7

MULTIMODALITY, MULTIMEDIA AND GENRE

A multimodal view of genre

So far I have treated the category of *genre* more or less as though it were obviously and naturally realised in language, either in speech or in writing. Much of the work done over the last twenty or thirty years assumes that genres are linguistic phenomena. Yes, film, or video and television, have been described by using this category, and of course they consist of much more than 'just' language. And literary texts have been described in genre-terms for a very long time. But in the broad area of literacy the work that underpins the interest in genre treats it as a purely linguistic phenomenon. This needs to be expanded a bit by saying that the assumption that genre is a linguistic category does not really surface into explicitness: it is simply there. Yet as so many of the text-objects in the contemporary world – as my example of the small card in the previous chapter – make use of modes other than speech or writing, or make use of many modes at the same time, the question must arise of whether 'genre' is a category that applies to texts or text-like objects realised in other modes, in image, gesture, 3D representations, or in relation to multi-modally constituted texts. Is genre a linguistic category first and foremost, or most plausibly? Or is it a category that applies to all forms of representation and communication?

The problem which arises is that the theoretical categories developed to understand and describe genre are linguistic categories, developed by linguistics for linguistically realised objects. The question then is whether categories that are specific to the modes of speech or writing, to texts which are (predominantly) linguistic, can be apt, appropriate or useful for describing texts which are realised in other modes. Does it matter if we use linguistic categories to describe visual or three-dimensional texts? Can that which is realised in language – that is, the kinds of meaning that I discussed in relation to written genres – be realised in other modes, in image, for instance, or in combinations of image and writing? Can the meanings of negation, overt and covert, that I discussed be realised other than in speech or writing? Or, to turn it the other way around, are there social meanings which can be realised in the mode of image but not in the mode of speech or of writing? We can make the question

quite specific and ask, how do images represent social relations and social interactions?

The materiality of the different modes – sound for speech, light for image, body for dance – means that not everything can be realised in every mode with equal facility, and that we cannot transport mode-specific theories from one mode to another without producing severe distortions. This is somewhat difficult to express clearly, because I want to say that meanings, in the broad sense, can be realised in any mode, but that when they are, they are realised in mode-specific articulations. This means that we need to attend to that which is mode-specific and to that which is not. Our past understanding of meaning has not raised that question, and therefore our attention does not go in that direction. Rather we have been told that that which is meant is realised, and that that which is realised is that which has been meant. Instead we need to understand that meaning is articulated in this way in a specific mode, and in this other way in another mode. From here we have questions which go on the one hand in the direction of 'meaning', loosely speaking, and on the other hand in the direction of theory. From the point of view of meaning the question is, what is the meaning to be realised? From the point of view of theory one question is, what are the affordances of different modes, and how do different modes therefore realise meanings of a certain kind? The other is about genre as a category: is it a mode-specific category or not?

The question about the social meaning is readily answered: it is not possible to imagine communication which does not encompass the meanings realised in genre. That is, no message or text is conceivable which does not respond to such social facts. Hence all representation and communication must be generically shaped; it must carry these social meanings. 'Meaning' is inevitably and necessarily realised differently in different modes. And so the question here is, what is our sense of the social givens realised in genre, and how will they appear in this modal articulation? Does the category of genre remain important, useful, necessary; does it become more or less important in the era of multimodal communication? The answer is that the category of genre is essential in all attempts to understand text, whatever its modal constitution. The point is to develop a theory and terms adequate to that.

The question is, what is it that we want to mean, and what modes and genres are best for realising that meaning? That leads us to the social givens which we want to realise in a genre, and a question more like, what social, representational and communicative function do genres have? I will return to this throughout this discussion, but here I wish to make this concrete by looking at two texts.

The texts are entirely usual. They come from a science classroom in a secondary school in inner-city London. The children in this class are in year 8, which means that they are 12 to 13 years of age. The series of lessons in which the texts were produced had as its topic 'plant cells'. Four children – all girls – had worked together in a group around a microscope, first preparing a slide

with a piece of the epidermis of an onion, then looking at this slide through a microscope, and afterwards carrying out the task, given by the teacher, of 'doing a report'. Each had to 'record' the experiment: to draw what they had seen through the microscope and to write what they had done in conducting the experiment. The teacher had given them just two specific instructions: 'put your writing at the top of the page' (the teacher was anxious that the drawing should not take up too much of the space, so as to leave enough room for writing), and 'use only your lead pencil – do not use coloured pencils in your drawings' (to distinguish 'scientificness' – black-and-white drawing – from 'artisticness' – using colour pens – or from 'everyday realism'). Here I will look at two of the four texts produced. I am particularly interested in the meanings of formal aspects – the genre – of the texts.

