

Sociology of Genres

①

Confusion (or lack of distinction) between genres and individual exemplars. (Cf. Dahlhaus "Sociology" essay on a Bach fugue as illustrating the principle of manufacture, p. ...). A fundamental interpretive error, confusing the exemplar for the genre.

Point → The genre (fugue) might -- but does the individual exemplar? We need to be able to distinguish between individuals -- and in this difference may be said to reside the aesthetic's component of the work (true?) (in the "strong sense" of the term)

JH principle → The sociological "content" of an artwork resides most notably in its genre, not in the individual exemplar. But what does this mean??

∴ Genre

[cf: langue; discourse network]

- ① socially produced, "constructed" ^{- Also} "social formation" ("reading formation") of the receiver etc. (norms for reception of genre socially determined) [may be affirmational or contain a "site of resistance"]
- ② May be pre-centered; centered; post-centered in terms of fixity, clarity,
- ③ Genres are connotationally "loaded" -- This is a natural result of its "social construction." What kinds of connotational loads might (or does) a genre carry at any given stage of its development?

(The connotational loads are multiple ... and manifold ... capable of being unlocked with the proper question). AXIOM: Genres may not be reduced to single connotations.

- a) ^{Power- or} hegemonic-aspects (the genre serves whose interests?)
 - 1) local/social
 - 2) regional/social
 - 3) religious/philosophical
 - 4) political
 - 5) sexual/gender relations
 - 6) economic (i.e., what kinds of economic support will it take to distribute/perform/maintain this genre?)

All these things are in part responsible for the heterogeneity, "social authorship" of a work (i.e., the extent to which a work participates in a genre)

b) Structural aspects. [involve modes + procedures of the genre's performativity, which will probably be, at some level, in dialogue with other genres]

④ Note: any individual artist/composer working within a genre need not be (and probably is not) concerned with the multiple connotational loads within a genre. In any event, these aspects of a genre are "given," that is,

They are not subjected to an act of "intentionality" on the part of the composer. ~~It is~~ (A slight exception might be in those situations in which an artist feels free to select from many different, widely connotationally varied, genres. Genre-choice, in this sense, could conceivably be an intentional act. The issue, though, is whether such a situation ever exists in the real world.)

⑤ ~~④~~ Thus: a genre, as "given," is outside the grasp of a composer to alter. One may dialogue with the genre (and subsequent artists may understand that dialogue to have fundamentally altered some features of the genre -- as in deformations -- But the genre with which a piece is in dialogue is itself unaltered: it remains a fixed backdrop or frame of reference with which to understand the individual exemplar.

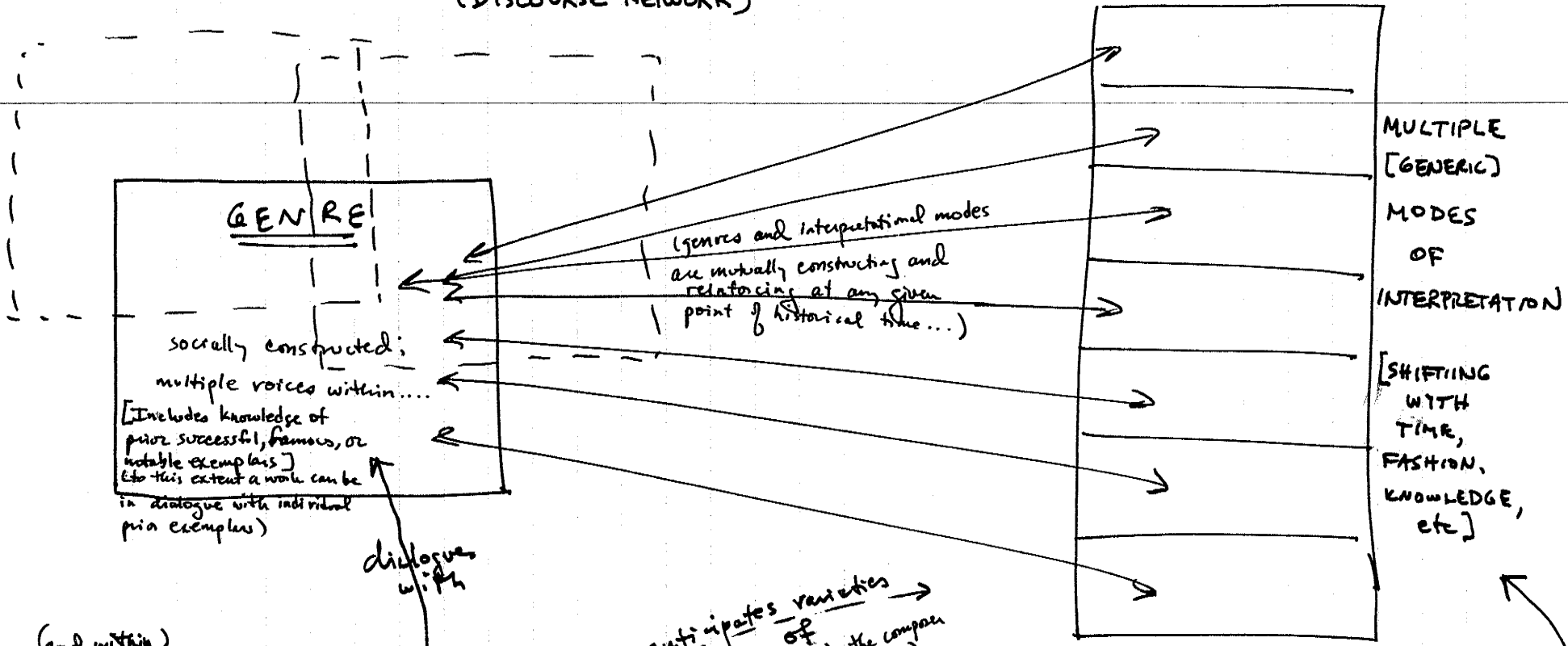
⑥ ~~⑤~~ Any individual exemplar ("work") is a produced dialogue with a multiply, connotationally loaded genre. It is the staging of an event to be subjected to the norms of interpretation made possible by that ["socially constructed"] genre. It is the genre [large aspects of which are tacit, understood, to be taken for granted, "without saying"] that provides the possibility of "understanding" (in dialoguing with) a work.
(Our dialogue with its dialogue)

