CATEGORICAL CONVENTIONS IN MUSIC DISCOURSE: STYLE AND GENRE

By Allan F. Moore

The experience of apparent exclusion from a discourse can be both painful and instructive. The operative distinctions between the terms 'style' and 'genre'[1] seemed largely transparent during both my undergraduate and my postgraduate studies, a transparency which seemed to be of no great concern to my peers. Recently, however, it has appeared to me that the foundations of these apparent certainties were insecure. So, as a result of my enduring positivism (another legacy from those studies), I began to realize that either the terms had to be so loosely employed as to be useless (i.e., actually impeding communication because the overlap between their spheres of reference was too great), or that they might be susceptible to a certain amount of stabilization. It is here that this investigation starts.

The issue came most clearly into focus when I undertook an informal comparison of usages, particularly of the term 'genre', between (what I think of as) conventional musicology and the writings of popular music scholars, whose concepts normally derive more from film, cultural and literary studies than from musical ones. Both 'style' and 'genre' are terms concerned with ways of erecting categorical distinctions, of identifying similarity between different pieces (songs, objects, performances even, 'texts'), but the initial unresolved question was whether the similarities thereby identified existed on the same hierarchical level or whether some were subordinate to others. For example, different writers identify 'heavy metal' as both a style and a genre. There seem to be three ways of understanding such a situation. First, it could mean that, whatever 'heavy metal' is, it has some characteristics that pertain to style and others that pertain to genre. Secondly, it could mean that it is both style and genre, in which case one concept is necessarily subsidiary to the other. Thirdly, the terms may be identical (or at least represent equivalent epistemologies). Consider trying to distinguish 'heavy metal' from 'white metal'[2] in terms of style and genre. The two categories share the same musical techniques, modes of dress and performance, iconographic techniques, etc. They differ in lyrics and subject matter (the former is secular with a tendency to misogyny and the demonic, while the latter is usually confrontationally evangelical), but they have an apocalyptic tone in common. The sharing of musical techniques would perhaps encourage a musicologist to declare a similarity of style, while the distinction in subject matter calls attention to a difference of genre. However, the similarity of modes of dress and performance might suggest to

[1] This study forms part of a large project which also interrogates the terms 'form', 'structure' and the superordinate 'code'.

[2] Exemplified respectively by Iron Maiden: *The Number of the Beast*, London: EMI, 1982 and Vengeance Rising: *Once Dead*, Los Angeles: Intense, 1990.

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a cultural theorist a similarity of genre, while the difference of subject matter in such a discourse perhaps indicates a difference of style.

In brief, there are three types of relationship which obtain between the two terms as they are used. First, they are employed to cover broadly the same ground, but sometimes with different nuances. Secondly, they are again used to cover the same ground but the relationship is a nested one, so that style pertains to only a portion of that ground. It is this confusion, and this unequal relationship, that I seek to address by suggesting, in my conclusion, that the third type of relationship, where the terms have different areas of reference, is the one to be preferred. My reasons stem from the need, within the interdisciplinary field that popular music studies is (and which now includes musicologists), to be able to communicate unambiguously and on an equal footing. Hence this investigation may be of benefit to those engaged in more academically orientated musicology.

In media and cultural studies generally, genre appears to have some kind of methodological priority,[3] while in musicology priority is often assumed for style.[4] A comparison of two key discussions will illustrate this. In a much cited study of the concept of genre in popular music, Franco Fabbri offers a definition: genre is 'a set of musical events . . . whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules'.[5] Genre is the key term in this discussion, although Fabbri does note its frequent interchangeability with others (he specifies style and form) in common discourse. The 'rules' of genre subject to social acceptance include formal and technical ones, but Fabbri also has in mind rules emanating from semiotic, behavioural, social, ideological, economic and juridical spheres. Philip Tagg, following Fabbri 'precisely', situates style clearly as a subsidiary of genre,[6] noting that 'although the steel guitar sound of Country and Western music acts frequently as an indicator of the "country" genre, it started its life inside that style [*sic*] as a style reference to the Hawaiian guitar, i.e. as genre synecdoche for something exotic'.[7] Fabbri's focus on genre is both historically and geographically situated (his native language is Italian), and his article is an early attempt to broach precisely the kinds of questions which concern me here.[8] Its presence in that influential context has, itself, had important consequences, among them the subsequent use of the term 'genre' rather than style as the dominant category within popular music studies. The position taken by Leonard Meyer, in his extended attempt to come to grips with the notion of musical style, is encapsulated in his opening definition: 'Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behavior or in the artifacts produced by human behavior, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.[9] In his definition, genre becomes subsidiary to

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[3] For example, Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, London, 1996; Stephen Neale, *Genre*, London, 1983; Tom O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders & John Fiske, *Key Concepts in Communication*, London, 1983.

