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МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ КРУГЛЫЙ СТОЛ

ЖАНР В КОГНИТИВНОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ: МОДЕЛИ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ЧИТАТЕЛЯ С ТЕКСТОМ

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Т.В. Шмелева

Модель речевого жанра

Понятие речевого жанра (далее – РЖ) приобретает популярность на наших глазах: еще недавно приходилось сетовать на непрочитанность работы М.М. Бахтина о проблемах речевых жанров, сегодня о них пишут все больше, термин входит в филологический оборот¹. Способствует этому и тот факт, что интуитивно РЖ – довольно ясное понятие: стоит привести два-три примера, как у любого человека складывается впечатление, что ему все понятно и он может работать с РЖ и решать какие-то проблемы. Это впечатление подкрепляется, во-первых, имеющимся почти у всех опытом обращения с жанрами художественной речи, теоретически осмысленными наиболее тщательно, что в малых дозах представлено даже в школьном преподавании литературы, а во-вторых, речевым сознанием, той его частью, которую можно обозначить как ИНТУИТИВНАЯ ЖАНРОВАЯ РЕФЛЕКСИЯ.

В качестве свидетельств ее проявления можно привести попутные замечания о разных сторонах жанра ВОСПОМИНАНИЯ (МЕМУАРА) трех разных авторов журнала «Знамя» (№ 7. 1996):

Помню как... вспоминается один случай... как-то раз... однажды... до чего неприятны, хочется сказать, унинительны эти сопроводительные словечки мемуарного жанра. Разве так говорит человек сам с собой? Разве так вспоминают? (А. Кушнер);

Ни одному мемуаристу не дано бестрепетно листать страницы былого... Однако миссию судьи труднее оправдать, нежели миссию протоколиста (В. Кардин);

Написаны они [воспоминания], вопреки давней мемуарной традиции и новой литературной моде, без самолюбования, пусть бы и приглушенного (В. Кардин);

Кстати, единственный жанр, в котором (внутри которого) дозволено цитировать свои собственные стихи, это жанр мемуарный. В других случаях это было бы, наверное, не очень скромно, но в мемуарах бывает даже необходимо. Особенно если сильно придется к слову! (Н. Матвеева).

¹ Понятие РЖ родилось в исследовании поэтического языка как одна из точек отсчета в поисках его специфики – в работах М.М. Бахтина, В.В. Виноградова, Ю. Тынянова, Б. Эйхенбаума, Б. Шкловского; позднее оно стало использоваться в работах по стилистике – Панов М.В. О стилях произношения (в связи с общими проблемами стилистики) // Развитие современного русского языка. М., 1963; Федосюк М.Ю. «Стиль» ссоры // Русская речь. 1993. № 5. С. 14-19, коллоквиалистике – Земская Е.А. 1988 – Городская устная речь и задачи ее изучения // Разновидности городской устной речи. М., 1988. С. 5-44; Капанадзе Л.А. О жанрах неофициальной речи // Там же; в исследованиях профессиональной речи – Гарбовский Н.К. О функционально-стилистической вариативности языка // Вопросы системной организации речи. М., 1987; Гарбовский Н.К. Сопоставительная стилистика профессиональной речи (на материале русского и французского языков). М., 1988. Хотя мы ограничиваемся рассмотрением ситуации в отечественной лингвистике, следует указать и такую известную работу: Wierzbicka A. Genry mowy // Tekst i zdanie. Zbiór studiów Wrocław itd., 1983. S. 125-137.

Такого рода свидетельства (привести их можно было бы много больше) говорят о том, что в сознании пишущих присутствует некий ОБРАЗ ЖАНРА, и они эксплицируют его отдельные стороны, чаще всего с тем, чтобы выразить свое к ним отношение. Вообще говоря, такие экспликации почти всегда – симптомы кризиса жанра или предчувствий его трансформаций, переосмысления в новых социокультурных условиях. Однако для наших рассуждений важно не это, а само наличие образа жанра, жанрового канона не только в профессиональном филологическом сознании.

Интуитивная очевидность понятия РЖ, конечно же, иллюзорна. В этом убеждается каждый, кто предпринимает попытки изучения и описания конкретных жанров или их групп. Трудности такого рода побуждают к тому, чтобы конкретизировать понимание РЖ, уточнив его наиболее спорные моменты. Чему и посвящена данная работа².

Начать стоит с того, чтобы указать на различие трех подходов к проблеме РЖ, осуществляемых в современной отечественной русистике.

Первый из них можно обозначить как ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИЙ: он предполагает обращение к именам жанров, толкованию их семантики. Он наиболее тесно связан с теорией речевых актов, во многом основанной на анализе употребления глаголов речи; опыты такого рода толкований известны и в отечественной русистике³. Их плодотворность не подлежит сомнению, на важность учета данных метасловаря указывалось при обсуждении проблемы⁴, однако на основе такой лексики нельзя, как представляется, составить полное и адекватное представление о РЖ, хотя бы потому, что одним именем могут обозначаться несколько жанров или их разновидностей и, напротив, один жанр может иметь ряд наименований (так, существует по крайней мере три жалобы⁵, с другой стороны, у имени *жалоба* есть синонимы *ламентация*, *иеремиада*).

Второй подход может быть назван СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИМ, он согласуется с традициями литературоведения и предполагает анализ текстов

² Она продолжает серию работ автора о РЖ: Речевой жанр / Возможности описания и использования в преподавании языка // *Russistik. Русистика*. 1990 г., № 2; Речевые жанры // *Культура русской речи: энциклопедический словарь-справочник* Проспект / Под ред. А.П. Сковородникова. Красноярск, 1991. С. 89-91; Речевой жанр как первичная характеристика высказывания // *Высказывание как объект лингвистической семантики и теории коммуникации*, Ч. I. Омск, 1992, С.25-26; Повседневная речь как лингвистический объект // *Русистика сегодня*. М., 1992. С. 12-13; Речевой жанр: несложившаяся традиция отечественной филологии // *Филология – Журналистика'94: Научные материалы*. Красноярск, 1995. С. 50; Речевой жанр: опыт общепилологического осмысления // *Collegium* № 1-2. 1995. С. 57-65.

³ См. напр.: *Гловинская М.Я.* Семантика глаголов речи с точки зрения теории речевых актов // *Русский язык в его функционировании. Коммуникативно-прагматический аспект*. М., 1993. С. 158-218; полемику с таким подходом см: *Федосюк М.Ю.* Анализ имен и глаголов речи и исследование речевых жанров (в печати).

⁴ *Шмелева Т.В.* Повседневная речь... С. 12-13.

⁵ *Шмелева Т.В.* Речевой жанр / Возможности... С. 27-28.

в аспекте их жанровой природы, включая композицию, отбор специфической лексики и т. п.⁶

Третий подход, который, как представляется, в максимальной степени соответствует идеям М.М. Бахтина, исходит из того, что РЖ – это особая МОДЕЛЬ высказывания⁷, из чего следует, что необходимо исследование его в двух направлениях: исчисление моделей и изучение их воплощения в различных речевых ситуациях. В рамках такого подхода могут быть осуществлены как монографические описания отдельных РЖ, так и построение их общей типологии. Основываясь на идеях М.М. Бахтина, учитывая результаты, полученные в рамках теории речевых актов и теории жанров художественной речи, данный подход соотносится со стратегией активной грамматики в понимании Л.В. Щербы, «двигаясь» от автора, его замыслов и предварительных условий общения к способам языкового воплощения РЖ, в которых для адресата закодирована вся необходимая для успешного общения жанровая информация. Поскольку такой подход оказывается обращенным к РЖ как феномену речи, его логично обозначить РЕЧЕВЕДЧЕСКИМ⁸.

Как уже ясно из характеристики подхода, его основополагающим моментом является признание существования в речевом сознании «ТИПОВОГО ПРОЕКТА», КАНОНА, СХЕМЫ РЖ, задача же исследователя состоит в том, чтобы это интуитивное представление эксплицировать в формулировках научной дефиниции, обозначив его как МОДЕЛЬ РЖ.

В теоретическом плане стоит, видимо, заметить, что говорить о РЕЧЕВОЙ МОДЕЛИ столь же правомерно, как и о языковой, в существовании таковых, кажется, уже никто не сомневается. Разумеется, это нуждается в серьезном теоретическом обосновании, что можно сделать, скажем, в рамках развития речеведения, однако здесь достаточно принять такую позицию, чтобы убедиться в том, что ее применение дает позитивные результаты.

Итак, если есть речевая модель жанра, то в каких параметрах она может быть описана? Иначе говоря, каков круг жанрообразующих признаков, необходимых и достаточных для опознания, характеристики, конструирования РЖ?

Речевая модель, несомненно, более сложное, можно даже сказать, громоздкое явление, чем языковые модели (хотя и последние представляют

⁶ Матвеева Т.В. К лингвистической теории жанра // Collegium № 1-2. 1995. С. 65-71; Николаев Б.И., Николаева Л.А. Жанр как текст, высказывание и система текстов (на материале новеллистики) // Язык и культура: 4-я междунар. конф. Ч. 3. Киев, 1996. С. 82-90.

⁷ Бахтин М.М. Проблема текста в лингвистике, филологии и других гуманитарных науках. Опыт философского анализа // Бахтин М.М. Эстетика словесного творчества. М., 1979. С. 307; основные представления М.М. Бахтина о РЖ изложены в работе «Проблема речевых жанров», опубликованной там же.

⁸ Представления о речеведении, включающем и учение о жанрах речи, изложены автором в работе: Речеведение. Теоретические и прикладные аспекты, Новгород. 1996.

большие сложности для исследователей в плане их поиска, представления, характеристики). Что касается модели РЖ, то для ее характеристики важны по крайней мере семь конститутивных признаков.

Главнейший из них наиболее значимый типологически – КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ ЦЕЛЬ, он противопоставляет четыре типа РЖ:

ИНФОРМАТИВНЫЕ – цель которых – различные операции с информацией: ее предъявление или запрос, подтверждение или опровержение;

ИМПЕРАТИВНЫЕ – цель которых – вызвать осуществление / неосуществление событий, необходимых, желательных, опасных для кого-то из участников общения;

ЭТИКЕТНЫЕ – цель которых – осуществление особого события, поступка в социальной сфере, предусмотренного этикетом данного социума: извинения, благодарности, поздравления, соболезнования, и т. д. вплоть до отречения от престола;

ОЦЕНОЧНЫЕ – цель которых – изменить самочувствие участников общения, соотнося их поступки, качества и все другие манифестации с принятой в данном обществе шкалой ценностей.

Актуальность различения этих четырех типов РЖ подтверждается тем, что для некоторых из них языком выработаны особые грамматические формы, например, императив⁹, интонационные показатели. Если учесть и разнообразные лексические показатели жанров, а также систему их наименований, составляющих целый словарь, то окажется, что на службу языковому воплощению РЖ привлечен огромный массив разнообразных языковых средств.

Если исходить из того, что наиболее важное в речи фиксируется в грамматике, то наиболее важными придется признать императивные РЖ, располагающие особой специализированной формой глагола и наряду с ней использующие массу транспонированных форм и неимперативных по своей природе конструкций. Можно считать, что лингвистическое внимание прямо пропорционально их речевой значимости и сложности языкового воплощения¹⁰.

Из информативных РЖ особого лингвистического внимания удостоены вопросы, классификация которых учитывает множество тончайших различий, которые нуждаются в осмыслении в рамках теории речевого жанра¹¹. Следует отметить, что информативные жанры составляют основную базу лингвистического анализа, однако вопросы их жанровой природы

⁹ См., напр.: Храковский В.С., Володин А.П. Семантика и типология императива. Русский императив. Л., 1986.

¹⁰ См.: Императив в разноструктурных языках: Тез. докл. конф. Л., 1988; Бирюлин Л.А. Теоретические аспекты семантико-прагматического описания императивных высказываний в русском языке: Автореф. дис... докт. филол. наук. СПб, 1992 и др.

¹¹ Русская грамматика. М, 1980. Т. 2. С. 386-394; Конрад Д. Вопросительные предложения как косвенные речевые акты // Новое в зарубежной лингвистике. Вып. 16. М., 1985. С. 349-383.

фактически не обсуждаются, а жанровое однообразие грамматически исследуемого материала «затушевывает» актуальность жанровой проблематики по отношению к классическим повествовательным предложениям.

Этикетные жанры оказались в центре лингвистического внимания с открытием перформативов как особого класса речевых актов¹², в отечественной традиции этикетные РЖ описываются в литературе, посвященной речевой этикету¹³.

Оценочные РЖ изучены в наименьшей степени, хотя весьма подробно описано проявление оценочной семантики в разных типах предложений с помощью различных языковых средств (Е.М. Вольф, Н.Д. Арутюнова).

Четыре охарактеризованных типа РЖ не исчерпывают всех коммуникативных задач, осуществляемых в речи, например, есть еще фатические задачи; но названные типы целей организуют основные типы РЖ, являясь важнейшим жанрообразующим моментом. С другой стороны, следует отметить, что названные четыре типа целей могут быть достигнуты и «в обход» свода РЖ, например с помощью паралингвистических средств (широко используются знаки отказа, согласия, предостережения, одобрения и т.п.) или за счет «маскировки» жанров, когда задачи, свойственные одному РЖ, решаются с помощью другого, при этом достигаются дополнительные речевые эффекты¹⁴.

Итак, главный жанрообразующий признак – это КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ ЦЕЛЬ, он противопоставляет четыре типа РЖ, каждый из которых объединяет довольно большое количество жанров, различающихся внутри названных типов по другим жанрообразующим признакам.

Начать их перечисление следует с ОБРАЗА АВТОРА – той информации о нем как об участнике общения, которая «заложена» в типовой проект РЖ, обеспечивая ему успешное осуществление¹⁵. Может быть, наиболее чувствительны к этому параметру императивные РЖ, которые дифференцируются прежде всего на этом основании: ПРИКАЗ предполагает автора с определенными ПОЛНОМОЧИЯМИ, вопрос адресата «*Кто ты такой, чтобы мне приказывать?*» означает непризнание таких полномочий,

¹² Остин Дж. Л. Слово как действие // Новое в зарубежной лингвистике. М., 1986. Вып. 17. С.22-130; Серль Дж.Р. Классификация иллокутивных актов // Там же. С. 170-194; Апресян Ю.Д. Перформативы в грамматике и словаре // Изв. АН СССР. Сер.лит. и яз. 1986. Т.45. -3. С. 208-223.

¹³ Акишина А.А., Формановская Н.И. Русский речевой этикет. М., 1986; Формановская Н.И. Русский речевой этикет: лингвистический и методологический аспекты. М., 1982.

¹⁴ Серль Дж. Косвенные речевые акты // Новое в зарубежной лингвистике. Вып. 17. М., 1986.

¹⁵ Осмыслить этот параметр РЖ помогает обращение к идее В.В. Виноградова об образе автора как организующем моменте художественного текста – см.: Виноградов В.В. Избранные труды. О языке художественной прозы. М., 1980. С. 203-210.

что равносильно провалу жанра; ПРОСЬБА предполагает ЗАИНТЕРЕСОВАННОСТЬ автора в исполнении обсуждаемого действия; ПОУЧЕНИЕ – СТАРШИНСТВО автора по отношению к адресату или его превосходство в другом отношении; ЖАЛОБА включает в свой типовой проект образ автора ПОСТРАДАВШЕГО. Стоит подчеркнуть, что для образа автора РЖ едва ли не на первом месте стоят его отношения с адресатом, это, так сказать, «портрет на фоне».

Уже поэтому третьим жанрообразующим признаком следует назвать ОБРАЗ АДРЕСАТА¹⁶. Среди императивных РЖ основную массу составляют жанры с адресатом ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЕМ, то вынужденным принимать такую роль (ПРИКАЗ), то принимающим ее в своих интересах (СОВЕТ); ЖАЛОБА, как уже приводилось писать, представлена разновидностями, различающимися образом адресата – конфиденнта или уполномоченного «принимать меры». При несовпадении представлений адресата о своей роли в данном эпизоде общения с образом адресата предъявляемого ему жанра появляются реплики типа *«Я тебе не тот-то, чтобы мне указывать / командовать / советовать и т.п.»*

Следующими можно назвать два симметричных признака, связанных с местом каждого РЖ в цепи речевого общения, которое представляет собой не хаотический поток словесных извержений, а разыгрывается по вполне определенному сценарию. Используя тот же «терминоэлемент» *образ*, их можно обозначить как ОБРАЗ ПРОШЛОГО и ОБРАЗ БУДУЩЕГО, утверждая тем самым, что для РЖ существенны предшествующий и последующий эпизоды общения¹⁷.

Образ прошлого различает РЖ инициальные, начинающие общение, и такие, которые могут появиться только после определенных РЖ – таковы ОТВЕТ, ОТКАЗ, СОГЛАСИЕ, ОПРОВЕРЖЕНИЕ и ряд других, для которых предлагалось наименование «реактивные»: все они являются реакциями на другие жанры.

Образ будущего предполагает дальнейшее развитие речевых событий, воплощающееся в появлении других РЖ. Иллюстрацию действия этого признака РЖ можно увидеть в рассказе Ф. Искандера «Чик чтит обычаи»:

– Чик, – сказала мама Чику перед тем, как отправить его в Чегем, – ты уже не маленький. Деревня – это не город. В деревне, если приглашают к столу, нельзя сразу соглашаться. Надо сначала сказать: «Я не хочу. Я сыт. Я уже ел». А потом, когда они несколько раз повторяют приглашение, можно садиться за стол и есть.

¹⁶ Впервые внимание к этому аспекту речи привлечено в статье: Арутюнова Н.Д. Фактор адресата // Изв. АН СССР Сер. лит и яз. 1981, Т 40. Вып. 4. С. 356-367. В последнее время появились работы, в которых исследуется проявление фактора адресата в газетных, научных и др. текстах (Л. Дускаева, Л. Красильникова). Эта новая информация требует осмысления с позиций теории РЖ. О возможностях проявления адресата в русском высказывании см.: Шмелева Т.В. Диалогичность модуса // Вестник МГУ. Сер. «Филология» № 5. 1995.

¹⁷ Об этих признаках как о факторе прошлого и факторе будущего см. в работе автора «Речевой жанр (Возможности...)». С. 29.

– А если они не повторяют приглашение? – спросил Чик.

– В деревне такого не бывает, – сказала мама. – Это в городе могут не повторить приглашение. А в деревне повторяют приглашение до тех пор, пока гость не сядет за стол. Но гость должен поломаться, должен сначала отказываться, а иначе потом будут насмешничать. Ты уже не маленький, тебе двенадцать лет. Ты должен чтить обычаи.