The first example (Figure 7.1) has the drawing at the top of the page (as did another one of the four), and the written part of the text at the bottom. Image and writing are clearly separated on the page; each has its own, slightly differing, heading. The written text is in the generic form of a 'recount'. That is, it is a temporally ordered or sequenced presentation of events reported in sentences. The image part of the text has the form of a line-drawing; it is not clear that there is a suitable generic label available to name it.

Here I will first say something briefly about the written part of the text as a 'recount', then I will attempt to uncover the generic form of the visual part, and then speculate on the generic form of the text as a whole. My intention is to answer the question 'is the category "genre" useful in a multimodal text and, if so, how is it useful?'

As I have mentioned, I treat genre as that category which realises the social relations of the participants involved in the text as interaction. The social relations which are realised in the recount are of three types: first, those of the relations of the actors, objects and events which are *reported in* the recount; second, those of the relations between the participants in the act of communication, which are *implied by* the recount. The third type concerns the social world that is *represented in* the recount. The question here is, how is (the institution of) science represented or constructed as a social activity? Here we are in large part in the realm of the discursive organisation of the activity, in the sense of Foucault's use of 'discourse'.

The relations 'in' the recount are of actors acting in events with and on objects, either singly (I collected all the equipment) or jointly (we then sorted the microscope out). This is recounted 'realistically', that is, it is presented as being a recount of the actual, significant events, in the temporal sequence in which they happened, with a clear enough implication that no other (significant) events occurred. The recount is 'complete'; there is closure: it is a completed, finished, rounded-off textual entity. The recount, as genre, makes an implicit claim about the relation of the events or practices recounted to other practices in the world, and of the relation of the domain of the practices to other domains. It is the claim of realism, in the everyday world. It makes the

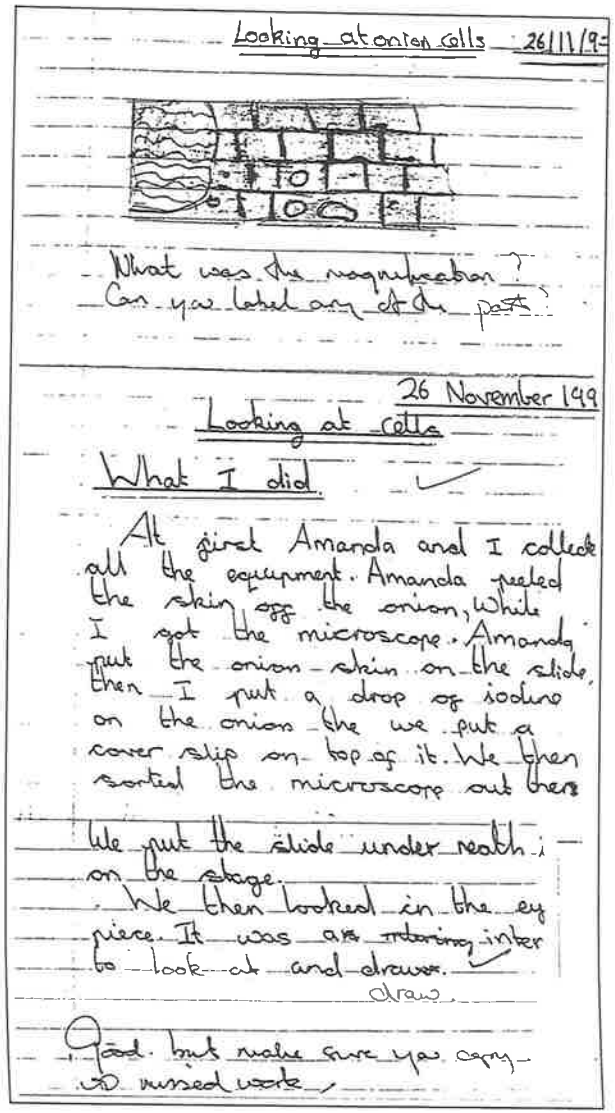

Figure 7.1 Student drawing of a plant cell 1: 'like a brick wall'

claims, implicitly: 'this is, simply, how it was; these were the main participants, the main events and they occurred in this order'. It claims, specifically, that 'practices in the science classroom are practices in the everyday world'. (A narrative, by contrast, makes a different claim: 'that is how I have (re)constructed

the world for you', and 'practices in the everyday world may be different to the way they are narrated here'.)