[4] For example, Richard L. Crocker, *A History of Musical Style*, New York, 1986; Siegmund Levarie & Ernst Levy, *Musical Morphology: a Discourse and a Dictionary*, Kent, Ohio, 1983, and even John Shepherd: 'Towards a Sociology of Musical Styles', in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White, London, 1987. Shepherd, of course, is explicit in his opposition to formalism.

[5] Franco Fabbri, 'A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications', in *Popular Music Perspectives*, ed. David Horn & Philip Tagg, Exeter, 1982, pp. 52–81, at p. 52.

[6] Philip Tagg, 'Towards a Sign Typology of Music', in *Secondo convegno europeo di analisi musicale*, ed. Rosanna Dalmonte & Mario Baroni, Trent, 1992, pp. 369–78, at p. 376.

[7] Ibid., p. 378.

[8] In conversation in April 1998, Fabbri suggested to me that genre tends to be differently loaded in non-Anglophone discussions. He has recently expanded this discussion in 'Browsing Music Spaces: Categories and the Musical Mind', keynote address at the Third Triennial British Musicological Societies' Conference, University of Surrey, July 1999.

[9] Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology*, Philadelphia, 1989, p. 3.

style, for Fabbri's rule-bound events appear to be none other than Meyer's constrained choices.

Both these positions assume a hierarchical relationship, either with genre prioritized (popular music study) or style (musicology). It might just be argued that, in fact, the terms can be considered roughly interchangeable (i.e., equivalent, operating within different discourses) were it not that those different discourses each persist in using both terms, even if individual authors often do not. This contradiction presents three opportunities: acceptance, rejection and resolution. We can simply accept that meanings for genre and style are purely intra-disciplinary and must be continually redefined as we shift discipline. Or we can insist that one set of meanings is more productive than another. Alternatively, we can attempt to find a ground whereon these differences can be accommodated. It is this latter course that I shall follow, but a necessary first step is to explore some of these basic differences in understanding before attempting to explain, and then to resolve, them. This exploration will necessitate all-too-brief summaries of how representative scholars in a range of disciplines either employ 'style' and 'genre' as unrelated terms or conceptualize some relationship between them. One potential result of such an exploration may be a revivification of the concept of style that will enable us to close the gap between analysis and criticism.

Etymologically, in English both terms can be traced back to the fourteenth century. There, 'style' had developed from *stilus* (Latin for 'pen') and was used to describe a 'manner of discourse'.[10] 'Gender', however, had connotations of *type*, and grammatically meant any one of three *kinds—genre* develops in English from *gender* by the nineteenth century,[11] but as early as the eighteenth century the two terms were being used in different disciplines to cover essentially the same ground. Style, as manner of discourse, was prominent in music of the Classical period, as has been demonstrated by Leonard Ratner,[12] where specific styles (singing, brilliant, strict, learned) are identified largely by rhythmic and textural features. Ratner identifies these also in the writings of contemporary (particularly German) authors on music. By the end of the century, Schlegel's characterization of Romantic art emphasizes the inadequacy of theorizing separate genres (epic, lyrical, dramatic) of writing,[13] a view on which Dahlhaus's discussion (on which I shall focus below) is built. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the need to dethrone the isolated genius had appeared in discourse surrounding both music and art history. The art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905), for instance, developed a theory of style which emphasized historical development (whereby individual art works ensured the changing continuity of ways of working), autonomy (that style itself generated change, rather than the skill of individuals or the purpose to which works were put, i.e., their 'genre') and teleology (that style developed in the direction of greater order).[14] This position lasted well into the twentieth century: the Marxist art historian Arnold Hauser takes a similar line in that he posits style as cumulative, beyond the intervention of the individual, and, in a sense, autonomous.[15]

[10] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. T. F. Hoad, Oxford, 1986.

[11] The adjective *generic*, though often used as the adjective of genre, pertains to genus. The Greek original, *genos*, had been used by Aristotle.

[12] Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style*, New York, 1980.

[13] See John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology*, New York, 1993.

[14] Michael Podro, 'Alois Riegl', in *Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, London, 1996, xxvi. 369.

