

Michael Basseler, Ansgar Nünning and Christine Schwanecke (eds.)

in collaboration with Elizabeth Kovach

The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change
in Contemporary Fiction:

Theoretical Frameworks, Genres and Model Interpretations

Ansgar Nünning und Vera Nünning (Hg.)

ELCH

Studies in English Literary and Cultural History

ELK

Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft

Band 56

Michael Basseler, Ansgar Nünning
and Christine Schwanecke (eds.)
in collaboration with Elizabeth Kovach

The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change in Contemporary Fiction

Theoretical Frameworks, Genres
and Model Interpretations

 Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

**The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change
in Contemporary Fiction. Theoretical Frameworks,
Genres and Model Interpretations.**

Edited by Michael Basseler, Ansgar Nünning
and Christine Schwanecke. -

Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013

(ELCH ; Band 56)

ISBN 978-3-86821-491-8

DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

Finanziert aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung.

Cover Design: Brigitta Disseldorf

© WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013

ISBN 978-3-86821-491-8

No part of this book, covered by the copyright hereon,
may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means
without prior permission of the publisher.

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: (0651) 41504
Internet: <http://www.wvttrier.de>
E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With the recent renaissance in the theory and history of genre, questions regarding what brings about and, consequently, explains transformations within and between particular genres have become central. Whether literary genres are conceptualized as families or classes of texts, sets of norms and conventions, repertoires of devices, pragmatic constructs, bodies or fields of knowledge, social contracts between authors and readers, or interpretive tools, to name but a few of the most dominant explanatory frameworks, one thing is clear: genres are dynamic and changing phenomena. Yet, although literary theory has come up with a broad range of ways to account for generic change, scholars have neither given systematic and up-to-date overviews of the various explanations of generic change nor have they closely looked at the ways in which new genres have actually emerged to test the hypotheses generated by genre theory.

Accordingly, this volume sets out to shed further light on the processes involved in what can be referred to as ‘the cultural dynamics of generic change.’ As this phrase immediately suggests, the contributions gathered in this volume are particularly focused on exploring the ways in which genres are determined not only by changes within the literary system, but also by ‘extra-literary’ – i.e., cultural – factors and contexts. While the chapters in the first part are dedicated to theorizing the cultural dynamics of generic change by offering systematic overviews of existing approaches as well as spelling out new hypotheses, the chapters in the second part of this volume examine a great variety of fictional genres within, as well as beyond, British and American literature.

This volume on the ‘cultural dynamics of generic change’ has emerged from the work of the ‘International PhD Programme “Literary and Cultural Studies”’ (IPP) based at Justus-Liebig-University, Giessen, and Giessen University’s ‘European Phdnet Literary and Cultural Studies’ (PhDnet), which is funded by the ‘German Academic Exchange Service’ (DAAD). In November 2012, both international doctoral programs, the IPP and PhDnet, jointly organized a preparatory conference, at which international PhD students, postdocs, and university professors gathered to discuss the fascinating matters of generic change and ensure the projected volume’s coherence.

Publishing the results of these discussions would not have been possible without substantial support. This is why we, the publishers, would like to thank, first and foremost, the DAAD and the German ‘Federal Ministry of Education and Research’ (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*) for their generous publication grant. We would also like to express our gratitude to Dr. Erwin Otto and Dr. Petra Vock of *Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier* (WVT) for kindly assisting us in realizing this project. But also our wonderful editing team’s support is very much appreciated: we thank, above all, Elizabeth Kovach, who took on the lion’s share of work in linguistically and stylistically checking and editing the articles; and we thank, last but not least, the IPP

team members, Anna Weigel and Farzad Boobani, for assisting us in carefully proof-reading and formatting the edited articles.

Finally we would like to extend our thanks to both the external contributors to this volume and all our IPP and PhDnet doctoral students. They have answered all our questions on theorizing, analyzing and interpreting generic change and its cultural dynamics with the utmost fervor and precision.