The social roles and relations established and implied by the *genre of recount as message* (that is, genre oriented towards communication) are, if *I* am presenting the recount, those of 'recounter' – I am someone who knows that which is being recounted – and 'recountee' – you are someone whom I regard as wishing to have the events recounted to you. If I am receiving the recount, the roles are those of myself being someone who is interested in having these events recounted to me, in being the 'recountee', and accepting you as the 'recounter'. The recount presents a world of action/event, temporally ordered and complete.

In asking about the generic form of the drawing, we bump up against a problem: there are no genre-terms for describing what this drawing is or does, either in terms of the presentation of material – the content – or of its representation of the social relations between the 'participants' in the production and reproduction of the text, the participants in the communicational event. What are these relations, as they are realised in the drawing, as they appear here? (To some extent what appears here will become clearer by comparison with the next example.) In answering this I will make use of the same types of relation as I used just above. First, what is shown 'in' the drawing (analogous to what is shown 'in' the recount) and by the drawing as a whole? The drawing shows a rectangular block with clearly distinct elements within it. The block is strongly framed along the top and the bottom, but is 'open' at each end, suggesting that it is 'a part of', 'an extract from', 'a fragment of' a larger entity. This suggests that while the drawing is not textually complete, it is conceptually complete: any other part of the larger entity of which this is a fragment will also be like this fragment. The elements themselves are drawn as being broadly uniform in shape and size. One of the handouts used in the lead-up lessons had suggested to the students that they would see something resembling 'bricks in a brick-wall', and quite clearly that metaphor has guided this student's 'seeing'. On the left-most edge there is a large 'irregularity' – the circular shape – and there are small bubble-like elements within the bricks.

This is a structure of relatively uniform elements in regular arrangement: the blocks are arranged in even layers, arranged regularly. While the recount presents a world of *happenings*, of *actions* or *events*, what is displayed here is a world of *entities as they are*: static, stable, regular elements in regular arrangement. While the world of the recount is complete in that *it represents all there is to recount*, the world of this display is complete in that *it represents all there is to know* – to show more would be to show more of the same, and while the world of the recount is set in time and is completed – it has happened – the world of this display is out of time – it just *is* – and it is complete in *being*.

The relation between the participants in the act of communication is an 'objective' one. The viewer is presented with this text-element 'front on'. It is objectively there, with maximal 'involvement' of the viewer, that is, the viewer

is positioned as confronting this image straight on, at eye-level. The positioning is neither to the side – which would indicate lesser involvement, nor is the viewer below or above the element shown, something that would indicate difference in power. The entity is presented to the viewer in a maximally neutral manner: it is simply 'there', *objectively*. Instead of the relations of 'recounter' and 'recountee' of that which is 'recounted', we have the relation of 'displayer' and 'viewer' of that which is 'displayed'.

At this stage we would need to look back at the written recount and attempt an assessment of kinds of involvement there. We can, however, make comments on the third level, the relation between the world of practices represented here and that of the everyday world. The mode of drawing is not a realist one: it is generalised away from everyday realism, both through the means of using the soft black pencil on the white page (rather than the use of colour, as in one of the other pieces of work) and the abstracting, diagrammatic form of representation. The former tells us that certain aspects of the everyday world, such as the colour of the viewed entity, are not relevant here, and similarly with other aspects, such as the actual, 'real' boundaries of the object. These all provide pointers to the kind of social world into which we are invited. 'Diagram' is closer to serving as a genre-label, in that it suggests both a particular social purpose, and social relations, of those who use the diagram and those who make it. 'Diagram' also suggests a particular coding-orientation: not the realism of the everyday world, but the realism of the scientific-technological world.

Meanings of genres in multimodal texts

So what is the genre of this text overall? And what consequences does all this have not just for a view of writing, but for the actual uses of writing, and for likely changes to the uses, forms and values of the technology of writing?

To answer the first question, we can say that there is a clear difference between the 'naturalism' (within the realism of everyday life) of the written genre of recount, and the abstraction (within the world of scientific theorising) of the visual genre of diagram-drawing. The first positions me as someone who hears an account of a completed, ordered, sequence of events, recounted as though they form part of my everyday life. That sense is reinforced by the syntax of the writing, which is close to the clausal structures of everyday speech, as is its use of words – 'we then *sorted* the microscope *out*' from a quite casual register. Doing science, in this account, is like doing cooking, or doing the dishes. The second form, the visual, positions me as someone who is given a view of a fragment of an entity, but understands that the fragment 'stands for' the structure of the whole entity, in a form which is not part of the everyday world. I am positioned in a different domain, out of time, in a world of regularity produced by the theory that I am applying.