[15] 'A style is nothing but the results at a given moment of purely individual products . . . A style . . . does not enter the consciousness of the individuals from whose products it arises. The collective attitude which is expressed in an artistic style realizes something which no one has "willed" and realizes *more* than any one individual could will.' Arnold Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, trans. Kenneth Northcott, London, 1982, p. 68

This emphasis on style is present at the beginnings of musicology, in the work of Guido Adler. Here, too, style is subject to its own development and is beyond the control of individuals working singly.[16] In his study of Mahler, Adler argues that Mahler's physical mannerisms (manifested as a conductor) find their sonic analogues in his music,[17] but also that the world outside (in Mahler's case, forms and melodies intrinsic to Austria) contributes to style. The autonomous tendencies of style in contemporary scholarship are crucial to the theory of musical meaning developed by Lucy Green;[18] they are also present in Crocker's mammoth study[19] and in writers as varied as Cope and LaRue, as we shall see.

There are two key features of the debate on style: the first is whether style operates as an innate (natural) quality and is thus wholly autonomous, or as a (cultural) convention to be adopted, thus only partly autonomous. (I believe we can observe a general shift from the former to the latter as formalist accounts give way to more culturally informed accounts.) The second concerns its conceptualization as a hierarchical system, and whether it operates in the same way at different levels.

Outside musicology, style is widely seen as an appropriable quality.[20] For Vic Gammon, for instance, writing from within folklore studies, style is a system of codes and conventions, wherein perception involves the decipherment of what has already been encoded. This can be called the standard 'communication' model.[21] Gammon argues that this allows illusory comprehension (*mis*understanding) to take place through ethno- or class-centrism.[22] From within communication studies, and with explicit reference to a Madonna video, John Fiske identifies style with modes of dress and activity, a notion closely allied to 'lifestyle', indicating an identity to be assumed, somewhat at will.[23] This is also the meaning of style employed by the cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, particularly with reference to punk culture. Rather than being innate in an individual, style here is something to be appropriated.[24] Although there is no reference in these examples to style as musically constituted, this assumption regarding its status will prove useful. Within music discourse, the picture is rather different. David Cope, for instance, refuses to problematize the term, viewing it simply as the utilization of particular patterns. Cope's is not a work of theory: for the purposes of computer modelling, he finds a definition with no cultural component adequate: ' "musical style" [means] the identifiable characteristics of a composer's music which are recognizably similar from one work to another'.[25] This carries the implication of

[16] 'The style of an epoch, of a school, of a composer, of a work, does not arise accidentally, as the casual outcome and manifestation of artistic will. It is, on the contrary, based on laws of becoming . . .', quoted in Ian Bent, *Analysis*, Basingstoke, 1987, p. 43.

[17] Guido Adler, 'Gustav Mahler', trans. & ed. Edward R. Reilly, in idem, *Gustav Mahler and Guido Adler*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 46.

[18] Lucy Green, *Music on Deaf Ears: Musical Meaning, Ideology and Education*, Manchester, 1988.

[19] 'Seeking the reasons for stylistic change within the history of style itself (rather than in the history of men or of ideas) . . .'; Crocker, *A History of Musical Style*, p. vi.

[20] Whether this is a position writers from contemporary fields such as media and cultural studies would have held prior to the advent of postmodernism is not, of course, determinable, and the intriguing possibility must be left to one side here.

[21] Vic Gammon, 'Problems of Method in the Historical Study of Popular Music', in *Popular Music Perspectives*, ed. Horn & Tagg, pp. 16–31. An unproblematized discussion of this model appears in John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, London, 1982, pp. 6–22. As a model for the creation of musical meaning, at least in the realms of high art, it has been refuted by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (*Music and Discourse*, trans. Carolyn Abbate, Princeton, 1990, pp. 16–19), among others.

[22] Gammon, 'Problems of Method', p. 20.

[23] John Fiske, *Television Culture*, London, 1987, p. 250.

[24] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, London, 1979, pp. 87, 103 ff.

