

Julian Schröter

**Gattungsgeschichte und ihr Gattungsbegriff am Beispiel der
Novelle
(Abstract)**

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The discussion of genre theory since the middle of the twentieth century has been marked, among other things, by two conflicting endeavors: on the one hand, there are attempts to semantically regulate generic terms for the purpose of a clear scientific language by defining them as types of texts (cf. Fricke 2010, Fishelov 1991, Zymner 2003); and on the other hand, there are attempts to accustom literary studies to the factual indeterminacy of generic terms and to comprehend this indeterminacy by adapting Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance or the semantics of prototypes (cf. Strube 1986, Hempfer 2010a). The essay is intended to show that both positions – that of strictly regulating and of merely descriptively comprehending practice – as they have been advocated so far hinder the foundation of genre-historical research. This essay aims to more precisely formulate the productive ideas from both positions and thus to provide a robust foundation for the historical study of genres. This foundation is to be structured by two core questions that until now have not been clearly separated: first, how one ought to define, before and during historiographic and empirical work, the concept of the genre that is to be examined; and second, how one can synthesize the historically changing semantics of a genre at the end of this empirical work. Answering these two questions becomes a problem when one is dealing with historically discontinuous and heterogeneous genres. This essay pursues this problem using the example of novella history, because research here is particularly divided as to how the concept of the novella can best be understood.

The guiding idea of the essay is to reverse the usual sequence of steps: in genre theory, the dogma is often advocated that the concept of genre must be defined *a priori*, i. e., before the investigation begins and independently of empirical work. The first section of this essay rejects this dogma and recommends that we make the use of the concept of a specific genre dependent on the concrete epistemological interest of the investigation. With the help of an argument by Kendall L. Walton, the essay shows that aesthetic innovations and the historical development of literary procedures can only be understood if a hermeneutic interest in the references of individual texts to historically established generic expectations is at the forefront of the investigation (cf. Walton 1970). The essay recommends that generic historiography serve this hermeneutic interest.

It aims to answer the first core question of how the concept of genre ought be used before and during historiographic work for two central procedures: for reconstruction from, on the one hand, historical poetics (second section); and, on the other hand, from text groups (third section). In both procedures, the thesis is that the concept of the genre to be examined should not be regulated before or independently of empirical work by defining a concept of a text type. In the case of the reconstruction of generic expectations from text groups, one is therefore dependent on a variant of the so-called inductive procedure. In order to rid the inductive method of its methodological deficiencies, the article reformulates this method in terms of quantity theory in such a way that the procedure fulfills the essential requirements. The problem with the inductive procedure is that, in the case of inconsistent historical use of names for genres, it is not suitable for inferring generic characteristics from text groups. This problem is particularly

pronounced with novellas, because the texts historically referred to as novellas seem to have only one thing in common, namely, that they have been referred to as novellas. The set-theoretical reformulation of the inductive procedure should allow the reconstruction of the generic expectations historically associated with the name of the genre by making use of classificatory predicates. However, it is not the concept of genre that this procedure aims to determine prior to historiographic work. Rather, the aim is to relate the set of texts that were communicated as novellas in the relevant historical situation to classificatory sets by means of intersections. Each of these intersections – for example, the intersection of the texts referred to as novellas and of fictional journal prose – can be described with regard to the relevant text characteristics of the defined set (for example, fictional journal prose). It is important not to summarily define such intersections as novellas, as is often done. Such a definition would result in a classificatory concept of the respective genre, which in turn would no longer be suitable for comprehending the historical use of the generic label and hence the semantics of a genre in historical literary communication. This essay thus provides an operationalizable reconstruction of the intuition, only vaguely formulated in genre theory so far, that in conducting research one must mediate between inductive and deductive procedures, between being oriented toward the material and reflecting on systematic concepts (cf. Hempfer 1973, 128 sqq., Mueller 2010).

The fourth and final section of the essay seeks to answer the second key question of how to move from heterogeneous empirical findings to a concept of genre that brings these findings together. This question is divided into two subquestions. On the one hand, the question arises as to how the connection between factual and conceptual history can be conceived: whether such a connection exists cannot, this essay argues, be decided on the basis of genre theory. Rather, this is a problem of conceptual and factual history that can only be solved hermeneutically. Two different genre understandings are connected in terms of conceptual history only if the later conception is meaningful for the earlier conception. They are not connected by a concept of text type that has been previously defined quasi as a substance. On the other hand, the question arises as to the concrete cases of literary application for which the results of a history of genre should be integrated into *a single* concept of genre. These are primarily acts of interpretation and codifying mediations of knowledge, in which generic knowledge becomes manageable in being comprehended by generic concepts that are as simple as possible. However, formulating generic knowledge in terms of concepts is principally associated with a loss of historical accuracy. In order to avoid returning to historically inadequate concepts of genres, the essay develops a model in which a concept of family resemblance oriented toward Wittgenstein and already roughly transferred, by Strube, to genre theory is specified and differentiated with historical indexes (cf. Strube 1986). The essay argues that such a specific concept of genre is most likely to serve the initially developed hermeneutic interest and, at the present stage of theory elaboration, represents the best compromise between historical accuracy and practical applicability.

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