The task of the science curriculum is, still, to induct young people into the practices that constitute 'doing science'. That practice is presented in two

distinct ways here: 'doing science' in the recount presents me with a world of ordered actions or events which are like actions or events in the everyday world. 'Doing science' in the drawing/diagram is presented as being about another world, not one of actions and events, but of states of affairs with regularities, abstracted away from the everyday world. If this multimodal text-entity 'has' a genre, then it is a mixed genre, in which differently organised worlds appear differently: one a world of actions where the actors are like you and me, the other a world without actors, a world of things as they are. If one is the world of the everyday, then the other is the world of theory, abstraction. One draws me in by suggesting that I am like the actors in a world that is familiar to me. The other positions me as a neutral observer of an objectively present world, but an observer with a special status and a special lens.

This is the meaning of this genre; these are the social relations and the social roles of the participants projected by the combined genre. Of course, this is a genre produced by a non-expert. The fact that she mixes the social relations of the world of the everyday with the social relations of the world of scientific work may be an effect of the teaching that she has had, or it may be her response to what she has taken from that teaching. She is able to form her own generic response, to see science her way and to represent it her way: actions which are like those of the everyday, in relation to a world which is differently constituted. The genre overall seems to position her somewhere between the everyday and the special world of technical/theoretical endeavour.

Mixed genres are commonplace, though the kind of disjunction presented here would appear as a severe problem if both texts were written texts, or if this was the text of an expert. Because the two generic positions are realised in different modes, the disjunction is not readily apparent, or does not become a problem; it does not appear as a contradiction. In fact it may well be a very good representation of the social relations as they exist in the science teaching that she is experiencing. Is it a problem that we do not have labels for these 'mixes', or indeed do not have labels for many kinds of generic organisation? This is not, I think, the main issue at all; if we find that we need labels, we will make them up. What is important is to recognise that texts realise, among other things, the kinds of social relation pointed to here.

In this text too we see design at work. This young woman has made a number of design decisions in a multimodal representation: a decision about layout, in where to place which element; a decision about generic (epistemological) form – everyday or scientific – for each of the two elements; a decision about which mode to use for the realisation of each of the distinct positions; and no doubt others.

As far as labels for the mixes are concerned, my analysis of the next example (Figure 7.2) will show that this may be even less of a useful aim.

Several differences are immediately apparent. The 'diagram' (with the teacher's written comment, 'Diagram needs to be much larger') is below the written text, as the teacher had asked. There is a division between the written

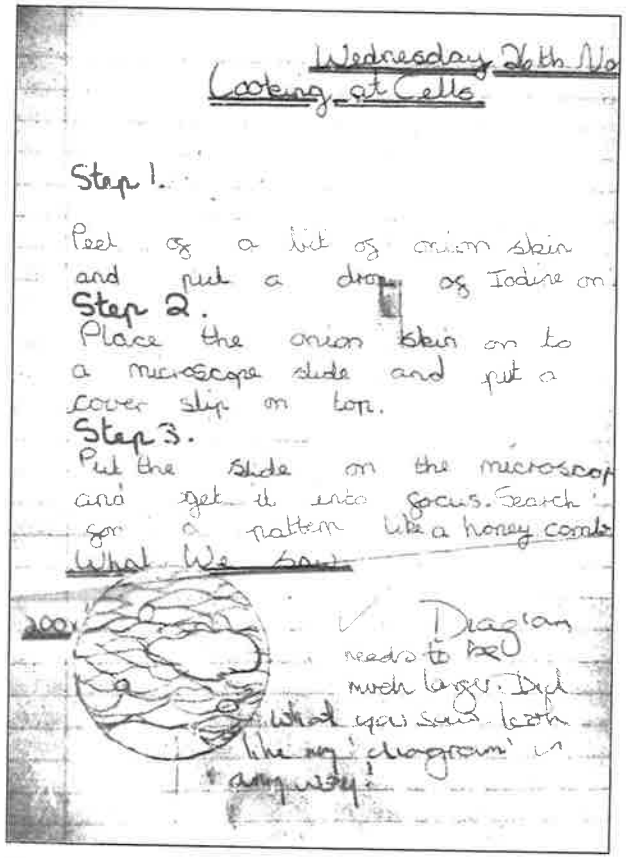

Figure 7.2 Student drawing of a plant cell 2: the lens of the microscope

part and the visual; they are separated by a heading – 'what we saw'. But the image partly protrudes into its heading, and the heading is very tightly linked to the written text, insisting, as it were, on a connectedness, even a unity, of writing and image. Where in the first example they had been clearly separate, here there is a real move physically to integrate them.