– А сколько раз надо отказываться, чтобы потом сесть за стол? – деловито спросил Чик.

– До трех раз надо отказываться, – подумав, ответила мама, – а потом уже можно садиться за стол. Ты уже не маленький, ты должен чтить обычаи.

Приведенный фрагмент рассказа убеждает, что образ будущего РЖ ПРИГЛАШЕНИЕ К СТОЛУ предполагает многократное повторение ОТКАЗА, а затем позитивной реакции на приглашение. Характерно, что при этом важен возраст адресата и место общения.

Таким образом, все рассмотренные жанрообразующие признаки имеют собственно речевую природу: они обращены к условиям и участникам общения.

Следующий признак, на первый взгляд, лежит в иной плоскости: он обращен к внеречевой действительности и может быть назван тип ДИКТУМНОГО (СОБЫТИЙНОГО) СОДЕРЖАНИЯ. С одной стороны, принято показывать, что одно и то же диктумное содержание может быть представлено в речи в различной «жанровой оправе»: в результате императивного жанра «Поздравь бабушку с днем рождения!» должен быть осуществлен этикетный жанр «Дорогая бабушка! Поздравляю тебя...», чтобы потом дать повод для появления информативного жанра «Я поздравил бабушку», который, в свою очередь, может вызвать к жизни оценочный «Хорошо, что ты успел поздравить бабушку. Молодец!» – все эти жанры имеют одно и то же диктумное содержание – пропозицию поздравления. С другой стороны, нельзя не заметить, что РЖ отнюдь не безразличны к характеру диктума; выявляется целая серия признаков не собственно диктумной природы, но важных для отбора диктумной информации при формировании того или иного РЖ. Важен характер АКТАНТОВ диктумного события, так, среди императивных РЖ выделяется ПОЖЕЛАНИЕ, поскольку предъявляемое в нем событие может быть осуществлено с помощью разных исполнителей – вплоть до высших сил, остальные императивные РЖ предполагают, что исполнитель прескриптивного события – человек. Не менее важны ОТНОШЕНИЯ АКТАНТОВ И УЧАСТНИКОВ РЕЧИ: ЖАЛОБА отличается от СЕТОВАНИЯ тем, что первая предполагает включенность события в личную сферу автора, а вторая такого условия не содержит. Весьма существенна ВРЕМЕННАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВА диктума, различающая среди информативных нарративных РЖ ВОСПОМИНАНИЕ и ПРОГНОЗ как жанры с перфектной и футуральной перспективой диктума. Но, пожалуй, наиболее сильным селективным действием обладает ОЦЕНКА диктумного события, противопоставляющая императивные РЖ ПРОСЬБЫ и ПРЕДОСТЕРЕЖЕНИЯ, РАЗРЕШЕНИЯ и ЗАПРЕТА; отрицательная

оценочность события обязательна для РЖ ЖАЛОБЫ, УПРЕКА, СЕТОВАНИЯ и многих других.

Последним называю параметр ЯЗЫКОВОГО ВОПЛОЩЕНИЯ РЖ – в соответствии с условием двигаться от замысла к воплощению, то есть с позиций автора; с позиций же адресата языковое воплощение должно было бы начинать характеристику РЖ: это первое, что «получает» адресат, из чего он вычитывает информацию об авторе, его коммуникативных намерениях, прошлом и планируемом будущем жанра.

Для модели РЖ его языковое воплощение важно увидеть как СПЕКТР ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ, лексических и грамматических ресурсов жанра. В этом спектре можно обозначить некоторые полюсы: клишированность / индивидуальность, минимальность / максимальность словесного выражения. В первом отношении различаются стереотипные воплощения РЖ, например стереотипы городского общения или документы деловой сферы. Во втором аспекте РЖ обладает целой шкалой эксплицитности – от имплицитного проявления (согласие = кивок) до словесного выражения всех моментов, включая пресуппозитивные, ср.: *Пригласите к телефону Андрея и Поскольку телефон в соседнем с вами кабинете не работает, а мне крайне необходимо поговорить с вашим коллегой Андреем, прошу вас: пригласите его к телефону, пожалуйста, если это вам не очень трудно, будьте так добры.*

Для характеристики языкового воплощения РЖ важно участие в оформлении МЕТАКОМПОНЕНТА с обозначением жанра: ср. *Поздравляю с Рождеством и С Рождеством!; Предлагаю вам выпить чаю и Пожалуйста, чайку; В ответ на ваш запрос сообщаем, что нужными вам данными не располагаем и Нужными вам данными не располагаем.*

Разумеется, многообразие возможностей языкового воплощения одного и того же жанра нельзя отнести к излишествам: это средство дифференциации предъявления РЖ «в интересах» целого ряда параметров общения, включая отношения участников, их речевые и языковые возможности, вкусы. Если говорить об иерархии жанрообразующих параметров РЖ, то надо сказать, что лингвистически наиболее важен именно параметр языкового воплощения, все остальные нужны нам настолько, насколько они влияют на него. Создать подробное описание языкового воплощения РЖ – и есть представить его ПОРТРЕТ, этот жанр лингвистического описания заявляет о себе все решительнее. И в этом смысле модель РЖ можно рассматривать как инструмент создания такого портрета.

При этом аналогично тому как в синтаксисе наряду с понятием модели предложения существует понятие его регулярной реализации¹⁸, по отношению к модели РЖ может быть предложено понятие РЕГУЛЯРНОЙ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ РЖ, которые будут различаться прежде всего по СФЕРАМ

¹⁸ Шведова Н.Ю. О понятии «регулярная реализация структурной схемы простого предложения» // Мысли о современном русском языке. М., 1969; Русская грамматика. Т. 2. С. 119-123.

ОБЩЕНИЯ. Согласно идеям М.М. Бахтина, на основе первичных РЖ повседневной сферы общения формируются системы вторичных жанров, состав и специфика языкового оформления которых определяется характером сферы. Исследование РЖ в аспекте их регулярных реализаций в разных сферах общения выявит своеобразные речевые парадигмы жанров; например, РЖ повседневной сферы ПРОСЬБА в деловой сфере трансформируется в ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ (недаром все наши заявления начинаются с «*прошу*», а не «*заявляю*»), а в религиозной в МОЛИТВУ; что касается эстетической сферы, то она может в своей переработке воспользоваться любой из регулярных реализаций жанра: лирическое стихотворение может быть построено с ориентацией на просьбу – как «*Я не любви твоей прошу...*» А. Ахматовой – или молитвы, как хорошо известные модели М. Лермонтова, Б. Окуджавы и других авторов.

Итак, модель РЖ включает семь параметров, первое место среди которых отводим коммуникативной цели, дифференцирующей четыре типа РЖ, далее называем две пары симметричных признаков, соотносимых с автором и адресатом, предшествующим и последующим эпизодами общения, которые дифференцируют РЖ с одного типа коммуникативной целью; параметр диктумного содержания вносит ограничения в отбор информации о мире и вносит дифференциации более частного характера, вплоть до различения конкретных РЖ. Все эти шесть параметров относятся к реальностям действительности и общения, тогда как параметр языкового воплощения прямо выводит РЖ в пространство языка с его сложнейшей дифференциацией языковых средств по требованиям речи.

Предлагаемое толкование РЖ с опорой на понятие модели реально использовалось в практике университетского преподавания лингвистики¹⁹, для описания РЖ в словаре «Культура русской речи»²⁰. Думается, есть

¹⁹ Результатом этой работы можно считать защищенные в Красноярском университете дипломные работы под руководством автора: *Олейников В.* Речевые жанры делового общения (1986); *Тарасенко Т.* Речевые жанры. Фрагмент обыденной риторики (1986); *Щурина Ю.* Шутка как речевой жанр (1989); *Чабан Т.* Речевой жанр «поучение» (1992); *Зубарева Е.* Угроза, предупреждение, запрет: опыт описания речевых жанров (1992); а также публикации: *Подберезкина Л.З.* Речевые жанры в корпоративном языке (язык столбистов) // *Высказывание как объект...* Ч. 2. С. 59-69; *Подберезкина Л.З.* Речевые жанры в корпоративном общении (методологический аспект) // *Филология – Журналистика*'94: 52-53, *Подберезкина Л.З.* Корпоративный язык. Принципы исследования и описания (на материале языка столбистов): Автореф. дисс... к.ф.н. М, 1995. С. 14-18; *Киселева Л.А.* Речевые жанры в городском транспорте: фактор адресата // *Филология – Журналистика*'94: 53-54, *Маланчук И.Г.* О соотношении речевого жанра и речевого акта // Там же. С. 50-51; *Тарасенко Т.В.* Перлокуция и речевой жанр // Там же. С. 51-52.

²⁰ Автором для словаря подготовлены статьи: Вторичные речевые жанры; Информативные речевые жанры; Оценочные речевые жанры; Этикетные речевые жанры; Жанры деловой речи; Жанры научной речи; Жанры бытовой речи; Аннотация; Доклад; Жалоба; Извещение; Исповедь; Конспект; Консультация; Лекция, Лозунг; Объявление; Признание; Реферат; Содоклад; Сообщение; Тезисы, Шутка (в соавт. с Ю. Щуриной). Всего для словаря подготовлено более полусотни описаний жанров.

основания полагать, что этот опыт и обращение к изложенному пониманию русистов²¹ свидетельствуют о его теоретической правомерности и практической целесообразности. Не стоит думать, что изложенные здесь параметры модели исчерпывают все возможные стороны описания РЖ, но в них заданы основные жанрообразующие моменты. Используя предложенную модель РЖ, можно поставить вопрос не только о наблюдениях над отдельными жанрами или их «пучками», но и о создании ЭНЦИКЛОПЕДИИ РЕЧЕВЫХ ЖАНРОВ для всех сфер общения, что стало бы значительным шагом в постижении реалий русской речи, пока еще только начинающей приоткрывать свои тайны исследователям.

²¹ Боброва В.М. Отказ и возражение как жанры негативной реакции // Семантические и прагматические аспекты высказывания в разных речевых жанрах (на материале препозитивной структуры «X любит Y-а»): Автореф. дис. ... к.ф.н. Томск, 1993; Федосюк М.Ю. О речевом жанре «уговоры» // Язык и культура: 3-я междунар. конф. Доклады и тезисы докладов. Киев. 1994. С. 163-164.

An Introduction to Genre Theory

Daniel Chandler

1. The problem of definition

A number of perennial doubts plague genre theory. Are genres really 'out there' in the world, or are they merely the constructions of analysts? Is there a finite taxonomy of genres or are they in principle infinite? Are genres timeless Platonic essences or ephemeral, time-bound entities? Are genres culture-bound or transcultural?... Should genre analysis be descriptive or proscriptive? (Stam 2000, 14)

The word *genre* comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. The term is widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics, to refer to a distinctive type of 'text'. Robert Allen notes that 'for most of its 2,000 years, genre study has been primarily nomenclological and typological in function. That is to say, it has taken as its principal task the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types - much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants' (Allen 1989, 44). As will be seen, however, the analogy with biological classification into *genus* and *species* misleadingly suggests a 'scientific' process.

Since classical times literary works have been classified as belonging to general types which were variously defined. In literature the broadest division is between poetry, prose and drama, within which there are further divisions, such as tragedy and comedy within the category of drama. Shakespeare referred satirically to classifications such as 'tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral...' (*Hamlet* II ii). In *The Anatomy of Criticism* the formalist literary theorist Northrop Frye (1957) presented certain universal genres and modes as the key to organizing the entire literary corpus. Contemporary media genres tend to relate more to specific forms than to the universals of tragedy and comedy. Nowadays, films are routinely classified (e.g. in television listings magazines) as 'thrillers', 'westerns' and so on - genres with which every adult in modern society is familiar. So too with television genres such as 'game shows' and 'sitcoms'. While we have names for countless genres in many media, some theorists have argued that there are also many genres (and sub-genres) for which we have no names (Fowler 1989, 216; Wales 1989, 206). Carolyn Miller suggests that 'the number of genres in any society... depends on the complexity and diversity of society' (Miller 1984, in Freedman & Medway 1994a, 36).

The classification and hierarchical taxonomy of genres is not a neutral and 'objective' procedure. There are no undisputed 'maps' of the system of genres within any medium (though literature may perhaps lay some claim to a loose consensus). Furthermore, there is often considerable theoretical disagreement about the definition of specific genres. 'A genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world,' notes Jane Feuer (1992, 144). One theorist's *genre* may be another's *sub-genre* or even *super-genre* (and indeed what is *technique*, *style*, *mode*, *formula* or *thematic grouping* to one may be treated as a *genre* by another). Themes, at least, seem inadequate as a basis for defining genres since, as David Bordwell notes, 'any theme may appear in any genre' (Bordwell 1989, 147). He asks: 'Are animation and documentary films genres or modes? Is the filmed play or comedy performance a genre? If tragedy and comedy are genres, perhaps then domestic tragedy or slapstick is a formula'. In passing, he offers a useful inventory of categories used in film criticism, many of which have been accorded the status of genres by various commentators:

Grouping by period or country (American films of the 1930s), by director or star or producer or writer or studio, by technical process (Cinemascope films), by cycle (the 'fallen women' films), by series (the 007 movies), by style (German Expressionism), by structure (narrative), by ideology (Reaganite cinema), by venue ('drive-in movies'), by purpose (home movies), by audience ('teenpix'), by subject or theme (family film, paranoid-politics movies). (Bordwell 1989, 148)

Another film theorist, Robert Stam, also refers to common ways of categorizing films:

While some genres are based on story content (the war film), other are borrowed from literature (comedy, melodrama) or from other media (the musical). Some are performer-based (the Astaire-Rogers films) or budget-based (blockbusters), while others are based on artistic status (the art film), racial identity (Black cinema), locat[ion] (the Western) or sexual orientation (Queer cinema). (Stam 2000, 14).

Bordwell concludes that 'one could... argue that no set of necessary and sufficient conditions can mark off genres from other sorts of groupings in ways that all experts or ordinary film-goers would find

acceptable' (Bordwell 1989, 147). Practitioners and the general public make use of their own genre labels (*de facto* genres) quite apart from those of academic theorists. We might therefore ask ourselves 'Whose genre is it anyway?' Still further problems with definitional approaches will become apparent in due course.

Defining genres may not initially seem particularly problematic but it should already be apparent that it is a theoretical minefield. Robert Stam identifies four key problems with generic labels (in relation to film): *extension* (the breadth or narrowness of labels); *normativism* (having preconceived ideas of criteria for genre membership); *monolithic* definitions (as if an item belonged to only one genre); *biologism* (a kind of essentialism in which genres are seen as evolving through a standardized life cycle) (Stam 2000, 128-129).

Conventional definitions of genres tend to be based on the notion that they constitute particular conventions of content (such as themes or settings) and/or form (including structure and style) which are shared by the texts which are regarded as belonging to them. Alternative characterizations will be discussed in due course. The attempt to define particular genres in terms of necessary and sufficient textual properties is sometimes seen as theoretically attractive but it poses many difficulties. For instance, in the case of films, some seem to be aligned with one genre in content and another genre in form. The film theorist Robert Stam argues that 'subject matter is the weakest criterion for generic grouping because it fails to take into account *how* the subject is treated' (Stam 2000, 14). Outlining a fundamental problem of genre identification in relation to films, Andrew Tudor notes the 'empiricist dilemma':

To take a genre such as the 'western', analyze it, and list its principal characteristics, is to beg the question that we must first isolate the body of films which are 'westerns'. But they can only be isolated on the basis of the 'principal characteristics' which can only be discovered from the films themselves after they have been isolated. (Cited in Gledhill 1985, 59)

It is seldom hard to find texts which are exceptions to any given definition of a particular genre. There are no 'rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion' (Gledhill 1985, 60). 'Genres... are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items' (*ibid.*, 64). It is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another: genres overlap, and there are 'mixed genres' (such as comedy-thrillers).

Specific genres tend to be easy to recognize intuitively but difficult (if not impossible) to define. Particular features which are characteristic of a genre are not normally unique to it; it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive (Neale 1980, 22-3). It is easy to underplay the differences *within* a genre. Steve Neale declares that 'genres are instances of repetition and difference' (Neale 1980, 48). He adds that 'difference is absolutely essential to the economy of genre' (*ibid.*, 50): mere repetition would not attract an audience. Tzvetan Todorov argued that 'any instance of a genre will be *necessarily* different' (cited in Gledhill 1985, 60). John Hartley notes that 'the addition of just one film to the Western genre... changes that genre as a whole - even though the Western in question may display few of the recognized conventions, styles or subject matters traditionally associated with its genre' (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1994). The issue of difference also highlights the fact that some genres are 'looser' - more open-ended in their conventions or more permeable in their boundaries - than others. Texts often exhibit the conventions of more than one genre. John Hartley notes that 'the same text can belong to different genres in different countries or times' (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1994, 129). Hybrid genres abound (at least outside theoretical frameworks). Van Leeuwen suggests that the multiple purposes of journalism often lead to generically heterogeneous texts (cited in Fairclough 1995, 88). Norman Fairclough suggests that mixed-genre texts are far from uncommon in the mass media (Fairclough 1995, 89). Some media may encourage more generic diversity: Nicholas Abercrombie notes that since 'television comes at the audience as a flow of programmes, all with different generic conventions, means that it is more difficult to sustain the purity of the genre in the *viewing experience*' (Abercrombie 1996, 45; *his emphasis*). Furthermore, in any medium the generic classification of certain texts may be uncertain or subject to dispute.

Contemporary theorists tend to describe genres in terms of 'family resemblances' among texts (a notion derived from the philosopher Wittgenstein) rather than definitionally (Swales 1990, 49). An individual text within a genre rarely if ever has all of the characteristic features of the genre (Fowler 1989, 215). The family resemblance approaches involves the theorist illustrating similarities between some of the texts within a genre. However, the family resemblance approach has been criticized on the basis that 'no choice of a text for illustrative purposes is innocent' (David Lodge, cited in Swales 1990, 50), and that such theories can make any text seem to resemble any other one (Swales 1990, 51). In addition to the *definitional* and *family resemblance* approach, there is

another approach to describing genres which is based on the psycholinguistic concept of *prototypicality*. According to this approach, some texts would be widely regarded as being more typical members of a genre than others. According to this approach certain features would 'identify the extent to which an exemplar is *prototypical* of a particular genre' (Swales 1990, 52). Genres can therefore be seen as 'fuzzy' categories which cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions.

