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**Subgenres as a sign of socio-cultural change: the case of men's magazines'**  
**problem pages in the UK**

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I

'Culture' is often said to be "one of the two or three most complex words in the English language" (Eagleton 1). Leaving aside any differentiation between 'high' and 'popular culture', this notion is herein taken from a contemporary cultural studies perspective integrating traditional anthropological approaches to the concept with a more recent sociological emphasis. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall stresses, "the word 'culture' is used to refer to whatever is distinctive about the 'way of life' of a people, community, nation or social group. [...] Alternatively, the word can be used to describe the 'shared values' of a group or of society" (2). The cultural is often conceived of as part of the social. For "the community's culture influences its social structure and vice versa; indeed both are intertwined and have been separated only for purposes of analysis" (Griswold 11).

Focusing on men's lifestyle magazines as a cultural artefact in contemporary British society, this paper explores how the emergence of problem pages as a subgenre in these publications may be explained as a sign of socio-cultural change in the UK. In particular, this contribution delves into the constitution of this subgenre, and new subject positions (e.g. 'newmannism' and 'laddishness') therein articulated, within a context of masculinity crisis. As Beynon puts it, "contemporary masculinity is held to be in crisis because the central tenets upon which previous masculinity was based (patriarchy, bread-winning, tasks demanding strength) have been eroded" (159). So,

after making some notes on problem pages and men's magazines in Britain, a number of extracts from problem pages in such magazines are examined. The notions of 'genre' and 'discourse' are subsequently theorized, and critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) is presented as an analytical resource for examining the interplay between discourse, society and culture. The status of British men's magazines' problem pages as a subgenre of its own is finally demonstrated, its evolution being finally accounted for from a CDA perspective.

## II

Men's general-interest magazines have become a well-established sector in contemporary British print media. These publications both reflect and perhaps shape the concept of masculine lifestyle and include features about health and fitness, sport, sex and women, fashion and grooming or cars. In Edwards's viewpoint, the general-interest magazines for men have "a fixed targeting of single, affluent, city-dwelling, high-earning and high-spending, primarily heterosexual men" (76). As Mort's (211) initial market research suggests, men's lifestyle magazines were launched to target a male reader of twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. Smith's (32) more recent research validates this audience tendency, reporting that as many as 59 % of the 25-to-34-year-olds regularly buy and read these magazines in Britain.

Edwards's (72-73) exploration of the history of British men's magazines reveals that, despite the long tradition of special-interest magazines dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the UK, it was only in the mid-eighties that general-interest magazines started to be published in Britain. After the launch of *FHM* in 1985 and *Arena* in 1986, titles like *Sky (Magazine)* and *GQ* appeared. In the early nineties several widely read titles continued this trend including *Esquire* (1991), *Loaded* (1994) and *Maxim* (1994).

Magazines like *XL for Men*, *Stuff for Men*, *ZM* or *Later* were successfully launched during the late nineties, thereby contributing to the consolidation of this print media sector in the UK.

According to Peterson (309-319), in the USA the general-interest magazine for men may be traced back to the end of the Second World War, when titles like *True*, *Argosy*, *Esquire* or *Play Boy* started being published. *GQ* had likewise been published in the US since the late fifties as *Gentlemen's Quarterly*. Nixon metaphorically describes the emergence of the first lifestyle magazines for men in the UK magazine market of the eighties as a search for 'the holy grail' (127-144). Media and advertising groups sought to develop an equivalent to the longer-standing American lifestyle magazine market with the success and high circulation figures of women's magazines. Echoing these debates in discussion forums like *Campaign* and *Media Week* early in the eighties, Nixon highlights that, in particular, "the development of a sector of UK general interest men's magazines was marked in its formation by the success of the 'style press' [...] it was the style-based format that set the precepts of general-interest men's magazines in their formation" (142). So, menswear and style magazines for men like *The Face*, *I-D* and *Blitz*—all of which developed in the early to mid 1980s—may be argued to represent a crucial 'pre-historical' stage of new lifestyles magazines like *Arena*, *GQ* or *FHM*, thereby contributing to constructing masculinity as "a lifestyle commodity to be bought, sold, admired through retailers' windows and aspired to in style magazines, just like anything else" (Edwards 75). Only by considering this genesis of the men's magazine in Britain, may we understand the present form of a market of lifestyle periodicals for men which, contrary to what happened in the US, had no tradition in the UK before the mid-eighties.