The genre of the written text is that of *procedure*: a sequence of distinct (in this case numbered) steps which, when followed, will lead to the achievement of the intended aim. The social relations expressed 'in' the procedure differ from those in the recount. The recount told what happened, and the assumption was that there might be those who would wish to reproduce those actions. Here there are those with the power or authority to order actions to be taken, and those who carry out the actions. This is very different to the recount. It is no longer the friendly telling of what happened so that you might do the same; this is

being told what to do. The claim made implicitly in the procedure is one of relations of power, actions and intended outcomes. This is not a realist genre in the manner of the recount; it is not a report of real events or actions of actual people, of events which have happened. It is a set of commands (in the syntactic form of imperatives) for actions that are to happen.

As in the first example, the written text-part is generically complete. Its relation to the world of the everyday is different; it is not the world of everyday happenings. This is a world in which power exists, and those with power can insist on actions being taken in a specific way and in a certain sequence. These are social relations of a very different kind. In the recount we could be sure that all the *significant* events were there, even though there might also be others. For instance, in the recount we are told that 'it was interesting to look at and draw'. In the procedure we have only those potential actions (as commands) which are essential to the carrying out of a task which already exists as a prestructured schema.

In terms of communicational roles, there is a big difference: the text overall is a set of instructions, and the individual segments are commands to carry out the instructions as they are indicated. Consequently, the roles here are of a different kind: to act in a world in accord with the commands of some other with power, with clear procedures and in accordance with those procedures. The reader is not in the world of their everyday life. My role is to carry out commands issued by some (institutional) authority.

That also describes the relation between the world of this written text and the everyday world: they are different. In this world I have less power than others. The manner in which I am drawn into the text is by command, by means of power, and not as before, by the pleasure or interest of the recount. The world projected here is the world of precise procedures which those who are a part of this world must follow. It is not the everyday world of these students: there is no (implicit) claim here that the world of scientific practices is like the world of their everyday practices.

The drawing differs from that in the first example. One clue is provided in the instructions: 'Search for pattern like a honeycomb'. In his talk the teacher had provided the metaphor, among others, of the honeycomb: 'it might look like a honeycomb'. In the case of both texts a metaphor provided in language – in writing in the one instance – 'what you will see will be like bricks in a brick wall' – and in talk in the other – has been transducted by the pupils into visual form. Let me follow the steps that I took in analysing both the written and the visual elements of the first example. The drawing shows a strongly delineated circle, with elements of different kinds contained in the circle. What is represented 'in' the image, and what is represented by the image overall, as a whole? Like her fellow students, this young woman saw air-bubbles, larger and smaller ones. However, the cell-entities which she saw are far less regular in shape, and their arrangement is not in any way as orderly as in the 'brick wall' example. Regularity of the elements or of their arrangements is not a feature of this

image. The drawing differs from that in the first example in that what it shows is complete: here we have the whole world that is to be represented. The implication is that this is what she actually saw through the microscope: everything that was there to see is there, as she saw it. It is textually as well as representationally complete.

In the drawing in the first example scientificness lay in abstraction away from that which appeared in view in the microscope, abstraction in the direction of theory and generalisation. There was no representation of the lens of the microscope, and in fact no real pretence that the drawing represented what the 'eye' had seen. That drawing represented what the 'eye of theory' had seen. Here, by contrast, scientificness lies in the precision of representing that which is there in view, that which the human eye can see. In the first example truth is the truth of abstraction, the truth of theory; here truth is the truth of actuality, of that which is there, the truth of the empirically real world. We are shown not only what she saw, but the means by which she saw what she saw, hence we see the eyepiece through which the young woman looked – we see everything that she saw. For her, being scientific resides in the accuracy of observation and representation.

The relation of the written text and the image is inverted in relation to that in the first example. There the written text was broadly realistic and the visual broadly non-realistic, theoretical. Here the written text is not an account of events as they happened, but of a schema as it exists in the world of science, which might lead to a set of actions in that world. The visual part, by contrast, is realistic. The two aspects of the text jointly seem to suggest that the meaning of 'scientificness' here might be that the world of science is ordered by schemata for action which organise and underlie action, and that the essential task of science is to achieve an accurate account of the empirically real, aided by these schemata of actions.

If we contrast the two examples, they are nearly an inversion of each other: in the first, the written part of the text is realist; in the second it is schematic/theoretical; in the first text, the visual part is theoretical/abstract, while in the second it is empirical/realist. Scientificness is carried in distinctively different ways in the two cases. Underlying this is the action and the process of design of an overall message-entity.

