that genres are socio-cognitive recognition categories, and that as such, they can be "as fine-grained and differentiated as users recognize and orient towards. As instantiations increase, it is to be expected that experienced users will start to create and recognize many typifications [in order to] orient themselves and navigate – as well as to shape rhetorical recognitions" (Bazerman 1994).

We can see that such disagreements and different interpretations of generic change, have much to do with the theorist's underlying conceptual framework (and most likely, disciplinary training). If that theorist begins with the concept of genre as a socio-rhetorical form, the conventions of which undergo rapid change over time, she is, at the assumption level, conceiving of the genre as both a form of social action and a technological artifact, external to the knowledge stores of the users. If, on the other hand, the analyst conceives genre as a *recognition category*, i.e., as the scaffold of individual orientation and collective social action, then, for analytical purposes, it becomes necessary not to conflate the technological artifact (i.e., the software) with the recognizable texts that are the instantiations of those forms of life we call genres. As Myers observes, "the users of these texts [blogs, Wikis] don't just create a genre, they create a social world" (Myers 2010: 21).

4 Controversial issues

In this part we focus on three questions:

– What does initiate genre change?
– What is the role of individuals within this process?
– When do genre variations turn into genre branching, resulting in two or more new genres?

Earlier we elaborated that genre change is best understood as part of cultural change, as norms and values of a discourse community have to be negotiated by symbolic practices. We also argued that genre variation and change are never a mandatory consequence of context factors, but that they rely on the interpretations of these factors by the members of a discourse community. Nevertheless the question remains which context factors initiate cultural change. For the classical works of contrastive textology (like Kaplan [1966] 1972; Clyne 1981) only nation and language mattered. Genre change – which has not been addressed by these works – then would be an index of general language or "*Volksgeist*" (Kaplan [1966] 1972: 246) change. Although these

possibilities cannot be neglected, many studies overgeneralize the results of their analysis, as the corpus analyzed only takes into considerations the factors of nation or language; consequently *all* differences found are interpreted in the light of these factors without the analyst knowing if the characteristics found are diffused in other language areas, nations, communities of discourse or not. In order to see other factors at work and to revise the force of the language and nation factor, comparative analysis is promising; however, the basis of comparisons has to be widened. Hauser and Luginbühl (2011) suggest a "multifactorial parallel text analysis", in which similar genres to be compared are compiled according to different factors (texts belonging to the same genre, but originating from different discourse communities, different nations, different language areas, different time periods with different technologies, etc.). As these factors relate to different groups of language users, the results of comparative analyses can show to what extent changes really occurred in an entire language area or only in certain groups, where changes started, where and how quick they spread, etc.

In the case of television news one can see that not all technologies available are used instantly and that they are used in different ways in different show formats (also within the same television station); in addition forms usually ascribed to the forces of commercialization can be observed in the case of the Swiss "Tagesschau" long before the media system became commercialized. Some features of television news stories can be found in several television news shows of public European television stations, establishing thus a news culture above and beyond nation and language (Luginbühl 2008, 2010b). Similar observations by Yakhontova (2006) on conference abstracts in different disciplines or by Alim (2009) on Hip Hop culture argue that cultures and thus genre styles in some cases are translocal phenomena.

Discursive changes in the psychiatric case history from its mid-19th century (1845) standardization in asylum record books, occurred very gradually, mirroring evolving assumptions and epistemological commitments among those who cared for the mentally ill. (For example, the lexical item, "manic depressive disorder" appeared for the first time in the Ticehurst Asylum Casebooks in 1918, despite the fact that Emil Kraeplin had introduced the term into the psychiatric nomenclature in 1899.) During the asylum era, case histories were a means by which practitioners organized and disseminated "local knowledge" through professional societies, affiliations, and journals. By the end of the 19th century Sigmund Freud's case histories of his neurotic patients led to technical innovations in the genre resulting from his incorporating such literary devices as reported speech and a conclusion brought about by an *epiphany*, in which the underlying causes of the patient's neurosis are revealed.

A fuller understanding of the processes through which Internet "texts", such as blogs and wikis, undergo change – or differentiation – will depend on further research. It does seem clear at this point, however, that the arrival of Internet technology has produced as large a historical, cognitive, and material transformation as did the printing press. Thus research into the "protean genres" of the Internet and the processes through which they change/differentiate is at a very early stage.

To sum up: genre change depends on very different, interacting and partially interrelated factors – and not only a single factor such as nation, language area, or level of technology. Not all material changes must result in genre change, as genre change depends on changed perceptions of material changes or of the same situation. On a general level it thus remains unclear how contextual factors and genre change interact precisely.

Although genre change is a social phenomenon, it must be initiated by the action of an individual. As mentioned above, genres are conventionalized responses to recurring rhetoric situations, but their emergence is tied to a process of negotiation of individual responses, usually exploiting, bending, mixing and embedding different antecedents (Bhatia 2004). As Bhatia (2004) and Devitt (2004) point out, power is a relevant factor here. It seems that established members of communities can more successfully exploit generic resources and thus establish new genre forms – or inhibit a change occurring somewhere else. Again, this individual influence on genre change can be intentional or not. But also the individual factor is not decisive alone; it only works when combined with cultural and local context. Yates (1989), for example, shows how changes in business communication genres differed between companies, depending on developments in railroad industry, legal contexts and (more or less innovative) company presidents. In television news unsuccessful show formats are a case in point: they illustrate that not all changes initiated by a single show are successful at a specific place in a specific time, but that they depend on the context.

When can we speak of the emergence of a new genre? We elaborated that genres usually originate relying on one or more antecedents. A crucial question of genre change is thus at which point a text can no longer be considered as a variation of an existing genre but establishes a new genre. In some cases – when a new genre is demanded by law, creating a new purpose and/or prescribing a certain form and content – the origin of a new genre may be rather obvious. But these cases are rare compared to the everyday, uncontrolled genre change. On closer scrutiny, all aspects of genres (content, form, purpose etc. (cf. Swales 2004)) are rather fuzzy and thus the "genre integrity" (Bhatia 2004) is as well. As we noted above, genres help to establish and stabilize discourse communities while at the same time being flexible in order to adapt creatively to changing situations. In this tension though between stability and flexibility, genre borders have to be porous so that the question when a new genre is "born" probably never can fully be answered. The existence of a new genre name or the explicit discussion of new genres by discourse communities, or the rapid diversification of a genre such as the personal blog into political blogs, cooking blogs, and mommy blogs are important indicators but they usually appear after the emergence of a new genre.

By looking at genre variation and change, we are led to several issues relevant for applied linguistics (Bhatia 2004), not the least of which is the flexible and dynamic character of genres as well as their sociocultural significances. In order to get an adequate understanding of genres, students need to see the above qualities reflected in

pedagogical practices through which the instructor not only concentrates on scaffolding prototypical (and often idealized) "best examples", but also introduces writing in specific contexts and thereby creatively adapting genres. This approach requires demonstrating variation as well as conflicts within genres of the same discipline and recognizing the hybrid character of genres as well as the relation between social and textual space.

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