In most of these publications, problem columns are a recurrent feature where male readers enquire about a wide range of questions to do with the masculine lifestyle. Following the long-standing tradition of ‘agony aunts’ in women’s magazines, counsellors offer readers advice about relationships with girlfriends and wives, emotional dilemmas, health, fitness, sexuality, body care, grooming or masculine fashion. Since counselling columns first appeared in *The Athenian Gazette* in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hendly; Kent), the genre has tended to be associated with women and femininity (cf. Moran; Gough and Talbot). In particular, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the genre has been intertwined with women’s magazines in “the form of the personalized letter and personalized answer” (Ballaster et al. 123). However, with the advent of the men’s magazine in the mid-eighties, problem columns have started to specialise in the masculine lifestyle.

An examination of problem pages in men’s magazines at the turn of the millennium is evidence of a pervasive tension between ‘newmannist’ and ‘laddish’ images of men and masculinity as constructed in these publications. So-called ‘new man’ represents “the ideal partner for the modern, liberated, heterosexual woman. He is a softer, more sensitive and caring individual, who also avoids sexist language, changes nappies and loves to shop all day his own clothes [sic]” (Edley and Wetherell 204). Readers’ questions about menswear, grooming and ageing are therefore representative of the ‘new man’’s deep preoccupation with personal looks and the impact of consumerist cultures upon men. The following sample from *FHM* is illustrative of young men’s anxiety about ageing, and sheds light on the pressure exerted by peers and the workplace in this respect:

*Q. Ever since I hit 25 last year I’ve become aware of how knackered I look. My mates are the same age but could easily pass for younger, whereas my face has become saggy and tired-looking. My boss keeps teasing me and people quite*

*often think I'm well into my thirties. I'm very conscious of my double-chin and jowls – are there any exercises I could do to firm up my face?*

*TV, Northampton*

*A. Your appearance has a lot to do with general well-being. A stressful lifestyle, poor sleeping and eating habits, too much booze and a lack of exercise have a hugely negative effect on how you look. Scrutinise your workload in relation to exercise, hobbies and social activities, and aim for a balance. Facial exercises will help in addition to cardiovascular workouts. Ensure you sleep at least six hours per night and eat a wholesome and varied diet (FHM, September 1999, p. 304).*

Questions exploring partnership relations in the home repeatedly project the image of a new man striving to satisfy his girlfriend's or wife's demands, and to embrace a great number of roles once associated with 'the feminine'. That is the case of the excerpt from *Later* magazine below:

*Q: I live with my girlfriend and over the last few months we've been having huge arguments, usually started by her complaining that I always control what we watch on TV. I work hard and want to just sit and relax. Can we do anything to sort this out?*

*THE EXPERT*

*You can do something to sort this out. If you are sharing your life and living space with your partner there is bound to be conflict about who controls what and who feels they are making most of the sacrifices. You both need to realise that living together and making compromises means listening too and accepting the other person's point of view. If you don't you will end up being like two separate states at war and you might need to bring in the UN in the form of a relationship counsellor (Later, September 1999, p. 27).*

As it is, the new man's "attempt to express masculine emotional and sexual life [...] engaged in forms of compromise" (Rutherford 1988: 32) is not only manifested in men's relations with their girlfriends or wives, but also in other relations amongst men. Questions on how to cope with emotional dilemmas in the course of male friendships, like the following extract published in *ZM* magazine, are significant to this regard:

*Q. My best mate has recently got a great job and I'm really jealous. What can I say to him?*

*JS, Oxford*

*A. Tell him that you want to feel pleased for him, but that you also feel very envious. If you can communicate that envy in terms of what you wish you had – rather than what a jammy git he is – then he's also less likely to feel quite so threatened or undermined. And by focusing on exactly what you envy about your*

*mate's job, you can begin to look at ways to achieve the same for yourself* (ZM, August/September 1999, p. 80).

Nonetheless, coexisting with such constructions of the new man, problem pages similarly project more 'laddish' versions of masculinity as part of a male culture which may be "seen as a reaction to the idea of the caring, sensitive 'new man' produced by the feminist movement [...] characterised by a climate of rough behaviour, excessive drinking ('lager louts') and all-male attendance at soccer matches" (Storry and Childs 338). In magazines like *Maxim*, the laddish image "of a riotous young man enjoying life to the full" (Beynon 164) underlies, by way of example, many questions delving into men's drinking practices:

*Q: If I drink water between pints on a booze binge, will I get pissed slower or quicker?*

*Charlie Squires, Essex*

*A: The water makes little difference either way, according to Mark Bennett of Alcohol Concern. 'The amount of alcohol and the period of time determine how drunk you get. Nothing else.' Drinking water may reduce your speed and capacity but not the amount of alcohol in your body. You'll be in the bog more often too, which cuts boozing time. Bennett's advice is, 'Know how much you can drink before you start out – and stick to it. Use soft drinks to keep within your limits.'* (*Maxim*, October 1999, p. 202).