How we define a genre depends on our purposes; the adequacy of our definition in terms of social science at least must surely be related to the light that the exploration sheds on the phenomenon. For instance (and this is a key concern of mine), if we are studying the way in which genre frames the reader's interpretation of a text then we would do well to focus on how readers identify genres rather than on theoretical distinctions. Defining genres may be problematic, but even if theorists were to abandon the concept, in everyday life people would continue to categorize texts. John Swales does note that 'a discourse community's nomenclature for genres is an important source of insight' (Swales 1990, 54), though like many academic theorists he later adds that such genre names 'typically need further validation' (*ibid.*, 58). Some genre names would be likely to be more widely-used than others: it would be interesting to investigate the areas of popular consensus and dissensus in relation to the everyday labeling of mass media genres. For Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, 'genres only exist in so far as a social group declares and enforces the rules that constitute them' (Hodge & Kress 1988, 7), though it is debatable to what extent most of us would be able to formulate explicit 'rules' for the textual genres we use routinely: much of our genre knowledge is likely to be tacit. In relation to film, Andrew Tudor argued that genre is 'what we collectively believe it to be' (though this begs the question about who 'we' are). Robert Allen comments wryly that 'Tudor even hints that in order to establish what audiences expect a western to be like we might have to ask them' (Allen 1989, 47). Swales also alludes to people having 'repertoires of genres' (Swales 1990, 58), which I would argue would also be likely to repay investigation. However, as David Buckingham notes, 'there has hardly been any empirical research on the ways in which real audiences might understand genre, or use this understanding in making sense of specific texts' (Buckingham 1993, 137).

Steve Neale stresses that 'genres are not systems: they are *processes of systematization*' (Neale 1980, 51; *my emphasis*; cf. Neale 1995, 463). Traditionally, genres (particularly literary genres) tended to be regarded

as fixed forms, but contemporary theory emphasizes that both their forms and functions are dynamic. David Buckingham argues that 'genre is not... simply "given" by the culture: rather, it is in a constant process of negotiation and change' (Buckingham 1993, 137). Nicholas Abercrombie suggests that 'the boundaries between genres are shifting and becoming more permeable' (Abercrombie 1996, 45); Abercrombie is concerned with modern television, which he suggests seems to be engaged in 'a steady dismantling of genre' (*ibid.*) which can be attributed in part to economic pressures to pursue new audiences. One may acknowledge the dynamic fluidity of genres without positing the final demise of genre as an interpretive framework. As the generic corpus ceaselessly expands, genres (and the relationships between them) change over time; the conventions of each genre shift, new genres and sub-genres emerge and others are 'discontinued' (though note that certain genres seem particularly long-lasting). Tzvetan Todorov argued that 'a new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres' (cited in Swales 1990, 36). Each new work within a genre has the potential to influence changes within the genre or perhaps the emergence of new sub-genres (which may later blossom into fully-fledged genres). However, such a perspective tends to highlight the role of authorial experimentation in changing genres and their conventions, whereas it is important to recognize not only the social nature of text production but especially the role of economic and technological factors as well as changing audience preferences.

The *interaction between genres and media* can be seen as one of the forces which contributes to changing genres. Some genres are more powerful than others: they differ in the status which is attributed to them by those who produce texts within them and by their audiences. As Tony Thwaites *et al.* put it, 'in the interaction and conflicts among genres we can see the connections between textuality and power' (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 104). The key genres in institutions which are 'primary definers' (such as news reports in the mass media) help to establish the frameworks within which issues are defined. But genre hierarchies also shift over time, with individual genres constantly gaining and losing different groups of users and relative status.

Idealist theoretical approaches to genre which seek to categorize 'ideal types' in terms of essential textual characteristics are *ahistorical*. As a result of their dynamic nature as processes, Neale argues that definitions of genre 'are always historically relative, and therefore historically specific' (Neale 1995, 464). Similarly, Boris Tomashevsky insists that 'no firm logical classification of genres is possible. Their de-

marcation is always historical, that is to say, it is correct only for a specific moment of history' (cited in Bordwell 1989, 147). Some genres are defined only retrospectively, being unrecognized as such by the original producers and audiences. Genres need to be studied as historical phenomena; a popular focus in film studies, for instance, has been the evolution of conventions within a genre. Current genres go through phases or cycles of popularity (such as the cycle of disaster films in the 1970s), sometimes becoming 'dormant' for a period rather than disappearing. On-going genres and their conventions themselves change over time. Reviewing 'evolutionary change' in some popular film genres, Andrew Tudor concludes that it has three main characteristics:

First, in that innovations are added to an existent corpus rather than replacing redundant elements, it is cumulative. Second, in that these innovations must be basically consistent with what is already present, it is 'conservative'. Third, in that these processes lead to the crystallization of specialist sub-genres, it involves differentiation. (Tudor 1974, 225-6)

Tudor himself is cautious about adopting the biological analogy of evolution, with its implication that only those genres which are well-adapted to their functions survive. Christine Gledhill also notes the danger of essentialism in selecting definitive 'classic' examples towards which earlier examples 'evolve' and after which others 'decline' (Gledhill 1985, 59). The cycles and transformations of genres can nevertheless be seen as a response to political, social and economic conditions.

Referring to film, Andrew Tudor notes that 'a genre... defines a moral and social world' (Tudor 1974, 180). Indeed, a genre in any medium can be seen as embodying certain values and ideological assumptions. Again in the context of the cinema Susan Hayward argues that genre conventions change 'according to the ideological climate of the time', contrasting John Wayne westerns with Clint Eastwood as the problematic hero or anti-hero (Hayward 1996, 50). Leo Baudry (cited in Hayward 1996, 162) sees film genres as a barometer of the social and cultural concerns of cinema audiences; Robert Lichter *et al.* (1991) illustrate how televisual genres reflect the values of the programme-makers. Some commentators see mass media genres from a particular era as *reflecting* values which were dominant at the time. Ira Konigsberg, for instance, suggests that texts within genres embody the moral values of a culture (Konigsberg 1987, 144-5). And John Fiske asserts that generic conventions 'embody the crucial ideological concerns of the time in which they are popular'

(Fiske 1987, 110). However, Steve Neale stresses that genres may also help to *shape* such values (Neale 1980, 16). Thwaites *et al.* see the relationship as reciprocal: 'a genre develops according to social conditions; transformations in genre and texts can influence and reinforce social conditions' (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 100).

Some Marxist commentators see genre as an instrument of social control which reproduces the dominant ideology. Within this perspective, the genre 'positions' the audience in order to naturalize the ideologies which are embedded in the text (Feuer 1992, 145). Bernadette Casey comments that 'recently, structuralists and feminist theorists, among others, have focused on the way in which generically defined structures may operate to construct particular ideologies and values, and to encourage reassuring and conservative interpretations of a given text' (Casey 1993, 312). However, reader-oriented commentators have stressed that people are capable of 'reading against the grain'. Thomas and Vivian Sobchack note that in the past popular film-makers, 'intent on telling a story', were not always aware of 'the covert psychological and social... subtext' of their own films, but add that modern film-makers and their audiences are now 'more keenly aware of the myth-making accomplished by film genres' (Sobchack & Sobchack 1980, 245). Genre can reflect a function which in relation to television Horace Newcombe and Paul Hirsch referred to as a 'cultural forum', in which industry and audience negotiate shared beliefs and values, helping to maintain the social order and assisting it in adapting to change (Feuer 1992, 145). Certainly, genres are far from being ideologically neutral. Sonia Livingstone argues, indeed, that 'different genres are concerned to establish different world views' (Livingstone 1990, 155).

Related to the ideological dimension of genres is one modern redefinition in terms of *purposes*. In relation to writing, Carolyn Miller argues that 'a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish' (Carolyn Miller 1984, in Freedman & Medway 1994a, 24). Following this lead, John Swales declares that 'the principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purposes' (Swales 1990, 46). In relation to the mass media it can be fruitful to consider in relation to genre the purposes not only of the producers of texts but also of those who interpret them (which need not be assumed always to match). A consensus about the primary purposes of some genres (such as news bulletins) - and of their readers - is probably easier to establish than in relation to others (such as westerns), where the very term 'purpose' sounds too in-

strumental. However, 'uses and gratifications' researchers have already conducted investigations into the various functions that the mass media seem to serve for people, and ethnographic studies have offered fruitful insights into this dimension. Miller argues that both in writing and reading within genres we learn purposes appropriate to the genre; in relation to the mass media it could be argued that particular genres develop, frame and legitimate particular concerns, questions and pleasures.

Related redefinitions of genre focus more broadly on the *relationship* between the makers and audiences of texts (a *rhetorical* dimension). To varying extents, the formal features of genres establish the relationship between producers and interpreters. Indeed, in relation to mass media texts Andrew Tolson redefines genre as 'a category which mediates between industry and audience' (Tolson 1996, 92). Note that such approaches undermine the definition of genres as purely textual types, which excludes any reference even to intended audiences. A basic model underlying contemporary media theory is a triangular relationship between the text, its producers and its interpreters. From the perspective of many recent commentators, genres first and foremost provide frameworks within which texts are produced and interpreted. Semiotically, a genre can be seen as a shared code between the producers and interpreters of texts included within it. Alastair Fowler goes so far as to suggest that 'communication is impossible without the agreed codes of genre' (Fowler 1989, 216). Within genres, texts embody authorial attempts to 'position' readers using particular 'modes of address'. Gunther Kress observes that:

Every genre positions those who participate in a text of that kind: as interviewer or interviewee, as listener or storyteller, as a reader or a writer, as a person interested in political matters, as someone to be instructed or as someone who instructs; each of these positionings implies different possibilities for response and for action. Each written text provides a 'reading position' for readers, a position constructed by the writer for the 'ideal reader' of the text. (Kress 1988, 107)

Thus, embedded within texts are assumptions about the 'ideal reader', including their attitudes towards the subject matter and often their class, age, gender and ethnicity.

Gunther Kress defines a genre as 'a kind of text that derives its form from the structure of a (frequently repeated) social occasion, with its characteristic participants and their purposes' (Kress 1988, 183). An interpretative emphasis on genre as opposed

to individual texts can help to remind us of the *social* nature of the production and interpretation of texts. In relation to film, many modern commentators refer to the commercial and industrial significance of genres. Denis McQuail argues that:

The genre may be considered as a practical device for helping any mass medium to produce consistently and efficiently and to relate its production to the expectations of its customers. Since it is also a practical device for enabling individual media users to plan their choices, it can be considered as a mechanism for ordering the relations between the two main parties to mass communication. (McQuail 1987, 200)

Steve Neale observes that 'genres... exist within the context of a set of economic relations and practices', though he adds that 'genres are not the product of economic factors as such. The conditions provided by the capitalist economy account neither for the existence of the particular genres that have hitherto been produced, nor for the existence of the conventions that constitute them' (Neale 1980, 51-2). Economic factors may account for the perpetuation of a profitable genre. Nicholas Abercrombie notes that 'television producers set out to exploit genre conventions... It... makes sound economic sense. Sets, properties and costumes can be used over and over again. Teams of stars, writers, directors and technicians can be built up, giving economies of scale' (Abercrombie 1996, 43). He adds that 'genres permit the creation and maintenance of a loyal audience which becomes used to seeing programmes within a genre' (*ibid.*). Genres can be seen as 'a means of controlling demand' (Neale 1980, 55). The relative stability of genres enables producers to predict audience expectations. Christine Gledhill notes that 'differences between genres meant different audiences could be identified and catered to... This made it easier to standardize and stabilise production' (Gledhill 1985, 58). In relation to the mass media, genre is part of the process of targeting different market sectors.

Traditionally, literary and film critics in particular have regarded 'generic' texts (by which they mean 'formulaic' texts) as inferior to those which they contend are produced outside a generic framework. Indeed, film theorists frequently refer to popular films as 'genre films' in contrast to 'non-formula films'. Elitist critics reject the 'generic fiction' of the mass media because they are commercial products of popular culture rather than 'high art'. Many harbour the Romantic ideology of the primacy of authorial 'originality' and 'vision', emphasizing individual style and artistic 'self-expression'. In this tradition the

artist (in any medium) is seen as breaking the mould of convention. For the Italian aesthete Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), an artistic work was always unique and there could be no artistic genres. More recently, some literary and film theorists have accorded more importance to genre, counteracting the ideology of authorial primacy (or 'auteurism', as it is known in relation to the emphasis on the director in film).

Contemporary theorists tend to emphasize the importance of the semiotic notion of intertextuality: of seeing individual texts in relation to others. Katie Wales notes that 'genre is... an intertextual concept' (Wales 1989, 259). John Hartley suggests that 'we need to understand genre as a property of the relations between texts' (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1994, 128). And as Tony Thwaites *et al.* put it, 'each text is influenced by the generic rules in the way it is put together; the generic rules are reinforced by each text' (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 100).

Roland Barthes (1975) argued that it is in relation to other texts within a genre rather than in relation to lived experience that we make sense of certain events within a text. There are analogies here with schema theory in psychology, which proposes that we have mental 'scripts' which help us to interpret

familiar events in everyday life. John Fiske offers this striking example:

A representation of a car chase only makes sense in relation to all the others we have seen - after all, we are unlikely to have experienced one in reality, and if we did, we would, according to this model, make sense of it by turning it into another text, which we would also understand intertextually, in terms of what we have seen so often on our screens. There is then a cultural knowledge of the concept 'car chase' that any one text is a prospectus for, and that it used by the viewer to decode it, and by the producer to encode it. (Fiske 1987, 115)

In contrast to those of a traditionalist literary bent who tend to present 'artistic' texts as non-generic, it could be argued that it is impossible to produce texts which bear no relationship whatsoever to established genres. Indeed, Jacques Derrida proposed that 'a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without... a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genre-less text' (Derrida 1981, 61).

Note

*In these notes, words such as *text*, *reader* and *writer* are sometimes used as general terms relating to 'texts' (and so on) in whatever medium is being discussed: no privileging of the written word (*graphocentrism*) is intended. While it is hard to find an alternative for the word *texts*, terms such as *makers* and *interpreters* are sometimes used here as terms non-specific to particular media instead of the terms *writers* and *readers*.

2. Working within genres

John Hartley argues that 'genres are agents of ideological closure - they limit the meaning-potential of a given text' (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1994, 128). Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress define genres as 'typical forms of texts which link kinds of producer, consumer, topic, medium, manner and occasion', adding that they 'control the behavior of producers of such texts, and the expectations of potential consumers' (Hodge & Kress 1988, 7). Genres can be seen as constituting a kind of tacit contract between authors and readers.

From the traditional Romantic perspective, genres are seen as constraining and inhibiting authorial creativity. However, contemporary theorists, even within literary studies, typically reject this view (e.g. Fowler 1982: 31). Gledhill notes that one perspective on this issue is that some of those who write within a

genre work in creative 'tension' with the conventions, attempting a personal inflection of them (Gledhill 1985: 63). From the point of view of the producers of texts within a genre, an advantage of genres is that they can rely on readers already having knowledge and expectations about works within a genre. Fowler comments that 'the system of generic expectations amounts to a code, by the use of which (or by departure from which) composition becomes more economical' (Fowler 1989: 215). Genres can thus be seen as a kind of shorthand serving to increase the 'efficiency' of communication. They may even function as a means of preventing a text from dissolving into 'individualism and incomprehensibility' (Gledhill 1985: 63). And while writing within a genre involves making use of certain 'given' conventions, every work within a genre also involves the invention of some new elements.

As for *reading* within genres, some argue that knowledge of genre conventions leads to passive consumption of generic texts; others argue that making sense of texts within genres is an active process of constructing meaning (Knight 1994). Genre provides an important frame of reference which helps readers to identify, select and interpret texts. Indeed, in relation to advertisements, Varda Langholz Leymore argues that the sense which viewers make of any single text depends on how it relates to the genre as a whole (Langholz Leymore 1975, ix). Key psychological functions of genre are likely to include those shared by categorization generally – such as reducing complexity. Generic frameworks may function to make *form* (the conventions of the genre) more 'transparent' to those familiar with the genre, foregrounding the distinctive *content* of individual texts. Genre theorists might find much in common with *schema theorists* in psychology: much as a genre is a framework within which to make sense of related texts, a schema is a kind of mental template within which to make sense of related experiences in everyday life. From the point of view of schema theory, genres are textual schemata.

Any text requires what is sometimes called 'cultural capital' on the part of its audience to make sense of it. Generic knowledge is one of the competencies required (Allen 1989: 52, following Charlotte Brunsdon). Like most of our everyday knowledge, genre knowledge is typically tacit and would be difficult for most readers to articulate as any kind of detailed and coherent framework. Clearly one needs to encounter sufficient examples of a genre in order to recognize shared features as being characteristic of it. Alastair Fowler suggests that 'readers learn genres gradually, usually through unconscious familiarization' (Fowler 1989: 215). There are few examples of empirical investigation of how people acquire and use genres as interpretative frameworks in everyday life. However, a few of these studies have been conducted with children in relation to television genres.

In an intensive longitudinal study of twelve children from 2- to 5-years-old, Leona Jaglom and Howard Gardner (1981a, 1981b) noted the development of genre distinctions. 2-year-olds did not recognize the beginnings and endings of programmes (Jaglom & Gardner, 1981b). The researchers found that for the 2-year-olds the disappearance of characters was a source of consternation: 'children become very upset and sometimes even cry when their favourite television personalities leave the screen' (Jaglom & Gardner, 1981a: 42): they suggested that this feature might assist their eventual identification of the advertisement genre. The researchers report the order of acquisition of the principal genre distinctions: adver-

tisements (3.0-3.6); cartoons (3.7-3.11, early in interval); *Sesame Street* (3.7-3.11, late in interval); news (4.0-4.6); children's shows (4.0-4.6, late in interval); adult shows (4.0-4.6) (*ibid.*: 41). They argue that 'in the first few years of attempting to sort out the confusing elements of the television world, children are concentrating on making distinctions between shows' (*ibid.*: 42).

David Buckingham has undertaken some empirical investigation of older children's understanding of television genres in the UK (Buckingham 1993: 135-55). In general discussions of television with children aged from 8- to 12-years-old, Buckingham found 'considerable evidence of children using notions of genre, both explicitly and implicitly':

The older children were more likely to identify their likes and dislikes by referring to a generic category, before offering a specific example. They also appeared to have a broader repertoire of terms here, or at least to use these more regularly. However, there was some evidence even in the youngest age group that genre was being used as an unspoken rationale for moving from one topic to the next. Thus, discussion of one comedy program was more likely to be followed by discussion of another comedy program, rather than of news or soap opera. (Buckingham 1993: 139)

Buckingham then gave the children, in small groups, the task of sorting into groups about 30 cards bearing the titles of television programmes which had already been mentioned in discussions, with minimal prompting as to the basis on which they were to be sorted. The children showed an awareness that the programmes could be categorized in several ways. Genre was one of the principles which all of the groups (barring one of the youngest) used in this task. The children's repertoire of genre labels increased with age. However, Buckingham emphasizes that the data did not simply reflect steady incremental growth and that cognitive development alone does not offer an adequate model (Buckingham 1993: 149). He also cautions that 'it would be a mistake to regard the data as a demonstration of a children's pre-existing "cognitive understandings"' (*ibid.*: 154) since he stresses that categorization is a social process as well as a cognitive one. Nevertheless, his findings do offer some evidence 'that children progressively acquire (or at least come to use) a *discourse* of genre as they mature – that is, a set of terms which facilitate the process of categorization, or at least make certain kinds of categorization possible. As their repertoire of terms expands, this enables them to identify finer distinctions between programmes,

and to compare them in a greater variety of ways' (*ibid.*: 154).

