



Sociolinguistics Symposium 20, Panel “Typographic Landscaping”
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Typography as Context

The Graphic Constitution of Genres and Social Territories

Outline

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2 On genres

Genre concept

“[G]enres can be defined as the historically specific conventions and ideals according to which authors compose discourse and audiences receive it. In this view, genres consist of orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, and sets of expectations that are not part of discourse structure, but of the ways actors relate to and use language [...]” (Hanks 1987: 670)

“We conceive of genre as one order of speech style, a constellation of systematically related, co-occurrent features and structures that contrasts with other such constellations [...] and provides a conventionalized orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse [...]. More specifically, a genre is a speech style oriented to the production and reception of particular kinds of text.” (Bauman 2005: 58)

Genres and ideology

“Genres also bear social, ideological, and political-economic connections; genres may thus be associated with distinct groups as defined by gender, age, social class, occupation, and the like. Invoking a genre thus creates indexical connections that extend far beyond the present setting of production or reception, thereby linking a particular act to other times, places and persons.” (Briggs/Bauman 1992: 147–148)

Enregisterment of genres

“registers [are] culture-internal models of personhood linked to speech forms.” (Agha 2007: 135)

“*Enregisterment*: processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population.” (Agha 2007: 81)



Genres as interpretive phenomena

“*genres* [are] typical forms of text which link kinds of producer, consumer, topic, medium, manner and occasion [...]. These control the behaviour of producers of such texts, and the expectations of potential consumers. [...] Like the category of text, genres are socially ascribed classifications of semiotic form. Genres only exist in so far as a social group declares and enforces the rules that constitute them.” (Hodge/Kress 1988: 7)

Genres and social/metapragmatic practice

- Genres are the result of *recurrent* communicative [and metacommunicative] practice
 - ⇒ Communicative practice and “intertextual gaps” are part of generic change (Cf. Günthner/Knoblach 1995)

3 Typographic genre constitution

Hypothesis

Typographic forms and constellations serve as *contextualization* or *genre cues*, since they are indexically linked with (ascribed to) specific genres.

Hence, typographic form frames the interpretation of text, evokes interpretive expectations and triggers communicative knowledge.

Typographic dispositives

“[Ich] verstehe [...] unter typographischen Dispositiven makrotypographische Kompositionsschemata, die als syntagmatisch gestalthafte ‘Superzeichen’ jeweils Textsorten konnotieren. Typographische Dispositive stellen eine hochgeneralisierte Form der konnotativen Semantisierung typographischer Syntax dar. Der Existenz von typographischen Dispositiven ist es zu verdanken, daß man auf den ersten Blick in der Lage ist, eine Seite aus einer Tageszeitung von einem Dramentext oder einem Lexikoneintrag zu unterscheiden. [...] Die Vorstellungen über Textklassen und ihre charakteristischen Eigenschaften umfassen immer auch Merkmale ihrer äußeren (typographischen) Form; sie gehören zum Alltagswissen unserer Lesekultur.” (Wehde 2000: 119)

(I consider *typographic dispositives* as macrotypographical schemata of composition which connote text types in form of syntagmatic gestalt-like ‘super-signs’. Typographic dispositives are a highly generalized form of connotative semantification of typographical syntax. It is due to the existence of typographic dispositives that we are able to distinguish a newspaper page from a drama text or a lexicon article at a first glance. [...] Our ideas of text classes and their typical characteristics always also entail features of their outer (typographic) form; they are part of our everyday knowledge and our reading culture. [my transl.]