As Edwards metaphorically asserts, "where the New Man is caring and sharing the New Lad is selfish, loutish and inconsiderate to a point of infantile smelliness. He likes drinking, football and fucking and in that order of preference" (82). Such laddish versions of masculinity are thus often found in examples—without a doubt artificially created—parodying both problem columns as a genre and the would-be new men seeking advice in a cultural artefact traditionally associated with women and femininity. In the following excerpt, this process takes shape through a role inversion between an exaggeratingly 'masculinized' female counsellor and the male reader at whom she pokes fun because of his lack of manhood and, somehow, effeminate attitude. The apparently inoffensive humour in the following sample from *Sky Magazine* underlies an

invitation for men to return to the “traditional masculine values of sexism, exclusive male friendship and homophobia” (Benwell 13) mapping out laddish subject positions:

*Dear Karen*

*I'm desperate to shag this 22-year-old. I know her very well and we are good friends, though I've fancied her since day one. She has huge tits. But I'm worried if I make a pass and she doesn't like it, she'll hit me.*

*Adam, Manchester*

*Your problem is that you want a fuck but don't have the balls to ask. Christ, I've never seen such a wimp. Pussy does not spill out of those little gumball machines at the mall, you know. (If it did, I'd own a few.) You have to risk your arse to get some – that's the law. So, yellow-belly, why not take her for a drink and then say you fancy her? You know, in a few years you'll look back on this and think, “All that fuss over a pair of tits that aren't even attached to an offshore bank account and a bag of drugs.” (Sky Magazine, September 1999, p. 163).*

In any case, it is noteworthy that a tension between both images of masculinity is at times articulated in problem pages, so that readers at pains to hold on to laddish self-centredness frequently encounter replies inculcating more ‘newmannist’ attitudes and patterns of conduct. The result in many questions is the projection of “a would be New man who can't quite shake off his out-moded, but snug fitting, laddishness” (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks 35). The following example, published in *Men's Health* and dealing with a man's anxiety over fathering for fear of losing his libido, and the counsellor's recommendation of more nurturing attitudes, instantiates this tendency:

*Q. My wife is pregnant with our first child and I don't want to be in the delivery room when it pops out – the thought makes me feel sick, and I'm sure it would murder my sex drive. Got any good excuses I can use?*

*BH. Portsmouth*

*A. This is a common fear among men, but not always a rational one. “Your sexuality is not that delicate,” says Frank Pittman, a marriage and family therapist who thinks it's going to take more than a slippery placenta to destroy your sex drive. His advice: take a front-row seat. “The more involved you are at the beginning of the process, the sooner and stronger the connection will be between father and child,” says Pittman, a trifle optimistically. But if you think you may be particularly squeamish, make sure you don't hang around at the business end – make yourself useful by mopping your wife's brow or, better still, holding her hand and letting her crush yours when the going gets tough. Oh, and ignore all the abuse she'll throw at you for causing all the pain (Men's Health, July/August 1999, p. 97).*



### III

As Paltridge's (5 ff.) overview of the subject proves, throughout the twentieth century numerous disciplines across the humanities have been interested in the analysis of genres. That is the case of folklore studies, linguistic anthropology, the ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, rhetoric, critical theory, sociolinguistics or applied linguistics, among many others. Linguistic approaches to genre have been particularly concerned with disentangling the role of language and linguistic practices in the articulation of the genre-culture interface. As Eggins and Martin assert, trying to shed light on the overall conceptualisation of genres within this tradition, "different genres are different ways of using language to achieve different culturally established tasks" (26). By and large, this approach to genre is fully consistent with broader media and cultural studies approaches to this notion, which—without laying so much emphasis on examining the role of language in the configuration of genres—similarly conceive of genres as

ways of making sense of texts as particular types. Genres are texts types which structure meanings in certain ways, through their association with a particular social purpose and social context. In social semiotic terms, genres can be analysed as culturally defined (Shirato and Yell 189).