Obv → There are also hermeneutic genres: modes of claiming an understanding with a work... And those modes or genres make it possible for us to undertake our dialogue and for us to believe those dialogues are meaningful.

⑦ ~~⑥~~ Some of these hermeneutic modes for music have been:
a) sympathetic/empathetic/^{reverent} response [belief in emotional-response accuracy] ^{aesthetics of immediacy}
b) reproductive [performative]: grounded in physicality and intuition
(plus prior modes of training) = performative tradition
c) Bildung-response: historical-theoretical training
d) culture-critical (interrogatory, etc.)

etc.

THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE (DISCOURSE NETWORK)



(and within) into this discourse network; begins the individual dialogue.

WORK
(utterance)
is interpreted

AND REMAINS (relatively) FIXED (unlike "the social dialogue") as it moves into differing historical times and conditions.

and at some point a receiver enters into the picture (this can be a performer or a listener) and begins another dialogue - that must begin through the modes of interpretation -

Individual
receiver

must begin the dialogue through here. (and note that modes available vary markedly with time and place)

in part seeking to construct, affirm, permanent identity? (cf. Lacan mirror stage)

Note: "original" approaches will try to construct "new modes" of interp. ... Are they in any sense "new"? More often they involve new configurations of certain pre-existing aspects of the "given" modes

Cf. Jakobson Model of Communication of which this is a variant, (2)

in dialogue with interrelated genres

PRODUCTION LEVEL (social)

GENRE (dynamic: changes with time)
 "socially constructed" with multiple connotational loads, many of which the composer is either unaware of or takes for granted. (Some aspects are "hidden")

Note: certain aspects of the genre are in dialogue with certain aspects of the generic reception modes... they anticipate typical modes of reception (at a given historical moment), and, in absence, play into them.

PRODUCTION LEVEL (individual)

work/utterance
 in dialogue with genre

= generally survives in time as "fixed letter" -- relatively stable -- the genres above and below are highly fluid and change markedly with time.

RECEPTION LEVEL (social)

MULTIPLE [GENERIC] MODES OF INTERPRETATION of "work"
 THESE INEVITABLY ALTER WITH TIME

Many modes (+ interpreters) are unaware of or unconcerned with the norms of the original genre -- they can attempt to "cut it loose" from its genre or free expression -- obv. they are wrong.

Our main question: WHY?

Many of the modes are concerned with a special privileging of their own hermeneutic validity, esp. to the exclusion of rival modes... These conflicts are both professional + often political.

RECEPTION LEVEL (personal)

individual receiver

Ind. interp. in dialogue with various modes of reception, through which, and only through which, the work can be said to have "communicated."

Sidelight on Work qua utterance. (+ vis-a-vis genre)

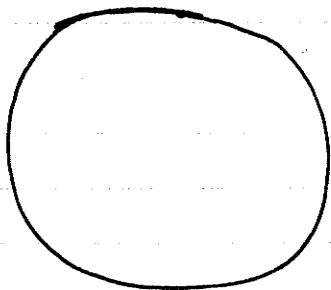
Genre has certain minimal requirements in order to be satisfied (or to act in a participatory dialogue) -- Some of these requirements are technical [in terms of "necessary technique" ^{"level of expertise expected"}], some are functional, and so on. ^{"level of intensity; level of clarity, etc."} ^{"level of abstractness required to follow the logic"} ^{COMPUTER SIGN → "successful transaction"}

(serviceability for
browser's context
performance)

Any utterance can: ① fall short of these minimal requirements ["unsuccessful", "incomplete", etc.]; ② meet the requirements; ③ exceed the requirements in varying degrees. ^(level of elegance + craft) Requirements = "what's needed to get the job done, the nature of that job determined by the social construction of the game."