David Morley (1980) notes in relation to television differential social access to the discourses of a genre. Buckingham found some limited evidence of social class as a factor, with young working-class children employing a particularly consistent concept of soap opera (*ibid.*: 149) and with a recognition amongst older middle-class children of the limitations of genre discourse 'such as its tendency to emphasize similarity at the expense of difference' (*ibid.*: 154). The data could not, however, be explained 'in terms of social class simply determining their access to discourses' (*ibid.*: 149).

Genres are not simply features of texts, but are mediating frameworks between texts, makers and interpreters. Fowler argues that 'genre makes possible the communication of content' (Fowler 1989: 215). Certainly the assignment of a text to a genre influences how the text is read. Genre *constrains* the possible ways in which a text is interpreted, guiding readers of a text towards a *preferred reading* (which is normally in accordance with the dominant ideology) - though this is not to suggest that readers are prevented from 'reading against the grain' (Fiske 1987: 114, 117; Feuer 1992: 144; Buckingham 1993: 136). David Buckingham notes that:

We might well choose to read *Neighbours* [an Australian television soap opera], for instance, as a situation comedy - a reading which might focus less on empathizing with the psychological dilemmas of individual characters, and much more on elements of performance which disrupt its generally 'naturalistic' tone. A more oppositional strategy would involve directly subverting the generic reading invited by the text - for example, to read the News as fiction, or even as soap opera (cf. Fiske 1987). (Buckingham 1993: 136)

As David Bordwell puts it, 'making referential sense of a film requires several acts of "framing" it: as a fiction, as a Hollywood movie, as a comedy, as a Steve Martin movie, as a "summer movie" and so on' (Bordwell 1989: 146). Genres offer an important way of framing texts which assists comprehension. Genre knowledge orientates competent readers of the genre towards appropriate attitudes, assumptions and expectations about a text which are useful in making sense of it. Indeed, one way of defining genres is as 'a set of expectations' (Neale 1980: 51). John Corner notes that 'genre is a principal factor in the directing of audience choice and of audience expectations... and in the organizing of the subsets of cultural competences and dispositions appropriate for watching,

listening to and reading different kinds of thing' (Corner 1991: 276). Recognition of a text as belonging to a particular genre can help, for instance, to enable judgements to be made about the 'reality status' of the text (most fundamentally whether it is fictional or non-fictional). Assigning a text to a genre sets up initial expectations. Some of these may be challenged within individual texts (e.g. a detective film in which the murderer is revealed at the outset). Competent readers of a genre are not generally confused when some of their initial expectations are not met - the framework of the genre can be seen as offering 'default' expectations which act as a starting point for interpretation rather than a straitjacket. However, challenging too many conventional expectations for the genre could threaten the integrity of the text. Familiarity with a genre enables readers to generate feasible predictions about events in a narrative. Drawing on their knowledge of other texts within the same genre helps readers to sort salient from non-salient narrative information in an individual text.

Sonia Livingstone argues that:

Different genres specify different 'contracts' to be negotiated between the text and the reader... which set up expectations on each side for the form of the communication..., its functions..., its epistemology..., and the communicative frame (e.g. the participants, the power of the viewer, the openness of the text, and the role of the reader). (Livingstone 1994: 252-3)

She adds that: 'if different genres result in different modes of text-reader interaction, these latter may result in different types of involvement...: critical or accepting, resisting or validating, casual or concentrated, apathetic or motivated' (Livingstone 1994: 253).

The identification of a text as part of a genre (such as in a television listings magazine or a video rental shop's section titles) enables potential readers to decide whether it is likely to appeal to them. People seem to derive a variety of *pleasures* from reading texts within genres which are orientated towards entertainment. 'Uses and gratifications' research has identified many of these in relation to the mass media. Such potential pleasures vary according to genre, but they include the following.

One pleasure may simply be the recognition of the features of a particular genre because of our familiarity with it. Recognition of what is likely to be important (and what is not), derived from our knowledge of the genre, is necessary in order to follow a plot.

Genres may offer various emotional pleasures such as empathy and escapism – a feature which some theoretical commentaries seem to lose sight of. Aristotle, of course, acknowledged the special emotional responses which were linked to different genres. Deborah Knight notes that 'satisfaction is guaranteed with genre; the deferral of the inevitable provides the additional pleasure of prolonged anticipation' (Knight 1994).

'Cognitive' satisfactions may be derived from problem-solving, testing hypotheses, making inferences (e.g. about the motivations and goals of characters) and making predictions about events. In relation to television, Nicholas Abercrombie suggests that 'part of the pleasure is knowing what the genre rules are, knowing that the programme has to solve problems in the genre framework, and wondering how it is going to do so' (Abercrombie 1996: 43). He adds that audiences derive pleasure from the way in which their expectations are finally realized (*ibid.*). There may be satisfactions both in finding our inferences and predictions to be correct and in being surprised when they are not (Knight 1994). The prediction of what will happen next is, of course, more central in some genres than others.

Steve Neale argues that pleasure is derived from 'repetition and difference' (Neale 1980: 48); there would be no pleasure without difference. René Wellek and Austin Warren comment that 'the totally familiar and repetitive pattern is boring; the totally novel form will be unintelligible – is indeed unthinkable' (Wellek & Warren 1963: 235). We may derive pleasure from observing how the conventions of the genre are manipulated (Abercrombie 1996: 45). We may also enjoy the stretching of a genre in new directions and the consequent shifting of our expectations.

Making moral and emotional judgements on the actions of characters may also offer a particular pleasure (though Knight (1994) argues that 'generic fictions' themselves embody such judgements).

Other pleasures can be derived from sharing our experience of a genre with others within an 'interpretive community' which can be characterized by its familiarity with certain genres (see also Feuer 1992, 144).

Ira Konigsberg suggests that enduring genres reflect 'universal dilemmas' and 'moral conflicts' and appeal to deep psychological needs (Konigsberg 1987, 144-5).

3. Constructing the audience

Genres can be seen as involved in the construction of their readers. John Fiske sees genre as 'a means of constructing both the audience and the reading subject' (Fiske 1987, 114). Christine Gledhill argues that different genres 'produce different positionings of the subject... Genre specification can therefore be traced in the different functions of subjectivity each produces, and in their different modes of addressing the spectator' (Gledhill 1985, 64). And Steve Neale argues in relation to cinema that genre contributes to the regulation of desire, memory and expectation (Neale 1980, 55).

Tony Thwaites and his colleagues note that in many television crime dramas in the tradition of *The Saint*, *Hart to Hart*, and *Murder, She Wrote*,

Genteel or well-to-do private investigators work for the wealthy, solving crimes committed by characters whose social traits and behaviour patterns often type them as members of a 'criminal class'... The villains receive their just rewards not so much because they break

the law, but because they are entirely distinct from the law-abiding bourgeoisie. This TV genre thus reproduces a hegemonic ideology about the individual in a class society. (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 158).

Mass media genres play a part in the construction of difference and identity, notably with regard to *sexual* difference and identity (Neale 1980, 56-62). Some film and television genres have traditionally been aimed primarily at, and stereotypically favoured by, either a male or a female audience. For instance, war films and westerns tend to be regarded as 'masculine' genres, while soap operas and musicals tend to be regarded as 'feminine' (which is not, of course, to say that audiences are homogeneous). However, few contemporary theorists would accept the extreme media determinism of the stance that audiences passively accept the preferred readings which may be built into texts for readers: most would stress that reading a text may also involve 'negotiation', opposition or even outright rejection.

4. Advantages of generic analysis

Tony Thwaites and his colleagues note that 'genre foregrounds the influence of surrounding texts and ways of reading on our response to any one text. More specifically, it confirms textuality and reading as functions rather than things' (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 92). Genre analysis situates texts within textual and social contexts, underlining the social nature of the production and reading of texts.

In addition to counteracting any tendency to treat individual texts in isolation from others, an emphasis on genre can also help to counteract the homogenization of the *medium* which is widespread in relation to the mass media, where it is common, for instance, to find assertions about 'the effects of

television' regardless of such important considerations as genre.

As well as locating texts within specific cultural contexts, genre analysis also serves to situate them in a historical perspective. It can help to counter the Romantic ideology of authorial 'originality' and creative individualism.

In relation to news media, Norman Fairclough notes that genre analysis 'is good at showing the routine and formulaic nature of much media output, and alerting us, for instance, to the way in which the immense diversity of events in the world is reduced to the often rigid formats of news' (Fairclough 1995, 86).

5. D.I.Y. Generic analysis

The following questions are offered as basic guidelines for my own students in analysing an individual text in relation to genre. Note that an analysis of a text which is framed *exclusively* in terms of genre may be of limited usefulness. Generic analysis can

also, of course, involve studying the genre more broadly: in examining the genre one may fruitfully consider such issues as how the conventions of the genre have changed over time.

General

1. Why did you choose the text you are analysing?
2. In what context did you encounter it?
3. What influence do you think this context might have had on your interpretation of the text?
4. To what genre did you initially assign the text?
5. What is your experience of this genre?
6. What subject matter and basic themes is the text concerned with?
7. How typical of the genre is this text in terms of content?
8. What expectations do you have about texts in this genre?
9. Have you found any formal generic labels for this particular text (where)?
10. What generic labels have others given the same text?
11. Which conventions of the genre do you recognize in the text?
12. To what extent does this text stretch the conventions of its genre?
13. Where and why does the text depart from the conventions of the genre?
14. Which conventions seem more like those of a different genre (and which genre(s))?
15. What familiar motifs or images are used?
16. Which of the formal/stylistic techniques employed are typical/untypical of the genre?
17. What institutional constraints are reflected in the form of the text?
18. What relationship to 'reality' does the text lay claim to?
19. Whose realities does it reflect?
20. What purposes does the genre serve?
21. In what ways are these purposes embodied in the text?
22. To what extent did your purposes match these when you engaged with the text?
23. What ideological assumptions and values seem to be embedded in the text?
24. What pleasures does this genre offer to you personally?
25. What pleasures does the text appeal to (and how typical of the genre is this)?
26. Did you feel 'critical or accepting, resisting or validating, casual or concentrated, apathetic or motivated' (and why)?
27. Which elements of the text seemed salient because of your knowledge of the genre?

28. What predictions about events did your generic identification of the text lead to (and to what extent did these prove accurate)?
29. What inferences about people and their motivations did your genre identification give rise to (and how far were these confirmed)?
30. How and why did your interpretation of the text differ from the interpretation of the same text by other people?

Mode of address

1. What sort of audience did you feel that the text was aimed at (and how typical was this of the genre)?
2. How does the text address you?
3. What sort of person does it assume you are?
4. What assumptions seem to be made about your class, age, gender and ethnicity?
5. What interests does it assume you have?
6. What relevance does the text actually have for you?
7. What knowledge does it take for granted?
8. To what extent do you resemble the 'ideal reader' that the text seeks to position you as?
9. Are there any notable shifts in the text's mode of address (and if so, what do they involve)?

10. What responses does the text seem to expect from you?
11. How open to negotiation is your response (are you invited, instructed or coerced to respond in particular ways)?
12. Is there any penalty for not responding in the expected ways?
13. To what extent do you find yourself 'reading against the grain' of the text and the genre?
14. Which attempts to position you in this text do you accept, reject or seek to negotiate (and why)?
15. How closely aligned is the way in which the text addresses you with the way in which the genre positions you (Kress 1988, 107)?

Relationship to other texts

1. What intertextual references are there in the text you are analyzing (and to what other texts)?
2. Generically, which other texts does the text you are analyzing resemble most closely?
3. What key features are shared by these texts?
4. What major differences do you notice between them?

Appendix 1: Taxonomies of genres

The limitations of genre taxonomies have been alluded to. However, this is not to suggest that they are worthless. I have noted already that the broadest division in literature is between poetry, prose and drama. I will not dwell here on literary genres and sub-genres. Despite acknowledging the limitations of taxonomies, Fowler (1982) offers the most useful and scholarly taxonomy of literary genres of which I am aware. Mass media genres do not correspond to established literary genres (Feuer 1992, 140). After a brief consideration of the most fundamental genre frameworks I will offer here a single illustrative taxonomy of fictional films.

Traditional rhetoric distinguishes between four kinds of discourse: *exposition*, *argument*, *description* and *narration* (Brooks & Warren 1972, 44). These four forms, which relate to primary purposes, are often referred to as different genres (Fairclough 1995, 88). However, it may be misleading to treat them as genres partly because texts may involve any combination of these forms. It may be more useful to classify them as 'modes'. In particular, *narrative* is such a fundamental and ubiquitous form that it may be especially problematic to treat it as a genre. Tony Thwaites and his colleagues dismiss narrative as a genre:

Because narratives are used in many different kinds of texts and social contexts, they cannot properly be labelled a genre. Narration is just as much a feature of non-fictional genres... as it is of fictional genres... It is also used in different kinds of media... We can think of it as a textual *mode* rather than a genre. (Thwaites *et al.* 1994, 112)

In relation to television, and following John Corner, Nicholas Abercrombie suggests that 'the most important genre distinction is... between fictional and non-fictional programming' (Abercrombie 1996, 42). This distinction is fundamental across the mass media (for its importance to children see Buckingham 1993, 149-50 and Chandler 1997). It relates to the *purpose* of the genre (e.g. information or entertainment). John Corner notes that 'the characteristic properties of text-viewer relations in most non-fiction television are primarily to do with kinds of *knowledge*... even if the program is designed as entertainment. The characteristic properties of text-viewer relations in fictional television are primarily to do with *imaginative pleasure*' (Corner 1991, 276).

Despite the importance of the distinction between fictional and non-fictional genres, it is important also to note the existence of various hybrid

forms (such as docudrama, 'faction' and so on). Even within genres acknowledged as factual (such as news reports and documentaries) 'stories' are told - the purposes of factual genres in the mass media include entertaining as well as informing.

In relation to film, Thomas and Vivian Sobchack offer a useful taxonomy of film genres (Sobchack & Sobchack 1980, 203-40). They make a basic distinction, on a level below that of fiction and non-fiction, between *comedy* and *melodrama* (adding that *tragedy* tends to appear in 'non-formula' films).

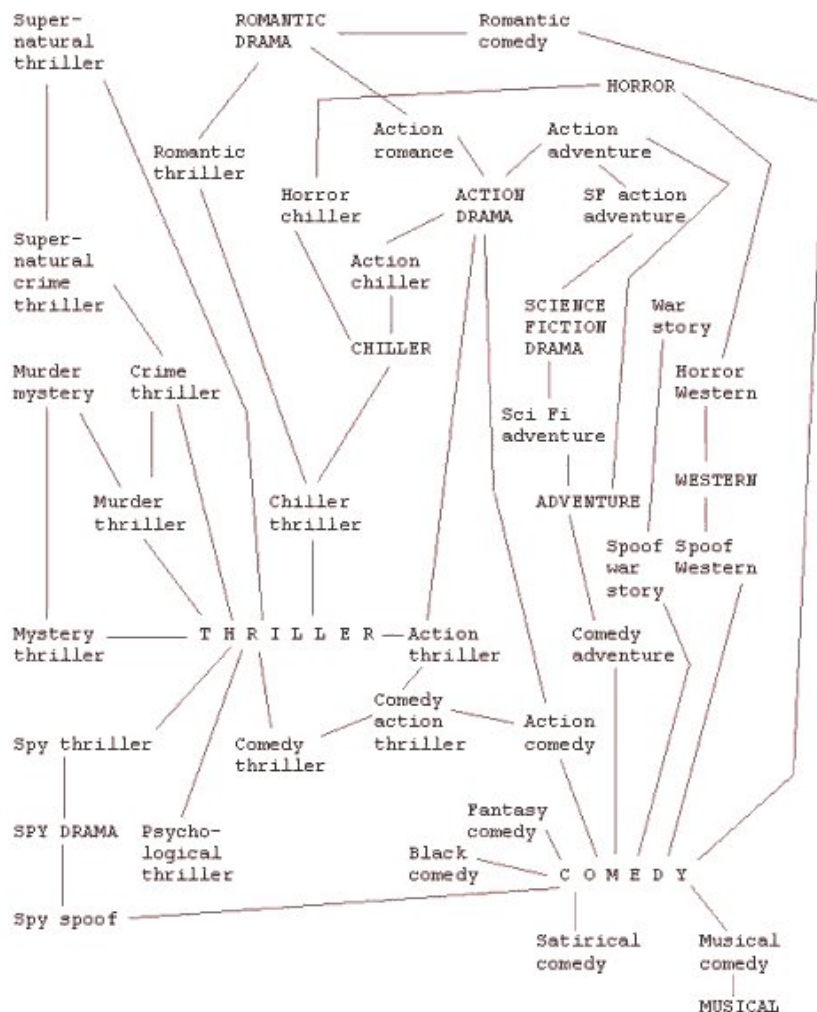
The Sobchacks list the main genres of *comedy* as:

- slapstick comedy;
- romantic comedy, including 'screwball comedy' and musical comedy;
- musical biography; and
- fairy tale.

They list the main genres of *melodrama* as:

- adventure films, including 'the swashbuckler' and 'survival films' (the war movie, the safari film, and disaster movies);
- the western;
- 'fantastic genres', including fantasy, horror and science fiction; and
- 'antisocial genres', including the crime film (the gangster film, the G-man film, the private eye or detective film, the *film noir*, the caper film) and so-called 'weepies' (or 'women's films').

While the Sobchacks offer an extremely useful outline of the textual features of films within these genres, part of the value of such taxonomies may be the way in which they tend to provoke immediate disagreement from readers!



The generic labels employed by film reviewers in the television listings magazines are worthy of investigation. Here is a personal attempt to map, purely by association, the labels used in the British television listings magazine *What's On TV* over several months in 1993.

Appendix 2: Generic textual features of film and television

While, as already noted, some recent redefinitions of genre have downplayed or displaced a concern with the textual features of genres, there is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Hence, this section briefly notes some of the key *textual* features of genres in the context of film and television narrative.