What is the role of writing in these multimodal ensembles? Even though the written parts of the two ensembles are *generically* different from each other, they do share a significantly common feature: both are focused on action and event, even if differently so; both of the visual elements by contrast are focused on 'what is', the visual display of the world that is in focus. Each of the two texts overall is incomplete without both written and visual parts; each mode, writing and image, does distinctly different and specific things. The specificity is the same at one level: the affordance of the logic of time governs writing, and the affordance of the logic of space governs the image. Within that, there is the possibility of generic variation. And the generic variation of the ensembles, in each case, produce an overall difference of a significant kind.

Genre as design: text and the new media

As I suggested, the two texts that I have discussed here – as well as the Annapelle text earlier – are examples of *ensembles of modes*, brought together to realise particular meanings. The fact that the two school-texts are made by unpractised designers is in one way an advantage in that it shows how an untutored maker of such ensembles uses the affordances of the modes for their ends. The purpose of the science curriculum is, in one important way, to induct young people into the idea of scientificness. Here we see the response of two students to this demand, expressed through what we can see as design decisions in the realisation of that meaning. They are faced with the question of 'what is it to act or be scientific?' and each gives a distinct answer, which is expressed through choice of modes, and choice of genres, more than through what aspects of curriculum content to represent. Both students understand the affordances of writing – best of all it does the job of representing action and event – though of course the teacher's demands and previously encountered models will have given them resources in that respect. The teacher's inexplicit or 'open' framing of the task leaves much of the design decision to the students: how to interpret the relatively open request 'write what you did' in generically specific terms, and to do the same for the request 'draw what you saw'.

The first of the two examples shows a decision to go for realism in the written genre: to be truthful to science means that I am expected to report things as they were; I have to stay true to the empirically real. But this student also realised that science is about constructing general accounts of what this aspect of the world is (like), and she does that in her drawing: the truth of this world lies in this abstraction, which generalises away from the messiness of the empirical and to a general truth. The truth of actions is reached via the mode of writing, and the truth of how the world looks is reached via the mode of image.

For the second student there is a similar question, though she answers it differently: the truth of science lies in the generality of the procedures, in the generality of the practices, which must be the same each time they are performed and not open to the chance of contingent event. This truth is reached via the mode of writing. The truth of what the world is like is reached via the mode of image and the precise recording of what there actually is in that world, without concession to anything but strict observation.

These are epistemological decisions, but they are realised through design decisions focused on the use of modes and the truth they harbour, the use of genres and the truths that they contain. On the face of it, these decisions have nothing to do with the existence of the new information and communication media. In reality they absolutely do: the manner in which these young people encounter school science owes much to the revolution in representation which has already in their world altered the status, the function, the uses and the forms of writing. The 'books' which they use are transformed already by the joint effects of the emergence into central representational use of the mode of

image, and the effect on the page of the organisations of the screens of the new media. The fact that there is now a design decision to be made, and that decisions about genre are now relatively open, is both a direct effect of the new media via their effect on the look of the page, and also an indirect effect of the new media in that teachers as much as designers of textbooks know that the young are attuned to a differently configured communicational world.

In that new communicational world there are now choices about how what is to be represented should be represented: in what mode, in what genre, in what ensembles of modes and genres and on what occasions. These were not decisions open to students (or teachers or textbook-makers) some twenty years earlier. Of course, with all this go questions not only of the potentials of the resources, but also of the new possibilities of arrangements, the new grammars of multimodal texts. These new grammars, barely coming into conventionality at the moment, and certainly very little understood, have effects in two ways at least. On the one hand they order the arrangements of the elements in the ensembles; on the other hand they design the functions that the different elements are to have in the ensembles. These are the kinds of decision that I pointed to: writing used for the representation of event structures, and image used for the representations of displays of aspects of the world. This is what I call the 'functional specialisation' of the modes, and that in turn has the profoundest effects on the inner organisation and development of the modes.

Where before, up until twenty or thirty years ago, writing carried all the communicational load of a message, and needed to have grammatical and syntactic structures that were equal to the complexities of that which had to be represented in that single mode, now there is a specialisation, which allows each of the modes to carry that part of the message for which it is best equipped. This brings with it the possibilities of great simplification of syntax for writing, for instance. It leads to some new questions, such as I have mentioned: what are the elements which come together in the multimodal ensembles? In the two text examples discussed above, there are image blocks and writing blocks, and it is these which form the first level of conjunction. At the first level of reading we note that the text is composed of 'blocks', and at that level it is not immediately relevant what modal realisation these elements have, whether they are image or writing. They are treated as elements of the same order. This is a bit like the analysis of a sentence where we might want to know what the main verb is, what its subject noun might be, and what complements – if any – there are. Reading at the next level down would then focus on the internal elements of these higher-level elements.