[25] David Cope, *Computers and Musical Style*, Oxford, 1991, p. 30.

style as a factor of personality, encapsulated in the composer Roberto Gerhard's comment that 'if style is the man, no man can have two'.[26] The term's degree of autonomy in music discourse is highlighted by Lucy Green, for whom it is the literal foundation of musical experience,[27] while Jean-Jacques Nattiez gives notice of his intention to theorize the 'remarkable anti-reductionism' found in Meyer.[28]

Meyer's later discussion[29] insists that definitions of style have fundamental cultural characteristics, in that style posits a series of choices to be made within a specific set of constraints.[30] These constraints are learnt, largely by enculturative processes. He offers a hierarchical organization. The top level consists of laws, or 'transcultural physical or physiological constraints'.[31] These quasi-psychological 'laws' will be familiar to any reader conversant with Meyer's work.[32] Below this he finds rules. These are intracultural constraints, such as those which distinguish the norms of medieval European music from those of the Renaissance, or those which link the Classical and Romantic periods. The third level of his hierarchy he calls strategies, which represent the choices made within established rules,[33] and are of three types. First, he identifies dialect, arguing that geographical neighbours or contemporaries will share similar strategies. The resulting music might be defined by social class or function, for example folk music or art music, military music or dance music. Secondly, he identifies idiom, which represents the personal voice of the composer. The implication here is that personal style is innate, rather than open to appropriation. Thirdly, he identifies intra-opus style. This refers to the sort of constraint made upon a recapitulation by an exposition.[34] For Meyer, changes of style 'seem mainly to take place not through the gradual transformation of complex entities but through the permutation and recombination of more or less discrete, separable traits or clusters of traits. And the traits involved may come . . . from sources of disparate stylistic and cultural provenance.'[35] Moreover, it is the present which chooses its past (its influences) rather than the past which causes style change in the present.[36] A similar hierarchization of levels of style is developed by Levarie and Levy. They define three: the material (out of which the work is fashioned, i.e., scale, rhythm etc.); the historico-geographic (a conflation of Meyer's second and third levels) and the individual. They disagree with Meyer, however, in upholding what we might call the 'cultural studies' view. Although style is 'deeper' than fashion, both terms

[26] Quoted in Ates Orga, 'The Man and his Music', in programme book to the London Sinfonietta series *The Complete Instrumental Chamber Music of Arnold Schoenberg and Roberto Gerhard*, ed. David Atherton, London, 1973, pp. 87–94, at p. 92.

[27] 'Style is the medium by virtue of which we experience music, and without it we could have no music at all. No piece of music is ever stylistically autonomous. Whether particular individuals hear all music in terms of either pop or classical styles alone, or whether they make finer distinctions between late Haydn and early Beethoven, Tamla Motown and Disco, whether such activity is self-conscious or intuitive, it cannot be avoided . . . *we must have some knowledge of the style of a piece of music in order to experience inherent meanings as distinct from non-musically meaningful sound, at all.*' Green, *Music on Deaf Ears*, pp. 33–4.

[28] Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, p. 144 n. 8, referring to Meyer's *Music, the Arts and Ideas*, Chicago, 1967.

[29] Meyer, *Style and Music.*

[30] This socio-cultural dimension is notably absent from Jan LaRue's *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, New York, 1970.

[31] 'Proximity between stimuli of events tends to produce connection, disjunction usually creates segregation; once begun, a regular process generally implies continuation to a point of relative stability; a return to patterns previously presented tends to enhance closure; regular patterns are, as a rule, more readily comprehended than irregular ones; because of the requirements of memory, musical structures usually involve considerable repetition, and are frequently hierarchic.' *Style and Music*, p. 13.

[32] Particularly *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago, 1956, and *Explaining Music*, Chicago, 1973.

[33] Meyer, *Style and Music*, pp. 17, 20.

[34] Ibid., pp. 23, 24.

[35] Ibid., p. 148.

[36] Ibid., p. 149. See also Allan F. Moore, 'A Problem of History', *Critical Musicology Newsletter*, ii (1994), 5–7.

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identify a particular manner of articulation: 'Style . . . concerns the manner of a work, not the essence'.[37]

There is therefore some disagreement over whether style is innate or conventional, there being a tendency for musicology to treat it as the former, and a lesser tendency for it to do so at higher hierarchical levels. Whether there would be interdisciplinary disagreement over its hierarchization is unclear, since the issue seems not to arise outside musicology. These usages of style have a strong tendency towards emphasizing the poietic. Discussions of genre, however, tend to emphasize the esthesic,[38] although there seems no necessary reason for them to do so. Again, genre can be seen to work as organizing system or as positing conventions.