The distinctive textual properties of a genre typically listed by film and television theorists include:

narrative - similar (sometimes formulaic) plots and structures, predictable situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions;

characterization - similar types of characters (sometimes stereotypes), roles, personal qualities, motivations, goals, behavior;

basic *themes*, topics, subject matter (social, cultural, psychological, professional, political, sexual, moral), values and what Stanley Solomon refers to as recurrent 'patterns of meaning' (Solomon 1995: 456);

setting - geographical and historical;

iconography (echoing the narrative, characterization, themes and setting) - a familiar stock of images or motifs, the connotations of which have become fixed; primarily but not necessarily visual, including décor, costume and objects, certain 'typecast' performers (some of whom may have become 'icons'), familiar patterns of dialogue, characteristic music and sounds, and appropriate physical topography; and

filmic techniques - stylistic or formal conventions of camerawork, lighting, sound-recording, use of color, editing etc. (viewers are often less conscious of such conventions than of those relating to content).

Less easy to place in one of the traditional categories are *mood* and *tone* (which are key features of the *film noir*). In addition, there is a particularly important feature which tends not to figure in traditional accounts and which is often assigned to *text-reader relationships* rather than to textual features in contemporary accounts. This is *mode of address*, which involves inbuilt assumptions about the audience, such as that the 'ideal' viewer is male (the usual categories here are class, age, gender and ethnicity); as Sonia Livingstone puts it, 'texts attempt to position readers as particular kinds of subjects through particular modes of address' (Livingstone 1994, 249).

Some film genres tend to be defined primarily by their *subject matter* (e.g. detective films), some by their *setting* (e.g. the Western) and others by their *narrative form* (e.g. the musical). An excellent discussion of the textual features of 'genre films' can be found in Chapter 4 of Thomas and Vivian Sobchack's *Introduction to Film* (1980).

As already noted, in addition to *textual* features, different genres also involve different purposes, pleasures, audiences, modes of involvement, styles of interpretation and text-reader relationships.

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Framing Monsters: Multiple and Mixed Genres, Cognitive Category Theory, and *Gravity's Rainbow*

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Abstract This article argues for a cognitive view of genre. Specifically, a cognitive view of categorization helps clarify how texts can participate in multiple genres—by instantiating several different genres more or less equally well and by mixing several genres. I respond to certain recurring assumptions in recent work on genre about the nature of categories and categorization, elaborating on John Frow's incisive critique of misconceptions of genre but correcting his discussion of cognitive poetics. I draw on concept and category research to sketch the three main contemporary approaches to categorization via prototype, exemplar, and knowledge theories. Against this background, I review the many genres that have been attributed to *Gravity's Rainbow*, then examine three influential generic framings of this text and what the text can tell us about the nature of categories and how people use them. I conclude by discussing the ways this example is particularly revealing about how prototypes, exemplars, and knowledge interact, how experts use categories to understand and experience the very rich and complex realities of their domains of expertise, and how this new understanding of categorization can help clarify Thomas Pynchon's blending of genres.

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1. Categories, Genre Theory, and Genre Criticism

To read *Gravity's Rainbow* in the light of the theory of categories is hazardous, as the book satirizes both theories and categories as forms of paranoia and celebrates their undoing. Antihero Tyrone Slothrop has a mysterious sexual connection with the German rockets falling on London during late 1944, and a group of political-military-scientific officials want to understand and use him. Behaviorist Edward Pointsman treats Slothrop as an experiment, exposing him to stimuli related to the rocket and to Slothrop's personality and past in the hopes of triggering a response that will reveal the nature of the sexual connection. Pointsman declares Slothrop "a monster" (Pynchon 1973: 144) and insists, "*We must never lose control*," dreading what might happen if Slothrop became "lost in the world of men" (ibid.). By the end of chapter 2, Slothrop does escape Pointsman's machinations to chase for himself the secrets of the rocket, his past, and the official interests in both. He encounters anarchists who celebrate the war's dissolution of borders and laws, eager to take the opportunity to let a new decentralized and open society grow (ibid.: 264–65). The escape causes bureaucratic frenzy. We must consider, the narrator reminds us, Murphy's Law: that "*when everything has been taken care of, when nothing can go wrong, or even surprise us . . . something will . . .*" When laws of heredity are laid down, mutants will be born" (ibid.: 275). This (counter) law refers to several unpredictable and chaos-inducing events of "a control that is out of control" (ibid.: 277): Slothrop's escape, Hitler's political rise after 1931 (the year of Godel's theorem, which Murphy's Law restates), Pointsman hallucinating voices that advise him on his schemes, and the determinist technology of the new A4 rocket spontaneously generating "plots." Most major characters and their groups are involved in constructing or searching for a legendary A4 Rocket ooooo. Early in the next chapter, as Slothrop explores the Mittelwerke rocket factory, the narrator tells us that even the ghosts here "answer to the new Uncertainty. . . here in the Zone categories have been blurred badly" and the status of names "has grown ambiguous and remote . . . some still live, some have died, but many, many have forgotten which they are" (ibid.: 303). The book and its world are also monsters, mutants of blurred categories and genres: a plot rooted in the grim historical events of modern war and genocide shades into nightmare and dream, and both borrow forms from spy thriller, romantic opera, Hollywood movie musical, comic book, and more. Characters break into song, slip on banana peels, and walk into other people's outrageous fantasies, and some become superheroes: Slothrop, on various costumed quests, mutates into Rocketman, Plasticman, Pig-hero, and others.

Also consider the array of genres that have been discovered or invented for Thomas Pynchon's books: comic epic (Safer 1988), romantic epic (Henkle 1978), "American picaresque" (Plimpton 1963), parable (Dugdale 1990), allegory (Madsen 1991), satire (Seidel 1978), Menippean satire (Kharpertian 1985, 1990), jeremiad (Smith and Tölölyan 1981), historiographic metafiction (Collado-Rodríguez 1993, 2003; Berressem 1994), and many varieties of novel: comic, Gothic (Fowler 1980, according to Cowart 1981: 24–25), apocalyptic (R. W. B. Lewis, quoted in Henkle 1978), "black humour" (Sklar 1978: 89), self-conscious (Stonehill 1988), and historical (Seidel 1978: 204). One critic says the book can be read as poetry (Fowler 1980, according to Booker 1987: 61, 67n7).¹ The book starts to sound as versatile as the actors in *Hamlet*, who are expert in "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" and so on (2.2.398–401). Some critics turn to the most comprehensive or noncommittal terms they can find, such as "encyclopedic narrative" (Mendelson 1976a, 1976b) or just "fiction" or "narrative" (I use "book" and "text").

And it's not just Pynchon. Confusion over deformed and blurred categories greets many books that play with genres in ambitious and complex ways, including the Pynchon precursors *Ulysses* and *Moby-Dick*.² Indeed, monstrosity seems endemic to *whole genres*. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 39) calls the novel "plasticity itself." Northrop Frye (1971 [1957]: 313) notes that satirists, often "accused of disorderly conduct," are called "monstrous," "demo-gorgon," and "behemoth."³ Stranger still, there are contentions that *all*

1. David Cowart (1981: 23) paraphrases Douglas Fowler: *Gravity's Rainbow* "is in effect a vast, intricate poem whose departures from novelistic decorum are calculated." Another critic (Leverenz 1976: 229) refers to "the anti-identity novel, the multinational novel, the novel of post-industrial plots and systems." Google "Pynchon and genre," and you will also find references to magical realism, hysterical realism, hypertext fiction, cyberpunk, steampunk, and slipstream. There are also further proposals in the *Modern Language Association (MLA) International Bibliography*. Some of the terms listed seem to name styles or schools rather than genres as such (they seem to be modifiers of *novel*); some (the last four, anyway) seem anachronistic.

2. In fact, many books have been subjected to such barrages of labels—complex works seem especially to attract them. For example, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* has been seen as a detective novel, religious epic, polemic against radical youth, study in criminal psychopathology, prophecy, social indictment, and philosophical analysis (McDuff 1991: 28).

3. Michael Seidel (1978: 198) writes that "the generic laws of literary inheritance assume healthy births, sound transmissions; but satiric forms produce the monstrous—hence satire's penchant for generic deformation." He discusses the interplay of satire with other narrative genres/modes: romance-epic quest (*ibid.*: 195–96), novel (of manners) (*ibid.*: 202, 204, 207, 210–12), tragedy (*ibid.*: 202–3). He also compares *Gravity's Rainbow* with *Tristram Shandy* (*ibid.*: 199–200).

genres may be blurry. Samuel Johnson complained of the futility of efforts to contain them:

Definitions have been no less difficult or uncertain in criticism than in law. Imagination, a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations, and impatient of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the logician, to perplex the confines of distinction, and burst the inclosures of regularity. There is therefore scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established. (quoted in Fowler 1982: 42)

“Definitions of genre,” Alastair Fowler says, “can hardly be stated, before they are falsified” (ibid.).

But, as in Pynchon’s novel, there is an opportunity here: when an older order collapses, new forms of order may arise. The traditional view (on which more below) is that categories are definition-like, constituted by necessary and sufficient conditions of membership. This view is, it turns out, completely defunct in cognitive science. Genres are central to interpretation, to literary history, and to the sociology of culture, and new models of categorization can help us rethink them. Moving to a cognitive approach radically changes the kinds of questions we ask and the kinds of answers we seek. We move from thinking about genres to thinking about how we think about and use genres—which clarifies genres themselves because they are partly constituted by the way we think. We turn the spotlight away from definitions and toward the multiple interrelated dimensions of categorial thought that cognitive science explores.

I will illustrate some ways cognitive category theory and genre theory can illuminate each other’s major topics—how genre theory can get past its love-hate relationship with categories by learning about the workings of nondefinitional types of category representations and how category theory can learn something about how those types of representations relate to one another in complex real-world category use. In particular, I will look closely at forms of the relation of text to category that Jacques Derrida (1981: 55, 59, 61) calls “participation without belonging.” Such relations include genre mixtures, which have been debated for millennia, and multiple genres—that is, multiple valid genre classifications of texts. In this cognitive reconsideration of genre, a parade of contradictory genre framings can become informative: all of the genre terms listed above follow a logic of some kind, and we can bring those various genre logics to light by looking at just why and how those terms are used. Thus I will be less interested in the correctness of genre classifications than in what they reveal

about how people think in and with genres. Nonetheless, I believe a study of this kind can contribute to cognitive literary studies, genre theory, and Pynchon criticism all at once.

To embark on this study, we need a sense of the current landscape of thinking about genre and categories. In that landscape, the two topics are only beginning to meet. Working against their interrelation is a familiar gulf between theory and practice—between how experts theorize genre and how others bring their work to bear on practical problems of textual study. The latter tend to make a selective use of theories that are already known or established in the field rather than delving into current specialist theoretical debates. So given a theoretical landscape that is by and large post-structuralist, Derrida's essay "The Law of Genre" (1981), which outlines his approach to genre in relation to categories, remains influential in practical criticism. This despite the fact that genre specialists are skeptical about the value of post-structuralist skeptical paradoxes.

Derrida's essay describes two paradoxically intertwined "laws" of genre purity and impurity, proscribing and prescribing transgression (reminiscent of Pynchon's account of Murphy's Law and Godel's theorem). In a historical survey of genre theory, David Duff (2000a: 15) views this deconstruction of genre as a reaction against theories that advocate genre prescriptivism and puritanism under the guise of describing reader knowledge (e.g., Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory, Jonathan Culler's account of literary competence, and E. D. Hirsch's study of validity in interpretation). The deconstructive reaction newly enacts "the Romantic revolt against the Neoclassical conception of genre . . . rendered necessary by what Derrida plainly saw as the totalising claims of modern structuralist thought," and Duff suggests that this "moment of need has probably now passed" (ibid.). But Duff's sense of the moment may be a bit off. The essays in the recent *PMLA* issue "Remapping Genre" (Dimock 2007b) frequently rely on post-structuralist ideas about genre and categories. Still, while those essays offer interesting practical criticism on how genres span spaces and times even while changing, they are short on theorizing about genre. An exception does not prove but rather states the rule: John Frow's (2007: 1627) "Genre Theory Today" waxes elegiac in lamenting genre's "decline as a vital issue in contemporary literary theory," which "nevertheless goes hand in hand with its ubiquity as a point of reference." He attributes this decline to the "continuing prevalence of a neoclassical understanding of genre as prescriptive taxonomy and as a constraint on textual energy," which continues to spark a "familiar post-Romantic resistance to genre" (ibid.). Frow takes Derrida's essay as exemplifying these attitudes—an assessment that closely echoes Duff's.

Frow, though, goes deeper into the nature of that “neoclassical understanding.” He presents Derrida’s argument thus: “As soon as the word *genre* is sounded, says Derrida, ‘a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: “Do,” “Do not”’” (ibid.). “Yet to put the matter this way,” Frow (ibid.) writes, “is to suppose that genre is, in the first place—and however much it is undermined from the beginning—a matter of Law.” As Frow (2006: 26) points out elsewhere, “The initial decision to view genre as a principle of taxonomic purity” assumes a naive folk theory of categorization, namely, “that things come in well-defined kinds, that the kinds are characterized by shared properties, and that there is one right taxonomy of the kinds,” as George Lakoff puts it (quoted in ibid.: 13).

Two further points, I would add, reinforce this association of genres with legalistic purity. First, Derrida actually treats genre categories as even *more* restrictive and rigid than that folk theory does. When he contrasts “the limitless field of general textuality” with textual categories, he defines the latter as follows:

The trait common to these classes of classes [i.e., types, genres modes, forms, etc.] is precisely the identifiable recurrence of a common trait by which one recognizes, or should recognize, a membership in a class. There should be a trait upon which one could rely in order to decide that a given textual event, a given “work,” corresponds to a given class . . . And there should be a code enabling one to decide questions of class-membership on the basis of this trait. (Derrida 1981: 59)

Accordingly, there is just one trait that defines each class, the trait is known (or knowable), and there is some clear procedure for determining membership. In Lakoff’s version of the folk theory instead, classes have “shared properties” (so there need not be a single trait common to all members), and there need be no procedure for determining membership.⁴ Second, when we try to understand and discuss a topic without delving into theories and their histories, we are liable to get our ideas from metaphors, and the genre metaphors that critics fall back on today often reflect Derrida’s repudiation of the folk theory of categories. Categories are seen as containers, and categorizing is pigeonholing, legislation, command, policing (specifically border patrol). This sharpens the distaste for genre theory, making it somehow both boring and sinister.⁵

4. Thus Derrida’s remarks may reflect what Gregory L. Murphy (2004: 127–28) calls the “unidimensional strategy,” the tendency to sort items based on one feature or dimension. Regarding classes “outside of literature or art,” Derrida (1981: 60) speaks of “a set of identifiable and codifiable traits” but soon turns back to the singular “distinctive trait *qua* mark.”

5. Many articles in the “Remapping Genre” issue of *PMLA* are disappointing in their traffic

Even if the profundity and novelty of Derrida's take on genre are exaggerated, he did recognize issues that Duff and Frow identify as central in recent genre theory. Genre multiplicity, mixture, and transformation—phenomena one might summarize as fluidity—emerge clearly over the course of Duff's collection of key essays in modern genre theory and are highlighted in his introduction. These phenomena recur in recent special issues of *New Literary History* on genre theory (Cohen 2003b, 2003c) and are identified and thematized in the introductions and commentary by Ralph Cohen (2003a) and Hayden White (2003; see also Colie 1973; Fowler 1982). Similarly, in Wai Chee Dimock's (2007a: 1380) endorsement of an "intergeneric" model, all genres experience "a continuous stream of input from other genres. Receiving and compounding are crucial to both, as are osmosis and sedimentation," and genre histories form kinship networks. New questions arise: "What does it mean to think of [genres] as afloat in the same pool, with generic particles released by cross-currents, filtering into one another and coalescing in different ways? What research projects stem from such a model?" (ibid.: 1381).⁶

in these clichés. Defining or describing genres is an activity "remarkably close to legislation or border control" (Owen 2007: 1389). Wendy Knepper (2007: 1443) contrasts intermixing, creolization, transgressions, hybridizing, and "illicit blendings" with "the mania of reason and violence that underpins the desire to impose a generic reading." Ed Folsom (2007: 1571) professes to dread genre as related to the "generic" supermarket products of the 1980s: "Category had prevailed; the borders were secured," he declares. "Rigidity is a quality of our categorical systems, not of the writers or usually the works we put into those systems." He contrasts Walt Whitman's discomfort with "the feudal mind-set that [genre] encouraged"—"peculiarity to person, period, or place always leads to division and discrimination, always moves away from and against universality" (ibid.: 1572)—with Wai Chee Dimock's "universal sense of genre" as "world system" that connects rather than contains by way of family resemblance, kinship networks, rhizomes, fractals (ibid.: 1572–73). Bruce Robbins (2007: 1646) takes from Frow (or, arguably, gives to him) little more than the idea that genre is "a mode of social domination," a "conservative regime" that "limit[s] literature's possibilities." 6. Dimock's (2007a: 1379) metaphors of "fluidity" and "wateriness" do capture recent themes of genre studies, and when their theoretical implications are developed, they do serve well for some aspects of generic change and mixture and hence of literary history. As noted, Dimock goes beyond the clichés mentioned in note 5, but we should always consider the limits of metaphors. The "fluid" metaphor fails to suggest any basis for the (limited) stability and coherence of genres, nor does it go far enough in recognizing genre relativity, because it still retains certain essentialist assumptions, as if categories were a kind of substance. For example, we tend to assume that fluid mixtures have a certain proportion of each fluid, but texts can have all the features of, and thus fully belong to, multiple genres. We see this most simply in the fact that genres can be defined at different levels of specificity: every subgenre (e.g., sonnet) is also a genre (e.g., poem). But texts can also belong to multiple genres because of the fact that genres can be defined according to different nonconflicting kinds of features (a bildungsroman might also be a Gothic science fiction romance) or according to different models of category membership (e.g., Paul Hernadi's [1972] polycentric model of writer-based or expressive models, work and world-based or structural and mimetic models, and reader-based or pragmatic models).

Frow's article and book stress analogous themes and questions, but he turns to disciplines other than literary studies for "emergent problematics" that are "at once a challenge to literary genre theory and a potential source of its renewal" (2007: 1629). One of those emergent problematics is "cognitive poetics"—for Frow (*ibid.*: 1631), "a general term for any kind of work in or influenced by the various domains of cognitive science that is relevant to genre theory." In these domains, he focuses on "schematic representations of the world that project genre-specific worlds" (*ibid.*). Yet Frow (*ibid.*: 1632) still sees "little direct theorization of genre in cognitive poetics" and feels that it is "caught up in a taxonomic conception of genre that belongs to an older and largely superseded problematic."⁷ That is, it treats genre as "a matter of the categorization of texts" instead of dealing with "the textual categorization and mobilization of information about the world" (*ibid.*: 1632–33). Frow (*ibid.*: 1633) urges us to ask: "What kind of world is brought into being here—what thematic topoi, with what modal inflection, from what situation of address, and structured by what formal categories? Who represents this world to whom, under what circumstances and to what ends?" Such questions flow from a view of genres as analogous to what Michel Foucault calls "discourses": "performative structures that shape the world in the very process of putting it into speech" (*ibid.*).