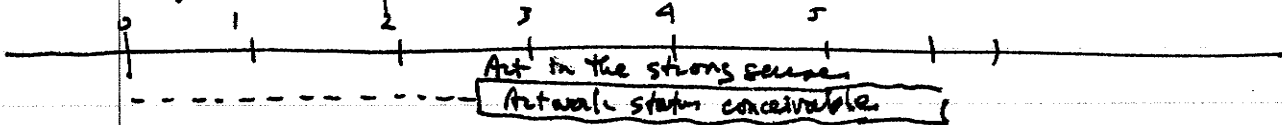
Works within the "game of art" are stylized utterances, utterances, in part about style + techniques. ^(emotional response, etc.) Therefore to ③ above -- "exceeding" -- may refer to its technical/emotional components.

POSTULATE → Any aspect of an utterance that exceeds the expectations of the genre may be considered a surplus. This surplus-currency or capital may be reckoned as contributing to the ~~work's~~ strengthening of the work's "art-character" or its particularity as an individual utterance. This "surplus" is not the only locus of the art character of a work -- But its presence ^{can} trigger ~~the~~ a response that then proceeds to dialogue with the whole work (including the generic aspects) as a work of art... that is, art is the strong sense.



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Prohaska - Category (2)

yes ... but not in the story sense.

Possible to meet the requirements ... and be considered an individual artwork (but character available at this level?)

I.e., e.g., → a particularly effective or memorable ≙ configuration of generic elements -- or does this already count as surplus? (i.e., particularly striking or effective or telling generic examples)

Vivaldi Concertos
Stravinsky symphonies
Rossini overtures

"generic exemplars" illustrating and embodying a norm ... also ... "art"?

Note: of course, it often happens that the particularity of an utterance is fully congruent -- and manifests -- with the social implications of the genre. Even so, the social implications therein are fundamentally a function of the genre, which it bears upon or summons by the category.

With this, several questions emerge:

Most important: (AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT PROBLEM)

To what extent can an utterance/work (parole), entering ^(or intervening in) the socially constructed discourse network, be said to escape a total reduction into social construction, in order to affirm the individual configuration of its particulars? (that is, to affirm the utterance-quality of its utterance.)

Can it escape a total determination by the discourse network?

Or is there ^{indeed} an "author," a "subject," an "aesthetic presence" to be discerned in the utterance. (I suggest that there is indeed!) (But that presence does not represent the totality of the utterance)

Obv [?] the solution must be that it is in the utterances/particularities (concrete particularities) that the aesthetic presence lies.

^{Now of course,} The discourse network is the condition of possibility for the existence of the utterance. Still, the utterance has a concreteness and specificity not manifest at the generic/discourse-network level. This is why an individual Bach fugue may not be reduced to the principle of manufacture. -- To be sure, its genre may exemplify or articulate that principle (among many others: always keep in mind the multiplicity of connotational loads), but there are features of the concrete utterance that are unique.

And this is why, at an individual level, one Bach fugue is not collapsible into every other one.

This non-collapseability, in artworks, is something we are invited to savor as "aesthetic presence." ^(= the "game" of certain types of art) In certain cultures, times, places, this can be vaulted into a presumed principle of AUTONOMY

... that is ... by social agreement to focus or restrict the discussion to the particulars of individual utterances ... and (by extension) to minimize or to rule out-of-bounds close attention to the generic, and especially to its manifold social connotations.

(The opposite viewpoint would focus only on the multiple voices of the genre + discourse network -- This is what causes a dispersion of meaning, the death of the author, and so on)

Solution:

Neither side has exclusive rights to correctness, especially when one side seeks to delegitimize the means (or denigrate the means) of the other side.

∴ The "Art Situation" is one that involves a dialoguing (or oscillation, if one prefers) between two principles:

- AND
- ① the social / discourse network / generic / "textual"
 - ② the individual / concrete utterance / particular / "aesthetic"
- THE CRUX IS IN THE DIALOGUING, THE BACK-AND-FORTH, NOT IN ONE SIDE ALONE!!

Those wishing to confront the full problematics of the issues at hand will keep in mind the total Art Situation as a condition of meaning(s). The methodological error to avoid is to insist on a blocking-out of certain features of the Total Art Situation as a consistent principle.

This simplifies the matter, to be sure, ^{though} ~~and~~ it can be an effective polemical weapon used either to affirm the hegemony of a mode of interpretation or to subvert an [unjust] hegemony of another.

Still, the point for the responsible scholar is to rise above factions, to see the Total Art Situation.

(And still, in any given piece of work/writing, sheer practicality dictates that we cannot view the T.A.S. all at once. ~~We must~~, Being practical, we must inevitably shift our sights according to the questions that interest us at the moment. Even so, though, we should not (esp. in 1990s) write in such a way as to suggest that we are invalidating other questions -- on the contrary, it is usually a good strategy to show your acceptance of/respect for those other questions, which are currently "outside the scope of this [particular] study."