Until recently, the term 'genre' was somewhat under-theorized in musicology. Lewis Rowell's position appears normative. For him, the issue was clearly not problematic: he refers to 'multimovement genres such as the symphony, concerto, sonata, and quartet', to the fact that 'many Japanese vocal genres are narrative styles [sic]' and to the qualitative change marked by the Romantic era, wherein 'the classification of music into a set of clear types and genres was replaced by the idea of music as a unified, amorphous, transcendental process, manifested by a vast number of individual works, each containing its own rules'.[39] Note that, although Rowell appears to view genre and style as somehow equivalent, this last citation points to a key difference: whereas style can be posited for all music, no matter what its historical or geographical origin,[40] genre has come under increasing attack in the Romantic and modern periods. This is the core of Carl Dahlhaus's concerns. Prior to the seventeenth century, he declares, genre was defined primarily by a piece of music's functions, its text (if present) and its textures. Subsequently, definitions came to rest on matters of scoring and form. The determining factors were social ('external') rather than technical ('internal'), although 'external circumstances . . . were . . . assimilated as internal determining factors'. Developments in the twentieth century have challenged the centrality of the concept, resulting in the predominance of a work as an individual entity, rather than in relation to a putative genre.[41] A similar point is made by Nicholas Cook, who suggests that for the contemporary classical tradition, genre has become a musicological rather than a musical fact, by which he means that we listen to individual works rather than to abstractions of a type (and his proffered list includes courante, waltz, Charleston and reggae). The eighteenth-century concentration on genre suggested that an individual item was ephemeral, and that the style of each was necessarily derivative.[42] It is in this opposition of ephemerality to autonomy that we find the roots of the concern of theorists of mass culture with genre, of texts as instantiations of type, for it only requires a non-specific competence to recognize genre conventions, as opposed to the specialist competence required to recognize what individuates specific works. This is borne out by contemporary practices. For example, when a working dance band is required to play a Charleston, it generally does not

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[37] Levarie & Levy, *Musical Morphology*, p. 264.

[38] The terms are Nattiez's: the poietic dimension is that of the creation of the art work or situation (the 'symbolic form'); the esthesic dimension is that of the creation of meaning in the presence of that symbolic form. The distinction is not simply one of conception–reception. See *Music and Discourse* pp. 11—12 ff.

[39] Lewis Rowell, *Thinking about Music*, Amherst, 1983, pp. 114, 192, 122.

[40] This is true even if it can be posited only negatively, as a source for appropriation, as in many postmodernist works. This employment of style in the construction of musical works has, of course, been a common aesthetic for centuries.

[41] Carl Dahlhaus, 'New Music and the Problem of Musical Genre', in idem, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, trans. Derrick Puffett & Alfred Clayton, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 33, 35, 38 ff.

[42] Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 147, 37.

matter which tune is taken.[43] Alternatively, with contemporary club culture, it is the particular DJ and the genre (trance, garage etc.) defined by the groove which attracts customers, rather than the particular recordings to be played. And even among autonomous works, the process does not take place consistently: it still makes sense to discuss operatic conventions in Tippett, or symphonic conventions in Lutosławski. The historical changes in the sphere of reference of genre in European music are thus fundamental. Dahlhaus goes further, insisting on a degree of 'community acquiescence', such that the notion of the masterpiece emerges out of conventions of genre. Contemporary programming and composition thus deny genre by denying the mediocre.[44] This idea of genre as social convention is crucial to film theory.

The standard relevant text in film theory is by Stephen Neale.[45] He refers to a key definition by Tom Ryall, that 'genres may be defined as patterns/forms/styles/ structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film maker, and their reading by an audience',[46] and in which genre is elevated unproblematically above style. Neale offers an extensive criticism of this key position, primarily on the grounds that no mechanism for the supervision of meaning is involved. He summarizes his position in these terms: 'genres constitute specific variations of the interplay of codes, discursive structures and drives involved in the whole of mainstream cinema', but he insists that there are no generic 'essences'— genres are sites of repetition and difference, which he grounds in desire (specifically the desire to repeat an experience precisely, but the impossibility of actually doing so), in pleasure (lying both in the repetition of signifier(s) and the differences separating instances of repetition) and in *jouissance*. In his final summary, he notes that 'both [genre and authorship] provide limited (contained and coherent) variety, both engage similar economies of repetition and difference, and both regulate the display of cinema, its potential excess, whether on the one hand as a generic system or, on the other, as personal style', wherein genre acts both as a body of texts and as a system of expectations.[47] Robert Walser's study of 'heavy metal' represents an intrusion into music discourse of this tradition of enquiry. For him, 'the purpose of a genre is to organise the reproduction of a particular ideology, and the generic cohesion of heavy metal until the mid 1980s depended upon the desire of young white male performers and fans to hear and believe in certain stories about the nature of masculinity'.[48] In similar vein, John Fiske defines genre as 'a cultural practice that attempts to structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate in our culture'.[49] He argues that the function of genre is to create an expectation within an audience for the range of pleasures on offer by activating the memory of similar texts, a position strikingly similar to that of Neale. This conceptualization of genre as an organizing system of expectations, albeit with a varying level of specificity, has recently been taken up within more mainstream musicology by Jeffrey Kallberg. Arguing against the lack of precision in Dahlhaus's consideration of 'social function' (a criticism which replays that of Ryall by Neale), he argues that genre 'guides' the listener through a ' "kind of