Frow's discussions are admirable in challenging the clichés about genre categories in mainstream criticism, but they underestimate cognitive poetics in general and certainly shortchange the potential of a cognitive approach to genre. They therefore provide a fine occasion to kill two birds with one stone: to confront a reductive account of cognitive poetics by showing how the subfield can offer effective alternatives to mainstream misconceptions about genre. To this end, I will use cognitive category research to develop Frow's (*ibid.*) point that "any text may be read through more than one generic frame; many texts participate in multiple genres." To put it more broadly, it is time to torch a few straw men. The reconceptualization of categories in cognitive science is revolutionary enough to allow us to turn to them once again. Categorization is thinking, and very often it is creative. Most thought, even most imaginative thought, uses categories, which are far from airtight boxes or guarded boundaries; they are rich and diverse and flexible. Nor is using categories limited to pigeonholing; we regularly extend and modify categories, apply them to new or odd things, combine and blend them. I am unashamed to say I like categories: I use them every day, all the time; they enable me to make sense of

7. Compare the section "Story or Narrative? Generic Typology and Teleology" in Sternberg 2003: 330–52.

things; they keep me sane, and they are essential to the “madness” of creativity; they are part of who I am. I do not know what I would do without them. Sometimes I even like them to be clear and well-defined.

Bringing together category theory and genre theory in this way leads me to ask certain specific questions, and the effort to develop answers to these questions will guide my discussion. Regarding category theory, how do people combine multiple factors of categorization—especially in real-life contexts and with rich categories? A recent survey of the state of the art sees this as a key problem. Experiments often use categorization tasks which probably miss real-life complications, because those tasks are constructed for easy experimental control and as a result are artificially simple and one-dimensional (Murphy 2004: 135–41).⁸ Regarding genre theory: how do factors interact in our use of genre categories to decide, for example, the genre of a complex text? Or to create a complex text?

I proceed in three steps. First, I review the demise of the classical-definitional view of categories and sketch three of the main theories that arose to replace it: exemplar, prototype, and knowledge theories, each of which postulates a different kind of mental representation of categories. Second, I review three important conflicting discussions of “the genre” of *Gravity's Rainbow* in order to discover how critics use genre categories. This includes the critics' recourse to patterns of argument that support (or dispute) particular categorizations of the text; the patterns of interplay among exemplars, prototypes, and knowledge in such reader response; and how patterns of interplay among those factors affect the critic's sense of the artist's creative mixing of genres. The genre discussions reviewed are Edward Mendelson's (1976a, 1976b) argument that *Gravity's Rainbow* is not a novel but an encyclopedic narrative, Theodore D. Kharpertian's (1990) argument that it is not a novel but a Menippean satire, and M. Keith Booker's (1987) argument that it is in fact a novel after all. These studies are not recent; I use them because they represent ways of looking at Pynchon's books that continue to be influential; because not much has been written lately on Pynchon and genre; and because they assume a definitional view of genres, which is useful for the study of how “folk classification” and “categorization” work in specific contexts. The recent dearth of research

8. Murphy (2004: 141) notes that the stimuli in experiments, such as “geometric shapes, alphanumeric strings, patches of color, dot patterns, and schematic faces,” are “as divorced as possible from outside knowledge.” They are very simple, and subjects use them only once, unlike “real objects, which are extremely rich and highly structured entities, about which it is almost always possible to learn more than one knows now” (ibid.: 135), and people often do learn more about many categories through repeated close exposure to them. “In short, category use could be an important variable in how concepts are represented” (ibid.).

on genre in Pynchon may be attributed to the fact that such large-scale framing tends to be done early in the critical response to a text, clearing the way for finer-grained interpretation.⁹

Third, I detail how this information could inform category and genre research by clarifying how critics match complex texts with complex genres, how the historical sequence of exemplars plays a special role in genre categories, and the different ways genres mixed in *Gravity's Rainbow* are represented in Pynchon's mind and in his text.

2. Cognitive Category Research

Being fundamental to perception, thought, language, and action, categories are naturally a major focus of cognitive research. To convey some sense of this, it will be easiest to begin with the debunking of the classical view by cognitive scientists over the past half century. The classical view is: "First, concepts are mentally represented as definitions. A definition provides characteristics that are a) necessary and b) jointly sufficient for membership in the category. Second . . . every object is either in or not in the category, with no in-between cases. . . . Third, [there is no] distinction between category members. Anything that meets the definition is just as good a category member as anything else" (Murphy 2004: 15). Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis (1999: 8) also note that "most theories of concepts can be seen as reactions to, or developments of," the classical view. According to that view, the concept of "bachelor" (to take one of the most common examples) is "a complex mental representation" made up of representations like "IS NOT MARRIED, IS MALE, and IS AN ADULT." Each component "specifies a condition that something must meet in order to be a bachelor, and anything that satisfies them all thereby counts as a bachelor" (ibid.: 9). Laurence and Margolis (ibid.: 10) add that "it would be difficult to overstate the historical predominance of the Classical Theory," which dates back to antiquity. The first serious challenges to it "weren't until the 1950s in philosophy, and the 1970s in psychology."

We can see this theory at work when Aristotle seeks to define the various species of poetry. In order to discuss tragedy, for example, he must "gather up the definition resulting from what has been said" about its nature, origin, and development (Aristotle 1947: 631). A tragedy is "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself;

9. Other possible reasons for the lack of interest in genre in Pynchon: the decline of genre theory that Frow observes, following from the assumptions and priorities of post-structuralism, and Pynchon's remarks on categories, which may also discourage the enterprise.

in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" (ibid.). A thing must meet these conditions in order to be a tragedy, and anything that does so must be a tragedy. Duff (2000a: 3) notes that the Aristotelian division of genres was "the cornerstone of Renaissance and Neoclassical poetics" and was first called into question by the Romantics.¹⁰ In this tradition, M. H. Abrams (1981: 70) adds, "The recognized genres . . . were widely thought to be fixed literary types, somewhat like species in the biological order of nature; many neoclassic critics insisted that each kind must remain 'pure' (there must, for example, be no 'mixing' of tragedy and comedy), and also proposed rules which specified the subject matter, structure, style, and emotional effect proper to each kind."

But things do not seem to work in the classical way. It is extremely difficult to construct viable definitions of any concepts, whether simple or complex, natural or artificial (Murphy 2004: 17–19; Laurence and Margolis 1999: 14–16). More pointedly, psychological research in the 1970s on how people judge category membership contradicts the classical implication that category membership is all-or-nothing—that membership is clearly determinable and all items are equally either "in" or "out." Instead, category membership is *graded*. First, categories often have no clear boundaries: "tall people" are a matter of degree. Second, in studies that have become classic, Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues found patterns in category judgments, known as "prototype effects" (or "typicality effects"), which show that categories have "better and worse examples."¹¹ For example, people

10. Duff (2000a: 3) discusses Gérard Genette's demonstration that the "familiar tripartite division" of poetry into epic, lyric, and drama that is "normally traced back to Aristotle" is a conflation of Plato's distinction among three "modes of literary representation: narrative, dramatic and mixed" and Aristotle's distinctions according to mode and object of representation. Genette (1992 [1979]: 49) observes that many Romantic theories also "constituted so many all-embracing, hierarchical systems, like Aristotle's in that the various poetic genres without exception were distributed among the three basic categories like so many subclasses. Under the epic went epic, novel, novella, etc.; under the dramatic went tragedy, comedy, bourgeois drama, etc.; under the lyrical went ode, hymn, epigram, etc."

11. For key articles, see Rosch 1975, 1999 [1978]; Rosch and Mervis 1975; Rosch, Simpson, et al. 1976; and Rosch, Mervis, et al. 1976. Murphy (2004: 31–38) reviews Rosch and C. B. Mervis's (1975) study of typicality and family resemblance and Lawrence W. Barsalou's additions to it. Barsalou (1987) discusses causes of instability in graded structure. Laurence and Margolis (1999: 24–26) also review and discuss Rosch's results. According to Murphy (2004: 31), "Typicality is a graded phenomenon, in which items can be extremely typical (close to the prototype), moderately typical (fairly close), atypical (not close), and finally borderline category members (things that are about equally distant from two different prototypes)." Note that all of the new theories of categorization discussed below have had to address the

agree that robins and sparrows are better examples of “bird” than are chickens and vultures. These facts affect cognition. Prototypicality correlates with many other psychological variables. Items that are more prototypical of their categories can be learned earlier (in childhood development) to be category members and learned more quickly. Also when people are asked to list members of categories, prototypical members are more likely to be produced, and the most prototypical items are produced earliest and most frequently (Rosch 1999 [1978]: 198–99). In general, “one can say that whenever a task requires someone to relate an item to a category, the item’s typicality influences performance” (Murphy 2004: 24). Typical items are also likely to serve as “cognitive reference points”: people will say that a penguin, but not a robin, is “technically” a bird, because a robin is “a real bird, a bird par excellence” (Rosch 1999 [1978]: 199). Similarly, people are more likely to say off-red is “virtually” the same as pure red than to say the reverse and that “101 is virtually 100 rather than 100 is virtually 101” (Murphy 2004: 24). Lakoff (1987a: 96) stresses that such reference points are used in reasoning, not just in identifying members. People use various kinds of category prototypes for “making inferences, doing calculations, making approximations, planning, comparing, making judgments, and so on—as well as in defining categories, extending them, and characterizing relations among subcategories” (ibid.).

In the literary field, the history of debate over any genre would amply confirm the point about the difficulty of constructing viable definitions. Further, many genres exhibit boundary gradience (“short stories” obviously but also novels lack clear boundaries), and most if not all exhibit prototype effects (e.g., *Pride and Prejudice* is a more typical novel than *Gravity’s Rainbow*). Various specific and general prototypes are used to judge the pros and cons of other members and to think about the category as a whole. Pynchon’s books have often been criticized for lacking typical “good novel” qualities, and those qualities might be derived from novels by Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, or Henry James.

Further, when plausible category definitions are available, they often do not quite fit the world. Lakoff (1987a: 65–66, citing Charles Fillmore 1982) points out that even “bachelor,” a standard example of a definitional concept, with “clear boundaries and necessary-and-sufficient conditions,” suits some unmarried adult males much less well than it does others. We are disinclined to use the term for homosexuals, or the pope, or Tarzan, or Muslims with only three of four possible wives. According to Fillmore

findings of Rosch and her colleagues about prototype effects. Those findings do not belong to any particular theory, although the prototype view has been attributed to Rosch.

and Lakoff, this is due to a mismatch between the idealized circumstances in relation to which concepts are defined and the actual circumstances in which concepts are applied. The definition of “bachelor” assumes “the context of a human society in which certain expectations about marriage and marriageable age obtain” (Lakoff 1987a: 66). Similarly, literary genres with clear prosodic conventions are often defined by those conventions, but a sonnet or limerick or haiku written in, say, Morse code would be a poor example of such genres. Prototype effects have also been found for rigorously definable technical categories, such as mathematical concepts of natural numbers, odd or even numbers, and prime numbers. For most people, single-digit numbers (in the base ten naming system) are better examples of these categories than are larger numbers (ibid.: 79–80, 97–99). These discoveries about the nonclassical properties of categories have brought in their wake extensive efforts to construct new theories of categories, as we will see.

Many of the problems with the classical approach to categories have been discussed in genre studies. From the Romantic period onward, genres have been seen as “convenient but rather arbitrary ways to classify literature” (Abrams 1981: 71). The twentieth century saw occasional attempts to revive the classical definitional view but generally tried to specify its shortcomings further and to move beyond it. On the first page of the first issue of the journal *Genre*, for example, John F. Reichert (1968: 1) rejects Ronald S. Crane and Elder Olson’s 1950s development of the Aristotelian strategy that started “with the most general classes . . . [and] zeroed in on a work by locating it in increasingly specific sub-classes.” Later in that first issue of *Genre*, Leonard Feinberg (1968: 31) endorses a “reluctant conclusion that no completely satisfactory definition of satire is possible.” He goes on to stress, in weary tones, common themes of twentieth-century genre theory: a focus on canons of texts informed by and informing a loose intuitive sense of similarity: “All we can do . . . is familiarize ourselves with the literature traditionally called ‘satire’; when a new work comes along which exhibits a reasonable number of similarities to accepted satires, we are justified in calling [it] a satire. But we have no right to demand complete conformity to a particular variety of satire, and we should be willing to accept numerous deviations from customary procedure” (ibid.). Likewise, the essays in Duff’s collection of seminal twentieth-century genre theory often see genres as historical entities not susceptible of strict definition. Yury Tynyanov (2000 [1924]: 30), for example, says that “mathematics is built on definitions, whereas in theory of literature definitions are not the foundation, but only an after-affect which is, moreover, constantly being altered by the evolving literary fact.” For Jauss (2000 [1970]: 131), genres

are not “*genera* (classes) in the logical senses, but rather . . . *groups* or *historical families*. As such, they cannot be deduced or defined, but only historically determined, delimited, and described.”

There have been efforts to develop richer principles for the categorical basis of genre theory. Paul Hernadi (1972: 153) signaled the need for a “polycentric” genre theory: “It is not a particular doctrine of three (or four or fourteen) genres that the discerning critic should reject. The fallacy lies in the monistic principle of classification usually underlying such doctrines. We seem to need several systems of coordinates . . . lest we lose our way in the more-than-three-dimensional universe of verbal art. There are many respects in which literary works can be similar, and distinctions based on different types of similarity need not be mutually exclusive.” A decade later, Alastair Fowler offered a sustained effort to treat genres in terms of the Wittgensteinian idea of “family resemblances” rather than definitions. He sees genre features as grouped into “repertoires,” “the whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit” (Fowler 1982: 54). But this is too loose to reflect genre membership. Fowler (*ibid.*: 42–43) finds another categorical principle by following the “family” metaphor to a “basis of resemblance” in “literary tradition . . . a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes” while insisting that “the direct line of descent is not so dominant that genre theory can be identified with source criticism.” Around the same time, Claudio Guillén (1986: 82), also rejecting “the conception of genre as descriptive taxonomy,” briefly but presciently urged us to think of a genre

as a conceptual model belonging to the ideal spaces of poetics, and of the poem as an activity taking into consideration that model, but in practice not coinciding with it fully, or only in some degree, and not without reference to other paradigms, through either acceptance or rejection. A piece of writing can be a hybrid; and to the question of its generic definition the answer need not be, as in a law court, either yes or no. A poem can be more or less of [its genre].

Hernadi, Alastair Fowler, and Guillén offer valuable revisions to definition-based assumptions about genre, yet none provides sufficiently detailed accounts of what categories are, how different types of similarity work, how multiple systems of coordinates interlock, how models and texts relate to one another. Thus despite some ingenious theorizing, few alternatives to definitions have been proposed, and none has caught on. Working definitions continue to be very widely needed and used in criticism and indeed theory, so the classical view (and its *doppelgänger*, general category skepticism) keeps coming back.

There is no single agreed-upon theory of categories to replace the old

view.¹² There are three main contenders, each of which tries to explain the above findings about categories with varying kinds and degrees of success. These are known as the exemplar, prototype, and knowledge theories

12. I have consulted overviews of research on concepts and categories by Laurence and Margolis (1999), James A. Hampton (2001), Douglas L. Medin and Cynthia Aguilar (2001), and Murphy (2004). The prototype view is associated most commonly with Hampton 1979, 1982, 1988; and Smith and Medin 1981 (excerpted in Margolis and Laurence 1999). The exemplar view is associated with Medin and Schaffer 1978; Medin and Shoben 1988; and Nosofsky 1984, 1988a, 1988b, 1992. The knowledge view is associated with Murphy and Medin 1985 (reprinted in Margolis and Laurence 1999); Carey 1985 (reprinted in Margolis and Laurence 1999); Medin 1989; Rips 1989; and Keil 1989. Lakoff's work (1987a, 1987b) is closer to the knowledge view than to the other views. Prominent critiques of the prototype view include Osherson and Smith 1981 (reprinted in Margolis and Laurence 1999) and Armstrong et al. 1983 (reprinted in Margolis and Laurence 1999). Murphy (2004) generally reviews and discusses in considerable detail a wide range of empirical studies and mathematical models in category research.

It is worth observing that there appears to be some tension between psychologists and philosophers in the evaluation of the field, especially as regards the classical view. Philosophers are more sympathetic to this view's strengths and to efforts to revise and revive it. By contrast, Murphy (2004: 16), like a psychologist, says that Rosch's work "essentially killed the classical view, so that it is not now the theory of an actual researcher in this area (though we will see that a few theorists cling to it still)." He briefly discusses revisions of the classical view (*ibid.*: 24–28, 38–40) but generally pays it little attention, repeating that it has "simply ceased to be a serious contender in the psychology of concepts" (*ibid.*: 38) and explaining its appeal in terms of philosophers' professional and historical interests. Laurence and Margolis (1999) also consider in detail the prototype view and the knowledge view (which they call "Theory-Theory"). Strangely, they mention the exemplar view only in a footnote (*ibid.*: 71, n88), but there they say it is a major theory that they have not discussed and refer the reader to an excerpt from Smith and Medin 1981 included in their volume. Laurence and Margolis are more sympathetic to philosophers. They go with the strengths of the classical view as well as its weaknesses (Laurence and Margolis 1999: 8–27) and devote significant parts of their collection to it, to philosophical skepticism about it, to criticism of the prototype view, and also, in "Part II: Current Theories and Research," to "Neoclassical Theories" and "Conceptual Atomism." The philosopher Jerry A. Fodor (e.g., 1998) is among the driving forces behind the latter theory, which argues that concepts have no internal structure: rather, their contents are determined by their causal relation to things in the world. James A. Hampton (2001) divides concept research into three main traditions: the cognitive-developmental tradition, a tradition derived from behaviorist psychology, and a tradition of applying psychological methods to lexical semantics. The first tradition sees concepts as schemata. In the second, concepts involve a classifying ability, and he explores several models of learning and use: rule-based, prototype, exemplar, and neural-network models. In the lexical semantics tradition, there are five broad classes of model: classical, prototype, exemplar, theory based, and psychological essentialism. Thus only the lexical semantic tradition exhibits a classical branch of theory, including the recent revisionary efforts. Hampton does not seem optimistic about it. Psychological essentialism seeks to account in psychological terms for the intuition that concepts are classical. Medin and Aguilar's account of categorization does not discuss definitions but notes problems with the related idea that categorization is based on similarity, understood "in terms of shared properties." This appears to be "too unconstrained to be useful as an explanatory principle" (Medin and Aguilar 2001: 104), and later work suggests that conceptual coherence relies on theories or some revised account of similarity.