If we take Figure 5.2 (see Chapter 5) as an example, it is clear that there are three elements or blocks at the first level. These are predominantly visual, but the point is that in our first engagement with and analysis of ('scanning' might be another useful term) the page we note the three blocks. We then note that each image has accompanying it a written bolded label. So at the next level down our analysis reveals that each block consists of two elements, in a

particular relation. That relation is in part defined in mode terms – large image, relatively small label – and in part by proximity – the label is at a certain distance from the image, indicating that it 'goes with' the image. At the third level down, the analysis reveals lower-level elements both in the visual mode and in writing, and here too the relation is that of labelling. Because the relationship is not so obvious – the elements are smaller, and the 'goes with' relation could be misinterpreted – it is indicated by a connecting line.

It is clear that here the question of genre no longer rests with the written mode. If we wish to understand the social relations realised in this text, we need to look predominantly at the visual mode. The verbal mode supplies text-elements, namely 'labels', and labels do of course also have generic effect – they supply the information of 'name', and supplying information is to take and assign a specific social role. In the original, the images are in heavily saturated colour, deep reds, purples, yellows, some green – all close to the primary part of the colour spectrum. We are not in the same domain as the black-and-white drawing of the students, nor in that of the student who used colour pencils. Nor are we in the coding orientation of the circuit diagrams in Chapter 9. This is the world of excitement, entertainment, pleasure, the world of consumer culture, and science has become a part of that. That is perhaps the first thing to note about this page/screen. We are shown the retina from the side, signalling lower involvement with what we are looking at than in either the onion-cell drawings, which were front-on, or the circuits, which also were. We are looking down on the square which is a hypothetical slice out of the retina. *Standing apart* (signalling low involvement) and *looking down on* (signalling greater power of the viewer) bring highly affective subjective elements into the social relation. These objects or entities do not demand our attention by the front-on objective demand – of the circuit diagram or of the onion-cell drawing. We, the viewers, are in control here, it is our will and our pleasure which dictates what we do. The distance at which these entities are presented is at mid-range: a distance which can signal some engagement, but not too close.

Generically this image suggests a social relation like that of the report; this is what there is; this is all there is; I have shown you all. However, the image, through its spatial affordances, can bring aspects of social relations into the text which might be problematic in a written genre in school science. For instance, there is a clear appeal to the viewer in the angles I mentioned, in the social domain signalled by the hyper-realist representation, including the intense saturation of the colours, and by the dynamism indicated by the angle of the retina segment. It is a 'display', but for a viewer with power – the power of the consumer in the market society.

Genre labels

These examples raise again something of a recurring problem: what do we call such 'mixed genres'? There is in any case the problem that there very few commonly used labels for genres; only really prominent ones have well-understood names – whether literary (the novel) or non-literary (the interview) or texts of popular culture (romance, film noir). That problem is somewhat compounded by the differences in theoretical practice – where genre can be used as the naming of the text as a whole or, as in my approach here, as the naming of an aspect of text. One of the solutions that has been adopted at times is that of inventing subcategories. So we have 'interview' but also then 'job-interview', 'media-interview', 'radio-interview' and so on. In these three cases the qualifying adjective names quite different things, a very good reason for avoiding this strategy. But even if we kept the categories steady, using one category, say 'what medium?' (radio, TV, newspaper and so on), we would end up proliferating types, and end up with an unprincipled list.

My preferred solution is to accept, to begin with, that *mixing* is normal, in whatever domain, and at whatever level. In writing we can have clauses functioning as subjects of a sentence, taking a quasi-noun role. We can have single words or two-word structures functioning as complete message units, taking a quasi-sentence role, and indeed functioning as complete texts – as in 'No' or 'No Smoking'. Mixed genres exist in written text, though they have been somewhat of a theoretical embarrassment. Mixed genres exist in multimodal, or mono-modal, non-verbal texts. The question is, what do we call generically mixed texts in writing? We have no problem accepting generically hugely mixed texts such as the novel as a genre. No one disputes that 'novel' is a genre label. Or is it perhaps a matter of the intensity and the degree of mixing? If all genres are mixed genres – as I suggested earlier – what is a 'genre', a pure genre; how and where would it occur; and how would we recognise it?