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[43] This is the situation in the 1990s, although it may not have been in the 1920s.

[44] Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, p. 43. This point is not universally agreed: for Covach, genre is a historicist issue, positing writers writing for inclusion in a museum. See John Covach, 'Dahlhaus, Schoenberg, and the New Music', *In Theory Only*, xii (1991), 19–42, at pp. 21–5. The historical development of genres was also, of course, a matter of concern to Adorno. See Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, Cambridge, 1993, esp. pp. 175, 154.

[45] See above, n. 3.

[46] Tom Ryall, 'Teaching through Genre', *Screen Education*, xvii (1975–6), quoted in Neale, *Genre*, p. 28.

[47] Neale, *Genre*, pp. 7–17, 48, 54–5.

[48] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Hanover, NH, 1993, p. 109.

[49] Fiske, *Television Culture*, p. 109.

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generic contract" . . . the composer agrees to use some of the conventions, patterns, and gestures of a genre, and the listener consents to interpret some aspects of the piece in a way conditioned by this genre'.[50] Here, the rules of the game are knowingly entered into by both parties, even if they are not foregrounded. *How* a particular composer fulfils his/her side of the contract seems to remain a separate matter.

The conceptualization of a *genre system* follows a different path from that of the hierarchization of styles. Although Dahlhaus discusses genre as a hierarchic system, this is not a (nested) set of levels *within* the concept, but a hierarchy of values attached to discrete genres. How these genres interrelate is not frequently discussed (for example, Fiske offers a specific list of genres but without any mechanism for relating them). Fredric Jameson developed for Hollywood cinema a different, non-hierarchic, system for relating genres, a system borrowed by Krims for making sense of the different genres inhabited by rap. The key idea here is that a series of genres organizes an entire field through a series of contrasts.[51] Thus, within rap, Krims finds four distinct genres, which he defines in terms of flow (largely a case of rhythmic density), topics and the musical styles most likely to appear within each. These genres then cover the entire field, such that new material appears either within one of these, or extends the boundaries of the field as a whole. Thus, whereas a style system (the hierarchy of styles) can be considered to move from the general (all the music of an epoch or region) through ever greater levels of specificity, the most important aspect of this theorized genre system is that it covers a field synchronically through particular genres spanning adjacent areas.

One problem for my endeavour to tease out the differences between these two terms is that, outside conventional musicology, very few scholars have space for both 'style' and 'genre' within their terminologies. In film studies in general, as in literary studies, style specifies the work of individual authors, roughly equivalent to Meyer's idiom.[52] There seems to be little understanding of, or need for, style as a wider, theorized, concept. Such a position is supported by Susan Hayward's dictionary,[53] which contains an extended entry for genre, but no entry for style. Apart from her uncontentious assertions that genres are neither pure nor divisible, she notes that one of the defining features of a particular genre results from spectator speculation as to its outcome.[54] This is of course an important point for, prior to their dissolution under modernism, all genres of music except opera shared the same denouement (i.e., there is no doubt as to the return of the tonic, or the closure of the fundamental line). The dominance of genre is also supported by the equivalent text for popular music,[55] and by Bauman's 'communications-centred' dictionary, where genre is seen as socially grounded, and its importance traced particularly to Vladimir Propp's work on fairy-tale classification and to Bakhtin's linguistic work.[56]

Robert Walser's discussion of heavy metal accepts a clear distinction between the ways that style and genre are constituted: genre is socially constituted, while 'stylistic traits' are autonomous. Despite this, Walser sees style subsumed within genre,

[50] Jeffrey Kallberg: 'The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's *Nocturne* in G Minor', *Nineteenth Century Music*, xi (1987–8), 238–61, at p. 243.