Genre-analysis theory has thus grown into a well-established tradition within discourse analysis as a major area of linguistics, with influential work in such varied domains as literacy contexts (Cope and Kalantzis; Hasan and Willians) or the discourse of professional settings (Bhatia; Christie and Martin)<sup>1</sup>. Swales's and Paltridge's work has been particularly significant in the articulation of a model for mapping out genres from a discourse analysis perspective. In their view, genres may be delimited on the basis

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eggins and Martin (237-243) for an overview of different schools of genre analysis in discourse analysis.

of common communicative purposes, schematic structure, contents, audience, communicative channel, author, cognitive framework and recurrent lexis. Specific subgenres within a given genre may be identified by considering minor variations in the factors defining a parent genre, above all as far as communicative purposes are concerned (Bhatia 13-14).

In this context, ‘discourse’ has become a crucial notion to understand the role played by genres in wider socio-cultural processes. A widely held view across the social sciences and the humanities has adopted a post-structuralist, Foucaultian perspective seeing discourses as “the practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 49). Contemporary cultural theorists accordingly assume that discourse “produces the meanings of the world (knowledge) in an intelligible way; we understand an object, event, person or practice because it is placed within the symbolic or discursive order” (Lewis 25). In this view, discourses have tended to be understood as

ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society (Hall 6).

Embracing such a broad post-structuralist stance, many discourse analysis theorists have paid particular attention to the role of language—and other semiotic modes—in actively contributing to the constitution of discourses in society<sup>2</sup>. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough point out in their attempt to reconcile linguistics and cultural studies, the notion of discourse may be used

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to underline that the notion of discourse has other meanings in linguistics and discourse analysis, which, adopting a more formal view, envisage discourse as “a continuous stretch of LANGUAGE larger than a sentence” (Crystal 118) or “*any aspect* of language use” (Fasold 65).

to refer to semiotic elements of social practices. Discourse therefore includes language (written and spoken and in combination with other semiotics, for example, with music in singing), nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movements, gestures, etc.) and visual images (for instance, photographs, film) (38).

Therefore, discourses may be seen as related to further socio-cultural practices whereby they influence each other in a dialectically constitutive way. As claimed by Fairclough and Wodak,

discourse constitutes society and culture, as well as being constituted by them. Their relationship is a dialectical one. This entails that every instance of language use makes its own small contribution to reproducing and/or transforming society and culture, including power relations (273).

The notion of genre is often regarded as key to bridge the gap between discourses—as constructs of abstract nature—and actual language usage. As Fairclough puts it—assuming the above-mentioned post-structuralist approach to discourses as “different ways of representing aspects of the world” (*Analysing Discourse* 215)—genres have come to be regarded as structures contributing to the realization of discourses as forms of social practice. Van Leeuwen has conceptualised the notion of genre in this respect as “the structure which realizes discourses as social practice, or rather, as part of it, for social practices comprise both discursive and non-discursive elements, both text and context” (194). According to Fairclough, the relation between genres and discourses is a complex one because “a genre may draw upon a particular range of discourses, though a given discourse may be drawn upon in various genres” (*Media Discourse* 12). In any case, discourse and genre alike carry specific socially and culturally determined meanings as highlighted by Kress:

Both discourse and genre arise out of the structures and processes of a society: discourses are derived from the larger social institutions within a society; genres are derived from the conventionalised social occasions on and through which social life is carried on (20).

The relation between language, genres, discourses and socio-cultural practices may be best understood if we take the social and cultural practices of a community in a specific point in time—say contemporary UK—as having a discursive dimension. Discourses are realized in, and through, actual genres where the use of language—together with other semiotic modes—features prominently. In other words, individuals draw upon different genres when they interact with each other to accomplish different cultural purposes inherent to their social life. Not only does language reflect socio-cultural practices to this regard, but it also contributes to constructing them. So, genre evolution may be explained by taking into account the ‘historical’ character of life in society and, consequently, of discourses, which “are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently” (Fairclough and Wodak 276).

The evolution of genres is noticeably linked to the changes in broader discursive practices taking shape in, and through, actual genres within a social formation. Such discursive changes are determined by even wider—and more abstract—processes at a socio-cultural level, and, as a result, have an effect on the linguistic features constituting discourses through specific genres. Here CDA has become a methodological tool accounting for this process through a dialectically constitutive view of discourse: society and culture. As it is, CDA has taken shape as a research programme exploring the interplay between power relations in society and the use of language and discourse by individuals; hence its concern with such issues as globalisation, media and politics,

ethnic prejudice and discrimination or gender representation. As Wodak stresses, the term CDA is used nowadays to refer

to the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit of communication. This research specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses [...] which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict (2).