In my approach, where genre does not name the text, but an aspect of the text's organisation (though I am happy to name the whole text after its dominant generic features – as in 'interview'), there is no problem in saying that a text can be and in many cases will be generically mixed. If we see this as a matter of 'levels' then there is no problem at all: we have genres and generic fragments embedded in, forming a part of, the text overall. The real issue in any case is not really to have labels, though they can be useful devices, and it is clear that bad labels can be importantly misleading. The science teacher's use of the label 'diagram' might be one case in point. But the real issue is to understand the generic nature of the text – what meanings does the text realise, what social meanings are at issue?

Genre and educational strategies

The profound cultural diversity of all contemporary 'Western' post-industrial societies, as much as the new demands for education for participation in a fully globalised economy, has specific educational consequences. It means that an 'outcomes-based curriculum' or, to use a better formulation, a curriculum which focuses on skills, disposition, essential processes and understanding of

resources for representing and communicating, may be what all of 'us' in the anglophone and ever more globalising world will need to consider urgently. This will be a curriculum which focuses above all on 'dispositions', a return to quite traditional notions of education – not training – on something akin to the German notion of *Bildung*, but refocused clearly on the real features of the new globalising world and its demands. I am not here thinking of the facile and deeply mistaken ideas around skills-training, but focusing rather on giving students a full awareness of what might be possible, beyond both the suggestions of current politics and the seductions of the market-led consumption. Such an education would provide them with the means both for setting their goals and for achieving them in the contexts of their lives. This is the ability for which I use the term 'design'. Much more goes with that change in curriculum from either content as stable knowledge or content as the training for skills, to dispositions to 'design'.

A new theory of text is essential to meet the demands of culturally plural societies in a globalising world. In my *Writing the Future: English and the Making of a Culture of Innovation* (1995) I suggested that the school-subject English needed an encompassing theory of text, in which the texts of high culture could be brought into productive conjunction with the banal texts of the everyday. If the literary texts which have been seen as 'the best' are to have real effects on all texts, they cannot be treated as separate. I suggested three categories of text, within the one theory: the aesthetically valued text – the texts treated by any one cultural group as the texts which embodied for them what they saw as best; the culturally salient text – texts which were significant for a society for any number of reasons, but which might not meet the criteria of aesthetic value; and the mundane text – texts of the everyday, entirely banal texts (the Annapelle text would be an example) which are significant because they constitute, reproduce and remake the 'everyday'. All these will have to be dealt with within one theory of text, within one culture, across cultures in one society and across historical periods. But what is quite clear is that even the production of the banal text – Annapelle – requires much more than competent knowledge. That text is based, however imperfectly, on the understandings of design: an understanding of what the social and cultural environment is into which my text is to fit, the purposes it is to achieve, the resources of all kinds that I have to implement and realise my design, and the awareness of the characteristics of the sites of appearance of that text.

That educational environment will deal with banal texts, culturally salient texts (from all the cultures represented in one society) and aesthetically valued texts, in all modes and in all kinds of modal combination. Translations, transformations and transductions will be entirely normal, and made more so by the affordances of the new information and communication technologies which make modal transformation and transduction, as well as the co-appearance of modes, entirely normal.

Theories of meaning will have to be rethought and remade. There is a reality

to genre, but the conceptions from former social arrangements with their (relative) stabilities have left us with both the wrong theory and the wrong vocabulary. The wrong theory led us to believe that stability of language or of text-form (as indeed of other social phenomena) is a feature of texts, when it had always been – as it appears now – a feature of these phenomena in a particular historical period, when relative social stability had obtained. So, for instance, to speak of 'generic mixes' is really to conceive of genre in the older fashion – of stable genres which can be and are mixed. A newer way of thinking may be that within a general awareness of the range of genres, of their shapes and their contexts, speakers and writers newly make the generic forms out of available resources. This is a much more 'generative' notion of genre: not one where you learn the shapes of existing kinds of text alone, in order to replicate them, but where you learn the generative rules of the constitution of generic form within the power structures of a society. And you learn what the shapes of these texts are, coming out of those social conditions. That will permit (and account for) constant change, and makes the actions of the producer of the genre innovative and transformative. It encourages and normalises 'design' of text in response to the perceived needs of the maker of the text in a given environment. In such a theory all acts of representation are innovative, and creativity is the normal process of representation for all.

There will need to be a new evaluation and description of the resources for representation and communication, the means for making texts, which are available and in use in a particular society. For in a plural society the generic forms of all cultural groups will need to be brought into the market of communication.

Literacy and communication curricula rethought in this fashion offer an education in which creativity in different domains and at different levels of representation is well understood, in which both creativity and difference are seen as normal and as productive. The young who experienced that kind of curriculum might feel at ease in a world of incessant change. A social theory of genre is one essential element in bringing about that shift.