[51] See Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 80 ff.

[52] For film-makers, as opposed to the industry and film critics, 'style' may well have greater impact than 'genre'. My thanks to my ex-colleague, film-maker Lezli-An Barrett, for this observation.

[53] See above, n. 3.

[54] Hayward, *Key Concepts*, p. 160.

[55] Roy Shuker, *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, London, 1998.

[56] Richard Bauman, 'Genre', in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments*, ed. idem, New York, 1992, pp. 53–60. For Propp, see his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Baltimore, 1968. For 'folktale', read 'fairy tale'.

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particularly because of the importance to the music industry of rigid genre definitions and coherence, definitions impossible to sustain in practice.[57] A similar relationship between the two obtains in the writing of Johan Fornäs, writing from Nordic cultural studies, and in Edward Lippmann's aesthetic theory. Fornäs suggests that 'a genre is a set of rules for generating musical works', while 'a style is a particular formation of formal relations in one single work, in the total work of an artist, or in a group of works across many genres'.[58] Although genre here appears to subsume style, we have a glimpse of some more equal and complementary relation between them. Lippmann notes, perhaps confusingly, that genre

> carries with it not only a group of subordinate conceptions—theme, medium, harmonic idiom, form, emotional character, and so on—but also a group of more general ones, which are essentially comprised by the notion of style. [This] is not the idea of style as subordinate to the genre . . . along with the adoption of the concept of a genre . . . the composer also implicitly accepts the commitment to think and create within a style of the times, and often also within a local, national, and personal idiom; the genre becomes the focal point of these more general styles . . .[59]

Both Lippmann and Fornäs appear to conceive of style as abstract, as requiring the adoption of a specific genre to make musical thought concrete. In this sense, a musical work could be said to appear at the intersection of these two concepts, which thus maintain a degree of flexibility one with another. The poietic/esthesic organizing principle is also apparent in other discussions. Writing from a position within historical musicology (specifically studying the Elizabethan period), David Wulstan implies that style is the reordering of experience to suit the artist's viewpoint, while genre consists of the elements that bind items together (explicitly, here, that of the cries of Elizabethan street vendors, the equivalent then of today's shopfronts or television advertisements). This equates to the notion of style as a manner of discourse, although chosen to a particular end, while genre remains a set of conventions enabling communication.[60]

Other writers, however, do not follow this distinction. From a background in social anthropology and folklore studies, Philip Bohlman defines musical style as 'an aspect of the sharing of repertories by groups of individuals formed on the basis of social cohesion', a definition which raises questions about the recognition of such a style by a listener unfamiliar with it. Viewed as genre, on the other hand, 'folk music' would be seen as a genre of 'folkloristics', or as a genre of 'national music', where commonality of origins is necessary for the identification of an item of music within a specific genre. This commonality is not requisite for the identification of a style in a repertory. Bohlman also accepts separate genres of folk music such as narrative, lyric, ballad, epic and blues. Genre is identifiable here through melodic grammar and syntax.[61] Writing from within semiotics, Nattiez argues (as had Meyer) for 'levels' of style analysis, but one of these is the 'style of a genre [e.g. the concertante style]'.[62] Nattiez seems not to find style problematic, although this type of category is declared by Fabbri as no longer having any explanatory value, for Fabbri insists that form, too, is subservient to genre, and is perhaps wholly included in it: '. . . each genre has its

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[57] Walser, *Running with the Devil*, pp. xiv, 28, 4–5, 27.

[58] Johan Fornäs, 'The Future of Rock: Discourses that Struggle to Define a Genre', *Popular Music*, xiv/1 (1995), 111–27, at pp. 111 and 124. His definitions reflect his appropriation for music of categories developed by Paul Ricoeur.

[59] Edward A. Lippmann, *A Humanistic Philosophy of Music*, New York, 1977, p. 335.

[60] David Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, Iowa City, 1986, pp. 2, 47.

[61] Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1988, pp. 4–12, 18, 38.

[62] Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, p. 136.

typical forms, even if . . . a form is *not* sufficient to define a genre'. Fabbri suggests that new genres are born by transgressions upon accepted conventions, but he also talks of a number of genres based on the form *canzone* (song), which calls into doubt his inclusion of form within genre.[63] I include these references to make it clear that there is no single understanding of these terms which can be imposed on all instances; nonetheless, a normative understanding remains worth pursuing.