Michael Basseler, Ansgar Nünning & Christine Schwanecke
Giessen, August 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MICHAEL BASSELER, ANSGAR NÜNNING & CHRISTINE SCHWANECKE	
The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change: Surveying Kinds and Problems of Literary History and Accounting for the Development of Genres	1

PART I

The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change: Theoretical Frameworks

MICHAEL BASSELER	
Tradition, Innovation and Defamiliarization in the Evolution of Genres: Explanations of Generic Change from Russian Formalism to the Renaissance of Genre Theory in the 21st Century	43
JAN RUPP	
Bakhtin's Genre Theory as an Explanatory Framework for Generic Change: Concepts, Building Blocks and Impulses for Modern Genre Theory and Study	65
JANINE HAUTHAL	
Metaization and Self-Reflexivity as Catalysts for Genre Development: Genre Memory and Genre Critique in Novelistic Meta-Genres	81
ANSGAR NÜNNING & CHRISTINE SCHWANECKE	
Crossing Generic Borders – Blurring Generic Boundaries: Hybridization as a Catalyst for Generic Change and for the Transformation of Systems of Genres	115
JAN BAETENS	
The 'Photo-Graphic Novel:' Hybridization and Genre Theory	147
MARCUS HARTNER	
Hybrid Genres and Cultural Change: A Cognitive Approach	163
HETA PYRHÖNEN	
Generic Stability Despite Hybridization: The Austenian Dominant Construction Principle	183
ANSGAR NÜNNING & JAN RUPP	
Media and Medialization as Catalysts for Genre Development: Theoretical Frameworks, Analytical Concepts and a Selective Overview of Varieties of Intermedial Narration in British Fiction	201

PART II

New Genres in Contemporary Narrative Fiction: Model Interpretations

JUTTA WEINGARTEN

Generatiographical Writing in Migration Literature: Sathnam Sanghera's
Memoir *The Boy with the Topknot* 237

POLINA SHVANYUKOVA

Generic Encounters in Italian Fictions of Immigration: Hybridity in
Amara Lakhous' *Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* 255

BEATRICE SELIGARDI

Retracing the Dynamics of 'University Fiction:' Formula and Hybridization
in David Lodge's 'Campus Trilogy' 271

ALEXANDER SCHERR

Discursive Hybrids between Literature and Science: Self-Reflexivity as a
Catalyst for Generic Change in Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* 285

ELIZABETH KOVACH

Cataclysmic Events as Genre Shapers? A Case Study of the Fantastic in
Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 301

NORA BERNING

Graphic Narrative Theory Meets Genre Theory: A Model Interpretation of
Joe Sacco's *Safe Area Goražde* 315

ANNE RÜGGEMEIER

The Re-Construction of Auto/Biography through Objects: Nancy K. Miller's
Relational Autobiography *What They Saved* 329

CHRISTIANE STRUTH

Autobiographies in the Third Person: The Self As Other in
Breyten Breytenbach's Metaautobiography *The True Confessions of an
Albino Terrorist* and J. M. Coetzee's Meta-'Autrebiography' *Summertime* 347

ANNA WEIGEL

The Rise of the New Genre 'Fictions of the Internet:' Hybridized and
Medialized Reading and Writing Practices in Jeffery Deaver's *Roadside Crosses* 365

MIRJAM HORN

'Through no Badness or Villainy of His Own:' Generic Change from Law to
Literature in Vanessa Place's *Statement of Facts* 381

THE CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF GENERIC CHANGE:
SURVEYING KINDS AND PROBLEMS OF LITERARY HISTORY
AND ACCOUNTING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENRES¹

MICHAEL BASSELER, ANSGAR NÜNNING & CHRISTINE SCHWANECKE

1. Accounting for Shifts and Changes within Genres:
Introducing the Goals, Theoretical Premises and Outline of the Volume

In her article on “Genre” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, the Finnish genre theorist Heta Pyrhönen raises a central question of genre theory – a question to which studies in the theory and history of genre have failed to provide satisfactory answers, namely, “What accounts for shifts and changes within a genre?” (Pyrhönen 2007: 119) As Pyrhönen and many other genre theorists have pointed out, genres are curiously Janus-faced. On the one hand, they are characterized by more or less fixed sets of conventions or features that make up the repertoire of the respective genre and that fulfill important communicative functions, as Elisabeth Wesseling, for instance, explains: “Generic repertoires may be regarded as bodies of shared knowledge which have been inferred from perceived regularities in individual literary texts. As sets of norms of which both readers and writers are aware, genres fulfill an important role in the process of literary communication.” (Wesseling 1991: 18) On the other hand, genres are also subject to historical change and cultural variation. Genres, thus, not only tend to encompass a number of generic variants; they also respond to various cultural contexts and economic, political and social changes.