(Murphy 2004, with an overview in chapter 3). They all propose different “conceptual representations and . . . processes of learning and categorization” (ibid.: 95). The *exemplar view* says that people categorize by learning and using *specific remembered examples*. Encountering a new bird (or, literary critics might say, a new novel), we categorize it by accessing many or all of our memories of specific birds (or novels) and comparing them with the new item for *similarity* (ibid.: 80).¹³ The *prototype view* says that we learn a *summary representation of the whole category* and classify by comparing new items to the prototype (ibid.: 95). A major question for the prototype view is the nature of the representation. A prototype is no longer regarded as a single “best example,” but the entire category has to be “represented by a unified representation rather than separate representations for each member or for different classes of members” (ibid.: 42). The most important proposal regarding this question concerns the schema, namely, “a structured representation that divides up the properties of an item into dimensions (usually called *slots*) and values on those dimensions (*fillers* of the slots)” (ibid.: 47–48). Daniel Chandler (1997) notes that values can be compulsory, default, or optional. For example, a certain dog is an animal (compulsory), has four legs (default), and is black in color (optional). In our bird example, necessary values would include its being a kind of animal; default values would include that birds have two wings and can fly; and optional values would specify color, size, shape, and so forth.

The *knowledge view* says that we learn and use concepts as “part of our overall understanding of the world around us”; this relation works both ways: concepts are influenced by what we already know, but new concepts can alter our general knowledge (Murphy 2004: 60).¹⁴ As already indicated with respect to commonplace ideas about categories, that understanding of the world seems to consist in idealized folk theories. I will use the expression “folk theory” to refer to the representations postulated by the knowledge view to avoid confusion with other uses of “knowledge” and “theory.” As Murphy (2004: 143) puts it, we can explain why people “think of birds as being feathered, two-legged creatures with wings, which fly, lay eggs in nests, and live in trees”—or “why this particular configuration of properties exists”—by appeal to “simple, mundane knowledge”:

In order to fly, the bird needs to support its weight on wings. The feathers are important as a very lightweight body covering that also helps to create an aero-

13. Researchers infer that there is “implicit memory” for categories: unconscious, long-lasting, and detailed, often resulting from interactions with the thing (Murphy 2004: 86).

14. Murphy (2004: 60) points out that “the prototype and exemplar models arose from the ashes of the classical view . . . The *knowledge approach* in contrast arose as a reaction to the two other approaches, and it is in some sense built upon them.”

dynamic form. Thus, wings and feathers enable flying. By virtue of flying, the bird can live in nests that are in trees, because it can easily fly into and out of the trees. This is a useful thing to do, because many predators are unable to reach the nests there. The bird needs a nest for brooding, and for babies to live in until they are able to fly. Thus flying can be partly explained by these desirable consequences.

Murphy discusses proposals for an integrated theory. As he notes, people do in fact use all of these kinds of representation, and they must interact somehow. For this reason, I will call them category *factors* from here on rather than discussing them as if they belong to mutually exclusive theories. Categories differ in many ways, and some factors are favored by certain types of category and in certain situations. For example, exemplars seem useful “when category structure is weak (no prototype can be formed), with few exemplars,” when they are “distinctive and interesting,” and when they are fresh in memory (*ibid.*: 491).¹⁵ Murphy (*ibid.*: 488–94) suggests that *schemata* could link prototypes and knowledge, but he is unsure how exemplars will fit into the picture.

Let us turn, then, to a case study that will, I hope, contribute to the ongoing efforts to use cognitive category theory to put genre studies (theory and criticism) on a new footing by addressing the questions raised above.¹⁶

15. Categories may vary, for example, in number of members (relatively few epics in the world, compared with birds), range of subcategories (many kinds of birds, not so many kinds of sonnets), degree of similarity of members (all seagulls tend to look alike to us, but distinctiveness is a value in literature) (Murphy 2004: 84–85, 93). Moreover, early in the learning process a few individual exemplars may have a major role in category formation and use, and this reliance on exemplars may hold more generally for categories that have few members or are rare in a certain environment (e.g., zebras, llamas) (*ibid.*: 51, 76).

16. Most cognitive studies of artistic genres concern prototypes and schemata or models rather than exemplars. Currie 1997; Hogan 2003a, 2003b; Mancing 2000; Sinding 2002; Steen 1999; Stockwell 2002; and Turner 1991 discuss prototype issues. Chandler 1997; Fishelov 1993; Hart 2004; Hirsch 1967; Hogan 2003a, 2003b; Mancing 2000; Sinding 2002; Steen 2002; Stockwell 2002; and Turner 1991 discuss the concept of the schema. Schaubert and Spolsky 1986 and Spolsky 1993 treat genre in terms of Ray Jackendoff’s notion of “preference rules.” Hart 2004 follows Ellen Spolsky’s (1993) mixture of evolutionary, cognitive, and post-structuralist thought, treating genre structure and function as shaped by cognitive principles but embedded in culture and history. Gibbs (2003) describes revised understandings of what prototypes are (i.e., constructed during reading, embodied, and context sensitive), with some reference to genre. Fludernik 1996 and Herman 2002 develop cognitive approaches to narrative (mainly using schemata, frames, and scripts), in which genre is significant but not central. Patrick Colm Hogan (2003b) analyzes literary concepts in terms of schemata, prototypes, and exemplars. Unusually, Hogan (*ibid.*: 57–65, 84–89) offers a detailed and valuable discussion of the sometimes confused relations among these three structures; also unusually, he discusses the importance of exempla in literary response. In relation to genre, however, he stresses the role of prototypes (for emotions, plots, characters, scenes, etc.), which he seems to regard as concrete examples of a typical case. Hogan 2003a: 44–47 also discusses

3. Prevailing Views of the Genre of *Gravity's Rainbow*

Against this background, I turn to three influential generic framings of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Three because no single genre framing is adequate to the text and because my goal of comparing the category thinking in multiple valid genre classifications requires a manageable multiple of studies. I have chosen these three because each is quite plausible, has been influential, and focuses on highly distinctive features of the text. The most obvious category for *Gravity's Rainbow* is "novel." Yet unlike most novels, it has epic ambitions and qualities. Yet unlike most epics in turn, it has strong intellectual, grotesque, and satirical qualities. Further, the three framings to be discussed differ along several dimensions of categorization, revealing various ways critics can adapt genre concepts for a specific difficult case. With "encyclopedic narrative," Mendelson essentially creates a new genre; with "Menippean satire," Kharpertian joins in the recovery of a subgenre known mainly to specialists; with "novel," Booker expands a well-known and very general (superordinate) genre. The search for the One True Genre is a bit like Slothrop's "grail quest" for the secret device of Rocket 00000: the harder you look, the more it recedes, and the quest reveals more than the goal.

3.1. Mendelson: "Encyclopedic Narrative"

Mendelson (1976a: 1267) stresses "the degree to which cultures and individual readers provide external order for literary experience" by bringing interpretive expectations to texts. His essay on *Gravity's Rainbow* begins with an indication of the value of genre criticism for interpretation by contrasting Pynchon's book with a novel prototype: "To refer to it as a novel is convenient, but to read it as a novel—as a narrative of individuals and their social and psychological relations—is to misconstrue it" (Mendelson 1976b: 161). He then names his new genre and links Pynchon's book with its other exemplars. Although "the most important single genre in Western literature of the Renaissance and after, it has never previously been identified. *Gravity's Rainbow* is an *encyclopedic narrative*, and its companions in this most exclusive of literary categories are Dante's *Commedia*, Rabelais's five books of Gargantua and Pantagruel, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*" (ibid.).¹⁷ He pro-

these structures but does not go into detail about genre. Swales 1990 and Paltridge 1997 discuss prototypes and schemata in relation to nonliterary genres.

17. Mendelson's claim to have discovered this new genre is doubtless exaggerated. First of all, he does not mention Frye's account of "encyclopaedic forms," to which his essay on *Gravity's Rainbow* seems to owe much. In a related article on genre, Mendelson (1976a: 1268–

vides a genre prototype—that is, a summary representation of its content and function: encyclopedic narratives “attempt to render the full range of knowledge and beliefs of a national culture” along with the ideological interpretations of that knowledge and belief (ibid.: 162). Mendelson then constructs a more elaborate folk theory (or “model”) for it, going beyond the summary representation to describe features and their functions, histories, and interrelations. Interestingly, for example, some features of encyclopedic narrative build on or modify those of contrasting genres, such as novel, epic, and encyclopedia; and Mendelson also describes what features the genre lacks. It evolves out of epic and may use an epic skeleton, but it sticks closer to the contemporary world and is set in the recent past, not in the distant one of epic. Thus texts in this genre have a “double function of prophecy and satire”: they both “predict” future events and mock their readers’ lives (ibid.: 163). Pynchon sets his book at what he sees as “the originating instant of contemporary history,” the end of World War II (ibid.).

The prophetic quality or “openness in time” correlates with an “indeter-

69n1) downplays Frye’s influence, saying that Frye refers to “anatomies and Menippean satires, not narratives,” and that his “cyclical and universal schemata” prevent him from recognizing Mendelson’s genre, which is tied to the history of cultures. This seems to me disingenuous and wrong in several ways. Some of Frye’s (1971 [1957]: 311–13, 322) discussions of encyclopedism relate to anatomies (the term he substitutes for “Menippean satire”) but not all (cf. ibid.: 55–61, 315–26). Also, anatomies are usually narratives, though the genre is intellectual and often essayistic. Moreover, Mendelson’s genre is similar in many ways to Frye’s. Frye does indeed connect encyclopedic forms with cultural and historical factors, but for Frye these factors are social, religious, and international, whereas for Mendelson they are national. For Frye (ibid.: 55), an encyclopedic tendency develops when a writer communicates as a professional with a social function, and this leads to “a conception of a total body of vision that poets as a whole class are entrusted with.” That body of vision tends to take on “a single encyclopaedic form, which can be attempted by one poet if he is sufficiently learned or inspired, or by a poetic school or tradition if the culture is sufficiently homogeneous” (ibid.). He later discusses specific encyclopedic forms. Every age tends to have a “central encyclopaedic form”: a “scripture or sacred book” in earlier times and in later times some “analogy of revelation” (ibid.: 315), mainly epics of various kinds. Here Frye also mentions several of Mendelson’s authors. Goethe’s *Faust* is an example from the “low mimetic” period (ibid.: 321), and comic and ironic forms of encyclopedism are found in François Rabelais, Laurence Sterne, and James Joyce (ibid.: 321–23). However, regardless of the source of the concept, “encyclopedic narrative” is indeed new in relation to the body of commonly recognized literary genres. That is, Mendelson and Frye create new categories for purposes of understanding groups of texts. Of course, what counts as commonplace genre knowledge is relative to people, places, and times, but we may make some generalizations. Most people who read today (and probably most readers since about 1800) know the genre “novel,” but relatively few specialists (i.e., only scholars) know the genre “Menippean satire,” and fewer still know “encyclopedic narrative.” In fact, the latter is what Tzvetan Todorov (1990 [1978]: 17) calls a “theoretical” rather than a “historical” genre. The term has never been in common use and was not used at all before Frye or Mendelson invented it.

minacy of form,” as these books incorporate many narrative genres and are defined by a set of qualities rather than by a plot or structure (ibid.). Their gigantic scale and ambition informs their narrative design: they lack romantic resolutions, as they seek a broader synthesis by straining “outwards from the brief moment of personal love towards the wider expanses of national and mythical history, and towards the history of [their] own medium” of language (ibid.: 166). In *Gravity’s Rainbow*, two of the main characters lose their romantic interests due to cultural-political causes. Roger Mexico loses his girlfriend Jessica when the war ends, and “Slothrop, for all his sexual exuberance, disintegrates lovelessly” in the Zone (ibid.: 165). The genre’s expansiveness also leads to encyclopedism of styles and languages, mixing high and low. Pynchon thus mixes proverbs, a primitive and anonymous form (the Proverbs for Paranoids), with the most esoteric high styles (presumably those of science, scholarship, and modernist literature), and he uses many languages: “French, German, Italian, Spanish, Middle Dutch, Latin, Japanese, Kirghiz, Herero, various English and American dialects” (ibid.: 166).

Mendelson links Pynchon’s linguistic cosmopolitanism with the “accounts of statecraft” in other encyclopedic texts (ibid.: 171), focusing on the episode “that follows [Russian officer] Tchitcherine to the Kirghiz . . . and is a history not of style but of the political *use* of language” (ibid.: 167). This episode exemplifies the recurring Weberian “political process” of “the transformation of charismatic energy into the controlled and rationalized routine of a bureaucracy” (ibid.: 168), as it concerns both Tchitcherine’s spiritual journey to a vision of the Kirghiz Light and his role in “the Soviet introduction of a Latin alphabet into illiterate Kazakhstan” (ibid.: 167). Mendelson’s (ibid.: 167–68) focus here interestingly reveals how a decision about genre can determine the relative importance of narrative episodes: “Read as if it were one element among the conventional structure of a novel, the Kirghiz episode seems disproportionate and anomalous. . . . Yet once the encyclopedic nature of the book is recognized, the Kirghiz interlude moves from its apparent place at the book’s periphery to its ideological and thematic center.” The Kirghiz people have been using a language of speech and gesture rather than writing, and as Tchitcherine helps introduce the New Turkic Alphabet, he also introduces complex new systems of authority. Mendelson (ibid.: 169) sees in this a “tragic realization . . . at the ideological center as well as on the stylistic surface of the book”: like the Kirghiz shamans, whose magic becomes political with the introduction of the new alphabet, Pynchon “must use language that is, unavoidably, a system shaped by the very powers and orders that it hopes to reveal.”

The genre's encyclopedic ambitions motivate its features in other ways as well. *Gravity's Rainbow* offers extensive accounts not only of social organization but also of science and art: it delves into "ballistics, chemistry, and mathematics" and film and opera (ibid.: 164). These books also "metastasize the monstrosity of their own scale by including giants or gigantism," as with Pynchon's "titans under the earth" and the angel towering over Lübeck (ibid.).

Mendelson also relates genre functions to conditions of production and reception. Encyclopedic writers begin from an outsider position (ibid.: 172), and their narratives originate "in moments of . . . cultural distress" (ibid.: 174) but later define national identity and even redefine what it means to be human (ibid.: 178). If earlier encyclopedic narratives court or achieve illegality because of their (initially) outsider view of their cultures, the West's wide toleration makes this unlikely now (ibid.: 172–73). But Pynchon expresses cultural dissent by his "elusive near-anonymity," so "alien to our literary culture," and *Gravity's Rainbow* drastically violates what remains of literary and social decorum with "stomach-churning pages" of Slothrop's trip-down-the-toilet nightmare, Brigadier Pudding's coprophilia, Mexico and Bodine's "disruption of officialdom at the dinner table" with revolting jokes, and Mexico's "urinary dissolution" of a meeting of the powerful (ibid.: 173). Mendelson uses Bakhtin's ideas to argue that these violations are re-creative as well as destructive. Pynchon's focus on the "postwar proliferation of new systems and structures," made possible by "the collapse of social structures that have grown obsolete," achieves, unlike earlier encyclopedists, a scope implying "a new international culture, created by the technologies of instant communication and the economy of world markets" (ibid.: 165). *Gravity's Rainbow* also moves beyond the representation of human identity by the last major encyclopedist, James Joyce. The book "provides an encyclopedic presentation of the world from a perspective that permits inclusion of fields of data and realms of experience that Joyce's perspective excludes" (ibid.: 179). Pynchon's characters do not live in their interior worlds, as Joyce's do, but "*in their work* and in their relations to large social and economic systems" (ibid.: 179). Yet the book "insists that we are not determined, as the inanimate rocket is determined, unless, paradoxically, we *choose* to be" (ibid.: 185). Roger Mexico and the Counterforce learn something of the world processes shaping their lives but in the end are "unable or unwilling to do very much about it" (ibid.: 189), and Slothrop loses all relation to the world (ibid.: 191), but the reader gains some of the knowledge needed to "act freely outside the world of writing" (ibid.: 192).

3.2. *Kharpertian: "Menippean Satire"*

Kharpertian (1985: 3), like Mendelson, notes the value of categorization for interpretation: "The problem of genre is . . . more than trivial," because "it is . . . one thing to read Pynchon's fictions as 'novels' . . . it is quite another to read them as 'satires.'" Critics "have largely avoided or mistaken" Pynchon's genre, "and without a sound generic premise, the resultant interpretive and analytical commentary can be judged only as problematic" (Kharpertian 1990: 20). Kharpertian (1985: 3) concedes that "Pynchon has created such polymorphous fictions that a unitary generic identification would seem to be an exercise in Procrustean folly." Yet he goes on to describe Pynchon's fictions as Menippean satires and Pynchon as, first and foremost, a satirist. His study "serves to construct the generic model that informs Pynchon's fiction and employs that model as the organizing principle of its textual readings" (Kharpertian 1990: 13). Thus the model aims to reflect both the writer's creative processes and the reader's interpretive ones.

This aim leads Kharpertian (*ibid.*: 14–15, 22–24) to attend more closely to Pynchon criticism than does Mendelson, focusing on genre studies (including Mendelson's). Menippean satire differs functionally from the novel, even when sharing its form. Here, fantasy "does not signify a literal, referential, or existential 'fact'" but releases "satire's aggressive impulses as well as providing a form for its realization" (*ibid.*: 109–10). Other genre categorizations fail to take adequate account of Pynchon's varieties of parody (*ibid.*: 22–23). Unlike Mendelson, Kharpertian is dealing with a well-known genre (satire) and a subgenre (Menippean satire) moderately well known among experts—though unfamiliar to ordinary readers. He therefore proceeds to review some critical analyses of these categories (*ibid.*: 24–42), critiquing, boiling down, and synthesizing material to develop a folk theory ("model") of Menippean satire, which he then applies to Pynchon's texts as a basis for his detailed reading.