My investigation has had as its impulse the need to avoid a sense of panic at the inclination 'to make the mistake of hearing a word and assuming that the various things it points to are similar'.[64] Right though Stokes is, we do need to make explicit the differences between the things a word points to, particularly in the interdisciplinary arena of popular music studies. There is a set of oppositions which genre and style can usefully be employed to structure. These oppositions are not hierarchically but orthogonally related. Each tells us something different about how we organize the sequence of sounds issuing from instruments or speakers, and I think this is where the emphasis needs to be. There is an inevitable tendency to conceive of these categories (and of other descriptive terms) as resident in the music we hear. They are only there to the extent that, as competent listening subjects, we have learnt to put them there, as an aid to our organizing that sequence of sounds. Any organization we impose on those sounds is literally that—it is an organization we individually, socially, impose. However, it is also an organization we *must* impose if we are to understand the sounds as music. Lucy Green's discussion implies the priority of style, in her declaration that, without it, there is no sense to be made. But, if we cannot make sense without style, can we make sense without genre? The implication of Alan Durant's discussion of David Bowie's song 'Fashion' is that we cannot.[65] Understanding 'Fashion' is dependent on understanding its irony, which in turn is dependent on understanding the genre conventions of up-tempo dance music (such songs as 'Loco-motion'),[66] against which 'Fashion' works.[67] We might argue whether genre categories are less crucial than Green's emphasis on style, but clearly a rich understanding is dependent on both sets of conventions. As we have seen, the music of high modernism tries to evade genre conventions, but it may be that, in doing so, the music becomes aesthetically (as opposed to structurally) poorer.

There are, then, four ways of distinguishing between the realms of reference of the two terms. First, style refers to the manner of articulation of musical gestures and is best considered as imposed on them, rather than intrinsic to them. Genre refers to the identity and the context of those gestures. This distinction may be characterized in terms of 'what' an art work is set out to do (genre) and 'how' it is actualized (style). Secondly, genre, in its emphasis on the context of gestures, pertains most usefully to the esthesic, while style, in its emphasis on their manner of articulation, pertains most usefully to the poietic. Thirdly, in its concentration on how meaning is constituted, genre is normally explicitly thematized as socially constrained (Kallberg, Neale, Krims). Style, on the other hand, in its emphasis on technical features and appropriability, frequently simply brackets out the social (Cope, Crocker) or at least regards this realm as minimally determining, where it is considered to operate with a negotiable degree of autonomy (Green, Hebdige). Fourthly, in its consideration of

[63] Fabbri, 'A Theory of Musical Genres', p. 64.
[64] Martin Stokes, Introduction to *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: the Musical Construction of Place*, Oxford, 1994, pp. 1–27, at p. 7.
[65] Jason Toynbee, *Making Popular Music*, London, 2000, cites Derrida making the same point, p. 103.
[66] Little Eva, 'The loco-motion', New York: London Records, 1962.
[67] Alan Durant, *Conditions of Music*, London, 1984, pp. 188–90.

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manners of articulation, style itself operates at various hierarchical levels, from the global[68] to the most local.[69] At global levels it is usually considered to be socially constituted, while it may operate with greater degrees of autonomy at more local levels. Indeed, if style at this lower level is something which can be appropriated, as cultural theorists argue, then it must operate autonomously here. I have grave doubts as to whether this hierarchy truly extends down to the level of idiolect—in the light of the appropriability of more global levels of style, many musicians involved in the popular sphere are adept at switching from one to another, at will. Genre as a system also operates hierarchically, but with the distinction that 'sub-genres' cover an entire genre territory in a way that 'sub-styles' do not.

Finally, to pursue a thought initially expressed elsewhere, where I suggested that much of the interest in music comes from the realization of friction between awareness of stylistic conventions that appear to be relevant to a particular piece of music, and the sonic experience itself:[70] as a result of the investigations summarized here, it now appears to me that such friction can exist between that piece and genre conventions as well. Gammon[71] accepts this position, but sees the friction as created by the composer or improviser, that is, that the work/performance is the most important site of residence of those conventions. It appears to me, however, that this site is the preserve of the listening act.

[68] What Bradley, following a line of semioticians, refers to as *code*. Dick Bradley, *Understanding Rock'n'roll*, Buckingham, 1992, pp. 32 ff.
[69] What Middleton, following a similar line, refers to as *idiolect*. Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham, 1990, p. 174.
[70] Moore, *Rock: the Primary Text*, p. 170.
[71] Gammon, 'Problems of Method'.