Typographic genre constitution

Typographic means/constellations might indicate perceived

- *text function*
- *historicity*



- *actors* (social personae)
- *social relations* and *power*
- *ideologies*

In *enplaced communication*, these allocations are *bi-directionally linked* with the location and with the social ascriptions the location is subject to

4 Exemplification

Legitimate practices

“Aber das ist die alte leidige Ultra-/Normalofan-Diskussion. Solange unsere organisierten Fans [= Ultras; Anm. J. S.] immer gegen jeden und alles protestieren und noch nicht mal ihre Schals bei ‘You’ll never walk alone’ hochhalten, was dann das schöne Gesamtbild kaputtmacht, solange können wir nur von einer perfekten Stimmung im Stadion [sic!] träumen.” (<http://www.bvb-forum.de/index.php?id=173591> <30. 12. 2011>)

(But that’s the old tiresome Ultra/normalofan discussion. As long as our organized fans [the Ultras] continue to protest against everybody and everything and refuse to hold up their scarfs even when “You’ll never walk alone” is being played, which destroys the overall picture, we can only dream of a perfect stadium atmosphere. [my transl.])

“Was ist aus den guten alten, von Frau / Mutti / Omi zusammen genähten, und selbst mit viel Liebe bemalten Zaunfahnen geworden? Klar, durch Digitaldruck & co Sind mittlerweile teilweise sogar Fotos auf Zaunfahnen darstellbar, aber dies ist meiner Meinung nach keine Entwicklung, die man mitmachen sollte. Mit einer Zaunfahne muss sich ein Fanclub identifizieren. Und das ist bei einer selbst gemalten Zaunfahne doch viel eher der Fall als an einer, beim Onlinehändler XY, bestellten. Natürlich sieht eine selbst gemachte Fahne wahrscheinlich optisch nicht so perfekt aus, wie eine bestellte, doch DAS macht die alten ‘Lappen’ doch gerade so liebenswert! Außerdem könnt ihr euch sicher sein: In einigen Jahren blickt ihr mit Sicherheit stolz auf eure selbst gemalte Zaunfahne und erinnert euch an die geilen (und mit Sicherheit auch beschissenen) Tage die ihr und eure Zaunfahne mitgemacht habt. Auch wenn sie vielleicht nicht die schönste ist – Es ist EURE Zaunfahne! Deswegen, der Appell, hier im BPZ [= ‘Beipackzettel’, Name of the Fanzine; J. S.]: Nehmt euch die Zeit, malt eure Zaunfahne selbst – Es lohnt sich auf jeden Fall und für den Block ist es eine Bereicherung!” (Ultras Krefeld 2011: 3)

(What happened to the good old fence banner that was tailored by your wife, mum or grandma, and that was decorated with so much love? Granted, digital print meanwhile even allows for photographs on such banners, but I do not consider this a development one should follow. A fan club has to identify with his fence banner. And with a self-drawn banner, this is much more the case than with one that has been ordered by online dealer XY. Arguably, a self-made banner does not look as perfect as an ordered one, but it’s exactly THIS that makes these old rags so lovely! Furthermore, you can be sure of one thing: Some years ahead, you will certainly look back proudly to your fence banner, and you remember those great (and probably also the lousy) days you and your banner have had. Even if it is not the most beautiful one – it is YOUR banner! Therefore my plea, here in the BPZ [name of the fanzine; J. S.]: Take your time and draw the fence banner yourself – it will pay off and it enriches the block atmosphere! [my transl.]



5 Conclusions: Typographic landscapes as social territories

- Genres as *orienting frameworks* make texts – and the places to which these texts are embedded – *socially interpretable* and *structure the social world*
- This is achieved by means of the *connection* of the discussed categories, *function, historicity, actors, social relations, power* and *ideology*, with genres
- All these aspects are part of *genre knowledge*
- The *context of interpretation*, when we read texts that are allocated to a specific genre, is derived from inferences we draw due to communicative cues, amongst others, *typographic cues*
- *Typographic constellations* are thus *contexts that stabilize communication* and invite us to read a text (or place) in a specific way
- *Typographic landscapes* are *social territories*, to which claims (of property, legitimacy, authority, orthopraxy etc.) are made by means of generic, enregistered typographic forms
- The claims, however, are themselves often *confronted with counter-claims*, and the indexical meaning of the forms is by no means stable, but itself *subject to discursive negotiation*

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