Among the various approaches to CDA, Norman Fairclough's (*Language and Power; Discourse and Social Change; Critical Discourse Analysis; Media Discourse; Analysing Discourse*) framework has been particularly concerned with 'sociocultural change and change in discourse' (Fairclough and Wodak 264)<sup>3</sup>. Three-fold in nature, "discourse, and any specific instance of discursive practice, is seen as simultaneously (i) a language text, spoken or written, (ii) discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), (iii) sociocultural practice" (Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* 97). According to this view of discourse, individuals draw upon specific genres—articulated in actual texts through language and other semiotic modes—in the course of everyday interactions involving practices of textual production and interpretation. Such interactions are carried out in order to accomplish the cultural purposes characteristic of individuals' social activity.

#### IV

An application of Swales's and Paltridge's framework for genre identification indicates that men's magazines' problem pages are a characteristic subgenre within problem columns as a parent genre. As in other types of problem pages, there is a fixed format consisting of a reader's question followed by a counsellor's reply (cf. the Q & A

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<sup>3</sup> For thorough overviews of CDA, including different approaches within this paradigm, see Wodak and Ludwig, van Dijk or Wodak and Meyer.

structure of the extracts above). The magazine serves as a communicative channel, and, similarly to other counselling sections in magazines, a neutral style with many conversational and colloquial features abounds. The samples above show this tendency, which is distinctly exaggerated in *Sky Magazine*'s, full of rude and offensive language. Moreover, an easily identifiable scenario—or mental representation—is called to mind by magazine consumers when reading these problem pages consisting of a prototypical form of reader-counsellor interaction in the press. As it is, problem pages are part of a modern socio-cultural context where various forms of counselling (e.g. magazines, self-help literature, broadcasting) have come to be pervasive.

McCracken has pointed to a common practice in women's magazines whereby readers' questions and problems "are often artificially stimulated or magnified" (57) in the spirit of constructing ideal female readers with specific sets of values and beliefs. The same tendency may be posited in men's magazines' problem pages as a strategy of editorial boards for projecting certain ideologies of masculinity amongst consumers. It is not inadvertent, for example, that questions about ageing, like the one in *FHM* above, are accompanied by other pages in the magazine advertising a new generation of grooming and beauty products for men. As the excerpt from *Sky Magazine* makes it clear, some reader-counsellor interactions are artificially created to produce an apparently inoffensive mockery of problem pages and their readers, which conceals the projection of sexist and homophobic values amongst magazine consumers. Either way, in order to provide further credibility to the advice provided, replies are produced by an assumed 'specialist'—the counsellor is referred to as such in magazines like *Later*—in the masculine lifestyle. As in the examples from *Maxim* and *Men's Health* above, magazine counsellors' recommendations are often supported by quoting the opinion of external experts on the issues under discussion.

Despite these similarities with problem columns in other types of magazines, the communicative purpose herein is to provide male readers with advice on the assumed masculine lifestyle. As the samples from various magazines illustrate, contents accordingly revolve around questions specific to men's lifestyle, including partnership relations (cf. sample from *Later* above), fathering (cf. *Men's Health*), sexuality (cf. *Sky Magazine*), work (cf. *ZM*), body care (cf. *FHM*), emotions (cf. *ZM*) and men's leisure practices (cf. *Maxim*). In point of fact, the audience of this variety of problem pages includes the 25- to 40-year-old, *primarily* single, heterosexual, city-dwelling, high-earning-and-spending target readers of men's magazines. The allusions to girlfriends and wives (cf. *Later* and *Men's Health*), readers' age (cf. *FHM*), and the—more or less—subtle homophobic comments (cf. *Sky Magazine*) in some of the problem pages examined above, are consistent with men's magazines' ideal readers.