This volume sets out to explore the processes that are involved in the cultural dynamics of changes, developments and innovations within and between literary genres: where exactly does the “ceaseless dynamism” come from that Jurij Tynjanov (2000 [1924]: 33) identified as the main force behind literary evolution? As the juxtaposition of the key concepts ‘cultural dynamics’ and ‘generic change’ in the title already highlights, the chapters that follow explore the question of how genres are determined not only by changes within the literary system but also by extra-literary, e.g., cultural, economic, and social factors and contexts. Pyrhönen’s observations at the end of her essay provide the starting point for the articles in this volume: “explanations of generic

¹ For this introduction, we have drawn on and adapted ideas and formulations first published in an article on the unavoidability of literary theory for literary and cultural history (cf. Nünning 2001a) that originally appeared in a volume of the yearbook *REAL* (cf. Grabes 2001) as well as on some ideas that one of the editors explored in a number of articles on literary history and the Englishness of English literary histories (cf. Nünning 2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2013).

change need to account both for modifications within the literary system and for the impact of the larger socio-cultural context.” (Pyrhönen 2007: 122)

Although literary theory has come up with a broad range of ways to account for generic change, there is as yet neither a systematic and up-to-date overview of the various explanations of generic change nor a sustained analysis of the ways in which new genres have actually emerged that could test the hypotheses generated by genre theory. Up to now, the most influential theories that have been developed range from the Russian Formalists’ explanations of generic innovation, which are based on the notions of automatization and defamiliarization, to more recent hypotheses that view concepts such as hybridization, medialization and metaization as catalysts for generic change. Unfortunately, much like the theory of literary historiography at large, these theories have been relatively far removed from the actual work done in genre history and critical practice. Although one might be inclined to think that there is nothing wrong with such a state of peaceful co-existence between literary theory and genre history, the trouble is that it is usually accompanied by a tendency of one field to ignore or simply be ignorant of what is going on in the other – despite the fact that, as we will try to show, both the theories of literary historiography and genres and the actual practice of writing histories of literature and specific genres are much more closely intertwined than one might be inclined to expect.

Focusing on the interrelation between changes in the cultural and historical contexts and the development of literary genres, this volume pursues two main goals: to provide a cutting-edge discussion of the theoretical issues at hand, and to examine the cultural dynamics of change in various contemporary genres in a practice-oriented manner. The chapters in Part I provide a systematic and state-of-the-art overview as well as a critical discussion of the various explanations of generic change that have been proffered so far; they will also develop some new hypotheses that have not yet been spelled out in genre theory. Focusing on the paradigm genre of ‘the novel,’ the articles in Part II are designed, firstly, as test-cases of the various hypotheses about generic change; secondly, as delineations of the emergence or ‘rise’ of new genres in contemporary fiction; and thirdly, as model interpretations of especially relevant new kinds or sub-genres of the novel.

Since the editors are convinced that the chapters in this volume speak for themselves and, therefore, need no summary here, this introduction focuses on delineating and discussing some of the main theoretical premises of the volume. We will problematize the relationship between the theorization of literary history,² on the one hand, and the actual practice of writing literary history and genre histories on the other. Exploring where the theoretical frameworks, premises and problems of literary history and

² When we speak of ‘literary history,’ we by no means intend to equate it with ‘genre history.’ Despite this, ‘genre history’ is often included in and implied in our employment of the more general term of ‘literary history.’ Generic change can be seen as one particular realm of change within the wider system of literature, and ‘literary history’ can be read as a paradigmatic synecdoche, as a universal umbrella, a *totum pro parte* for the history of genres and related issues.