All in all, men's magazines' problem columns may be said conform to the overall characteristics of the problem page as a textual type, as substantiated by a comparison with previous analyses of the genre (Thibault; Gough and Talbot; Kreuz and Graesser). Nevertheless, problem pages in men's magazines evidence a considerable degree of autonomy in terms of communicative purposes, contents and audience, which makes them a distinctive subgenre of problem pages on the whole. A CDA approach to problem columns in the new generation of men's magazines could well account for the emergence and consolidation of this subgenre. As a matter of fact, from the late seventies, socio-cultural circumstances such as the challenges of second-wave feminism, the shifting gender relations in the workplace and the home, or the increasing impact of consumerism upon men, may be claimed to have powerfully contributed to the questioning of patriarchal and hegemonic forms of traditional masculinities, and the consequent constitution of masculinity-crisis discourses in

Western societies like Britain (cf. Horrocks; MacInness). Considering the mutually shaping relation between the discursive and the socio-cultural orders posited by CDA, the emergence of men's magazines may be argued to be socially and culturally determined by pre-existing discourses on masculinity 'crisis' in present-day UK. Indeed these lifestyle periodicals have been conceived of as providing male readers with "a kind of cultural comfort zone, giving men the discursive resources to handle their changing circumstances and experiences" (Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks 156). Such discursive resources materialize, by way of example, in the novel use—especially in a type of publication targeted at men—of problem columns as a genre traditionally associated with women and femininity (cf. Hendly; Moran).

Following the traditional format of 'agony aunts' in women's magazines, men's magazines' problem columns have taken shape as a subgenre of its own, thereby projecting new images of masculinity likewise permeating other popular-culture genres across television, film, advertising and print media in the UK. Since the mid-nineties, for instance, public icons like soccer player David Beckham have come to epitomize the apparatus of newmannism in the UK, whereas TV sitcoms such as *Men Behaving Badly* (BBC1) or radio series like *The Locker Room* (Radio 4) have succeeded commercially through their recreation of laddish sets of values and attitudes among many young men in Britain. As substantiated by the magazine extracts above, newmannist identity projects may be claimed to underlie the representation of readers concerned with personal looks (cf. *FHM*), trying to come to terms with emotions (cf. *ZM*), and negotiating aspects of life in partnership including conflicts about who controls what at home (cf. *Later*). In a similar fashion, problem columns in the magazines incorporate alternative laddish constructions of men more selfishly preoccupied with alcohol (cf. *Maxim*), sex and the very parody of the new man (cf. *Sky Magazine*). In fact, as



discussed by Nixon and Edwards, both versions of masculinity—and their tensions as in *Men's Health's* laddish husband in new man's clothing—have resulted from the crisis of traditional constructions of masculinity and the subsequent articulation of new discourses on what it means to be a man: either embracing dimensions formerly deemed—to a large extent—feminine or recreating some of the most disparagingly patriarchal facets of traditional masculinities. Such images have pervaded popular-culture genres in Britain—men's magazines and problem pages included—from the eighties.

## V

In Martin's view, "genre represents the system of staged, goal-oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives" (46). Any changes in the social life of a community may accordingly be expected to have an effect in their interactional patterns and produce alterations in the genres employed by social actors, say, through the appearance of subgenres. Although the analysis of actual linguistic features is out of the scope of this paper on problem pages, CDA has illuminated how specific textual instances come to activate men's magazines' problem columns as a characteristic subgenre within the broader context of current discourses of masculinity crisis in Britain.

The analysis of genre evolution as a factor of socio-cultural change has not been particularly drawn attention to by historical discourse analysis, where "there have been studies of various genres at different periods, but no comprehensive accounts" (Brinton 145). Consequently, in addition to the implications for the analysis of men's magazines and problem pages in the UK, studies like the present one may open new vistas on the importance of generic evolution for observing socio-cultural change. As Fairclough

stresses, genres are ways “of acting in its [sic] discourse aspect [...] which are tied to particular networks of social practices” (*Analysing Discourse* 216). This examination of men’s magazines’ problem pages in Britain confirms that genre-analysis theory provides invaluable mechanisms not only for disentangling the structure of specific genres, but also for identifying subgenres within parent genres. In this respect, CDA is able to bridge the gap between the linguistic and the socio-cultural by deciphering how language and discourse are embedded in social and cultural processes. Used in combination, CDA may well account for the socio-cultural matrix of specific instances of generic evolution and change that genre-analysis theory may have helped to identify. This collaboration may be pushed forward through an analysis of how social and cultural changes, which CDA may have spotted in specific discourses, are actually articulated through an evolution of genres otherwise difficult to justify. In short, this piece of research substantiates the potential of CDA and genre theory for the analysis of the evolutionary character of media discourses in specific social and cultural formations.

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