Kharpertian begins with a partial prototype of Menippean satire (that is, again, a summary representation of form and function) and a list of its (authorial) exemplars: "Its structure is loose, mixing seriocomic prose and verse, and its principal emphasis is on the forms of variety" (*ibid.*) In European literature, the major practitioners are "its originator Menippus, Varro, Seneca, Petronius, Lucian, Apuleius, Boethius, Erasmus, Rabelais, Burton, Walton, Swift, Voltaire, Sterne, Landor, Peacock, and Carroll; in American literature, Melville, West, Gaddis, Vonnegut, and Barth use the form in differing degrees" (*ibid.*: 13). This list helps characterize the subgenre, but Kharpertian does not examine any authors other than Pynchon.

His further discussion of the subject begins with a somewhat more

specific prototype for the original exemplars: “Originated by the Cynic Menippus . . . these satires were written primarily in prose with verse interludes and were used to ridicule philosophical opponents. . . . Varro introduced Menippean satire into Latin and wrote ‘narratives of fantastic adventure told in the first person’” (ibid.: 29). The main features ascribed to the genre by scholars of classical literature are “seriocomic . . . prose and verse, extensive parodies, popular proverbs and speech, encyclopedism, fantastic narratives, and epideictic variety” (ibid.). Eugene Kirk’s (1980) description of (classical and Renaissance) Menippean satire’s “style, structure, elements, and theme” is also in part a feature list but has aspects of prototype and theory representations. For Kirk, the “chief mark” of the genre’s style was “unconventional diction,” and in “outward structure” it was “a medley,” usually of “alternating prose and verse, sometimes a jumble of flagrantly digressive narrative.” Its “topical elements included outlandish fictions . . . and extreme distortions of argument,” and its theme bore on “right learning or right belief” (Kharpertian 1990: 29).

Kharpertian then turns to his main concern, namely, folk-theoretical aspects of the genre category, involving the formal and functional relations among the parts. He focuses on the relationship between satire and Menippean satire and how to define them. As all definitions of satire “center irreducibly” on form, function, or some mixture of the two, he concludes that “an inclusive formal *and* functional method is desirable” (ibid.: 32). By an “egregious error,” many definitions “limit satire to some form of attack while downplaying or ignoring” the genre’s “carnavalesque variety” (ibid.: 33). Attack is evident in short forms (e.g., invective, epigram, lampoon), but even early verse satire displays variety, and “the Menippean-Varronian form expands that variety,” thus suggesting an inversion of historical hierarchy. For the purpose of model construction, that is, one may regard “the Menippean form as central and prototypical and ‘satire,’ in its more limited, conventional sense of verse attack, as marginal and derivative” (ibid.). For us, this reordering of the priority of features usual in definitions of satire—so as to place variety above attack—is the most interesting aspect of Kharpertian’s approach.¹⁸

18. Kharpertian made this point first in his article on Pynchon’s *V*. He explained the text’s lack of the satirist’s typical angry tone (a main feature of satire) by emphasizing other features of the “common definition” of satire (Kharpertian 1985: 11). He argued that the term *satire* also refers to form and that, in the “Menippean” subgenre, the priority of features is reversed: parodic forms are “the genre’s signature,” and the attacking tone is “relegated to a secondary role and function” (ibid.: 12). In his book, he discusses the relation of anger to attack, satire, and Menippean satire (Kharpertian 1990: 39), and he considers the anger-attack-satire-Menippean-satire nexus in relation to Pynchon’s *V*. (ibid.: 42, 58–59) and *Gravity’s Rainbow* (ibid.: 42, 109, 156n17).

From his survey of satire theory, Kharpertian (ibid.: 13) derives four essential conventions: “two formal conventions, attack and variety, and two functional conventions, fertility and delight.” They operate together in Menippean satire:

The attack, rhetorically presented explicitly or implicitly in narration and dialogue, challenges norms as sterile; the variety of parody, comedy, and fantasy not only relieves the potentially oppressive negativism of the attack but also further destabilizes norms by its diffusion of the attack throughout its forms; fertility or the renewal of perception is achieved by the reader’s recognition of the text’s form as metaphor; and the reader’s . . . delight is a function of the variety of forms intrinsic to the genre. (Ibid.: 41–42)

The “text’s form as metaphor” means that the genre opposes to common-sense reductions of experience its multiplicity of parodic, comic, and fantastic visions: this difference “constitutes a metaphor” (ibid.: 40).

For Kharpertian (ibid.: 108–9), *Gravity’s Rainbow* extends Menippean satire: “The critical exposure of official cultural institutions and demystification of power; the focus on the ugly, the painful, and the ridiculous; the attention to carnality, scatology, and consumption; the caricatures’ paranoid obsessions . . . the seriocomic prose and verse; the popular diction, proverbs, and culture; the multiple parodies; and, finally, the epideictic variety of the comic and the fantastic represent an encyclopedic extension of the genre’s possibilities.” Kharpertian’s theory of the genre links aspects of form and of function or theme in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Broadly speaking, the book satirically attacks “Western man’s futile attempt to master death by rationalization,” as manifested in various official institutions: philosophy, science, art, history, politics, economics, psychology, and sociology, all fall under the “mock erudition of . . . parodistic encyclopedism” (ibid.: 117, 109). On the other hand, the book “endorses the possibility of redemption in the here and now, and . . . counters man’s labyrinthine rationalizations with radical and fantastic alternatives” (ibid.: 139).

Kharpertian analyzes point by point how the genre’s conventions manifest themselves in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. For example, the “formal convention of carnivalesque variety appears as comedy and fantasy juxtaposed with extensive parody,” and the comic appears in “paronomasia and farce” (ibid.: 134). Like the paronomasia so common in the punning names, “episodes of farce . . . serve both to entertain and to provide textual significance” (ibid.: 135). The fantastic takes the form of “the supernatural and the grotesque”—“Spiritualism, witchcraft, animism, heresies, and fantasies”—and such irrationalisms, created in part by the Counterforce, make “an alternative to systems of rationalized thought” (ibid.: 136). Rational-

ization “produces the satire’s vision of the grotesque” in many examples: “Pointsman’s obsession with Slothrop, Tchitcherine’s obsession with finding and killing his black half brother Enzian, Brigadier Pudding’s scatophagy, Weissmann’s sadism and pederasty, Gottfried’s masochism, Major Marvy’s racism, and, of course, circumambient rocket fetishism” (ibid.). In one of the dominant structural parodies, the “failure of Slothrop’s quest is the irresolution of a parodied quest romance,” and the “dissipation of both protagonist and plot” parodies “conventional conclusiveness and . . . determinate significance” more generally (ibid.: 137). Yet besides the dominant attacks on the sterile, *Gravity's Rainbow* contains affirmations of the fertile, including Tantivy as Slothrop’s friend, Mexico’s affair with Jessica, and Slothrop’s belief in his young lover Bianca Erdmann (ibid.: 129).

3.3. Booker: “Novel”

Booker (1987: 61) is not sanguine, like the others, about the value of genre criticism, reducing it to “the comfort to be found in categorization.” He does say that genre categorization makes a difference: relaxing “the expectations associated with the novel as a genre . . . would result in a weakening of the effect of the book” (ibid.: 66). Though widely regarded as an inadequate term, “novel” is the name used most often and naturally for Pynchon’s books, and Booker backs it up. He draws on major novel theorists, Georg Lukács and Bakhtin, to argue that “*GR* adheres in an exemplary way to the truly fundamental characteristics that make a work a novel, and . . . its deviations from less fundamental conventions . . . only serve to make it all the more effective as an example of the novel form” (ibid.: 62).

Booker connects *Gravity's Rainbow* with other exemplars of texts regarded as generically indeterminate or mixed by T. S. Eliot (“The Waste Land”), Melville (*Moby-Dick*), Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Alain Robbe-Grillet (ibid.: 61). For example, much of the reaction to *Moby-Dick* included “puzzled attempts to classify it”—one reviewer was “at a loss to determine in what category of works of amusement to place it” though certain it was “neither a novel nor a romance” (ibid.). For this reader, the genre is indeterminate. Other reviewers were “content to announce it as the beginning of a new genre all its own” and offered labels like “‘Whaliad,’ and a ‘prose epic’” (ibid.). These names suggest a mixed genre. For Booker, comparable efforts to improve on the awkwardly fitting designation of *Gravity's Rainbow* as “novel” (including Menippean satire and encyclopedic narrative) are “insightful, useful, and accurate” but in no way rule it out of the “novel” category. Rather, such work “simply helps to define exactly what kind of

a novel *GR* might be and therefore to inform the reading of the book in useful (but not totalizing) ways" (ibid.: 64).

Booker derives from Lukács a prototype for the novel that combines plot and theme: the novel presents the "'transcendental homelessness' of the questing hero in an alien world," "the story of the soul that . . . seeks adventures in order to . . . find its own essence" (quoted in ibid.: 62).¹⁹ A key exemplar is *Don Quixote*. Booker tells us that Pynchon's books are full of such seekers (though he does not name them) (ibid.). He then adapts Bakhtin's theory of the novel as a folk theory for the category. Bakhtin defines the novel by "its contemporaneity, . . . contact with everyday life, close connection with extraliterary genres," and its "heteroglossia," which juxtaposes the languages and worldviews of many social groups (ibid.: 63). Against a "single-voiced" realistic tradition, Bakhtin defines a contrasting second "stylistic line of development," which "strives for 'generic, encyclopedic comprehensiveness'" (ibid.).²⁰ Booker cites *Don Quixote* and *Tristram Shandy* as exemplars of this second kind of novel (ibid.).²¹ Pynchon's novels fit Bakhtin's theory even better than they do Lukács's (ibid.: 62–64).

Unfortunately, Booker fails to specify how either conception of the novel matches *Gravity's Rainbow*. Speaking of the "striking" relevance of Bakhtin's approach, especially the concept of the "carnavalesque," to *Gravity's Rainbow*, Booker (ibid.: 63) writes, in parentheses, "just think of Plechazunga." Plechazunga is a legendary Pig-hero, and Slothrop suits up to play Plechazunga in a folk festival, at which he also has further battles with officialdom and amorous adventures. Booker (ibid.: 63–64) then quotes Allon White on how "all of Pynchon's novels 'provide perfect examples of Bakhtin's thesis. The "high" languages of modern America—technology, psychoanalysis, business, administration and military jargon—are "carnivalized" by a set of rampant irreverent, inebriate discourses from low life—from the locker-room, the sewers (in *V.*), the jazz club and cabaret, New York Yiddish, student fraternities and GI slang."

19. Observing that Lukács emphasizes "character and plot," Booker (1987: 62) nonetheless argues that the novel's "essence" is in the above thematic description.

20. The reference to the second-line novel's encyclopedic ambition shows that this genre concept overlaps with both Mendelson's and Kharpertian's genre analyses. Evidently, encyclopedism is important in Menippean satire, in the novel, and in the literary theories of both Frye and Bakhtin. Frye, Bakhtin, and Mendelson draw somewhat different conclusions about the significance of encyclopedism.

21. Booker (1987: 66) closes by quoting Victor Shklovsky's famous remark that "*Tristram Shandy* is the most typical novel in world literature." This is a nice way of putting an important point, but I take it as paradoxical, not literal: that is, *Tristram Shandy* shows most clearly the novel's inherent potential to play with narrative conventions. But in fact, this makes it *less typical* than the majority, which accepts the conventions.

4. Implications for Category and Genre Research

These studies provide valuable information, which helps answer our questions about theories of categories and genres:

1. Information about patterns of argument for particular categorizations and against alternative ones. We find them in efforts to match a complex text with a complex genre, that is, to identify “the” genre of *Gravity's Rainbow*.
2. Information about the role and interplay of factors (exemplars, prototypes, and knowledge) in such reader response and in category structure itself. Critical discussions reveal in genre categories a special role for particular exemplars and for their historical sequence.
3. Information about the role and interplay of category factors in genre mixture. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, such mixture depends on how the genre categories involved were represented in the writer's mind by the various category factors.

4.1. Patterns in Categorical Thinking

The instances of categorical thinking in the above accounts of Pynchon's genres reveal several common features. They all assign functions to categorization. Mendelson and Kharpertian stress the role of decisions about genre in interpretation. Booker, though doubtful about the value of genre criticism, insists on its importance for textual effect.²² Also, they all use exemplars, prototypes, and knowledge factors and use them in analogous ways.

To justify their respective genre classifications, the authors' arguments pursue two broad goals: arguing for the priority of their primary genre and against that of competing genres. To achieve those goals, they make several kinds of moves involving the three category factors. In arguing for their genre, they make all factors converge on it: they generally begin with a prototype, then flesh it out using exemplars and similarities among exemplars, and then move toward an account of their genre that combines history with folk theory. The genre folk theories they offer specify features, how they manifest themselves, and how they function. The main business of the essays is to identify those features in the text.

Yet more striking, there seem also to be patterns for dealing with categorization troubles—when the authors argue against competing categories

22. Kharpertian (1985: 3), like Mendelson, notes the value of categorization for interpretation: “It is . . . one thing to read Pynchon's fictions as ‘novels’ . . . it is quite another to read them as ‘satires.’” Unlike the others, however, Booker (1987: 61) is not sanguine about the value of genre criticism, reducing it to “the comfort to be found in categorization.”

and when something about their own categories does not fit the text. It is fair to say that none of these essays seriously considers alternative genre framings. They may ignore them, as Kharpertian (1985) essentially does. They may treat them merely as prototypes to make it easy to reject them, as Mendelson rejects the “novel” rubric on the basis of a too-simple notion of the novel. Or they may absorb them as subtypes, as when Booker says that other classifications just help show what kind of a novel *Gravity’s Rainbow* is. But only the critic’s preferred genre is treated in terms of theory and history, as something with a complex inner structure and a rich tradition.

Given a complex framework to work with, if some property of the genre does not fit the text, it is simple enough for the critic to restructure categories a little in order to smooth out rough patches. All category factors—exemplars, prototypes, and folk theories, including their features—can be reorganized and revaluated for this purpose. The critic can admit that other genres are involved yet insist that his or hers is first and foremost: Mendelson says encyclopedic narrative goes beyond epic; Kharpertian says Menippean satire shares satire’s two features (attack and variety) but reverses their priority; Booker draws on Bakhtin’s revaluating of the novel’s “two stylistic lines” of monologic realism and comic heteroglossia in order to elevate the latter over the former.

One could examine other cases of disputed categorization to confirm and expand these patterns of argument about categorization (argumentative goals and argumentative moves involving the three category factors). A general lesson for genre theory and criticism is that every genre has all three factors, and if we remember this commonality when using them, it should deter us from trying to frame monsters too glibly and help us see complex texts in terms of contributions from many genres.

4.2. Interplay of Factors: The Role of Exemplars and Sequence in Category Structure

We can also glean from these essays, and find reflected in genre studies more generally, something of what characterizes and distinguishes literary genres as categories: they give a special role to exemplars. I see several specific aspects of this role. Genre exemplars tend to be distinct and memorable and often have an element of originality. Some particular exemplars (generally the most admired ones) tend to be taken as genre prototypes. This is not the case in other kinds of categories: robins may be prototypical birds, but no particular (prototypical) robin is more prototypical than any other. Those admired generic exemplars also have a strong influence in creating other exemplars. That causal influence creates a histori-

cal sequence, which defines a range and a trajectory of structural variation. Finally, all of these facts can enter into genre folk theories and genre prototypes. In short, genre exemplars add an unusual diachronic aspect to the category structure, and the exemplars and their histories also affect the category's synchronic prototype and folk-theory structure. Let us consider these aspects more closely.

It is common for genre categories to have a set of particular exemplars that are recognized as having attained a certain standard of excellence by various measures. These accordingly function as what Lakoff (1987a: 79) calls "paragons": "individual members who represent either an ideal or its opposite" and often inspire emulation in human action (in sciences, sports, etc., as well as in the arts). Lakoff's (ibid.) paragons (e.g., Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Sandy Koufax) are geared toward "institutions like the ten-best and ten-worst lists, the Halls of Fame, Academy Awards, and the Guinness Book of World Records." Unlike these kinds of examples, genre paragons are connected in a definite sequence by a certain order of influence and emulation, and this gives genre categories an essential historical dimension. Because paragons can have a powerful influence on the creation of other exemplars, they help constitute genre categories and define their structures. This influence is both local and global. Local when other writers emulate the text directly; global when the text becomes part of the genre's "canon" and hence part of its overall history and its prototype. The text then continues to be influential indefinitely through direct emulation by later writers and through emulations of the genre prototype.

Thus even though the historical dimension of genres is continually changing (by addition of new works and contestation over old ones), it has a powerful and long-term stability. As an example, *Don Quixote* is a paragon for both Mendelson's encyclopedic narrative and the novel according to Booker (or both of his theorists, Lukács and Bakhtin). It was a founding text (emulated in various ways by Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and many others) for the novelistic genre and continues to be regarded as one of the novel's great achievements and, more specifically, as an influential basis for metafiction and for adaptations in other media.

The set of genre paragons and exemplars that we encounter affects the prototypes we develop (the synchronic structure of categories), because the prototype will embody a range of specification and variation. Regarding each category known to us, we have some detailed knowledge of exemplars and perhaps of their historical interrelation, but genre exemplars are, more than most, variable, individually distinct, and memorable. So I suspect that exemplars help us notice extensive but limited variation. This

variation in turn allows us to perceive many kinds of similarity among exemplars. Our sense of the range of exemplars also helps us notice preferred variations (against a vast range of possible variations).

Bakhtin's distinction between two "stylistic lines" of the novel, cited by Booker, is a good example of these categorical phenomena. The distinction is in some ways a crude one, since many exemplars have elements of both lines (e.g., the novels of Dickens, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gustave Flaubert, and Joyce). But it highlights two main preferred variations in the genre, with the similarities and influences among the members of each line. It is easy to sort many examples according to the distinction (in the early novel, Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson in the first line vs. Cervantes, Fielding, and Sterne in the second), so it may well be part of many readers' prototypes for the novel. Pynchon's books are of course highly distinct, original, and memorable, but they are also clearly in the second line, and in fact (as I will suggest below), some of their Menippean features can be understood as primarily parodic of realistic conventions.

Exemplars are also crucial in defining the diachronic aspect of genre categories. As we have seen, Alastair Fowler bases genre on a history of influence. Cohen (1985: 269, 272) argues that genre identity is determined more by exemplar relations than by folk theories or prototypes: "Any instance of a genre is analyzable as pointing backward to its diachronic ancestry, forward to its alteration of this inheritance," and "more important [than author's or critic's typologies], generic identification would be determined by the works to which it is related." There are complex causal relations between earlier and later exemplars, and knowledge of those relations is part of our knowledge of genre categories. The historical sequence of exemplars affects category structure, because it defines not just the range but also the development of structural variation. This adds to category coherence (later members can be related to earlier ones by intermediate steps), while it also diversifies prototypes (the emulation of paragons creates subgroups for which we can generate further summary representations).

As to *Gravity's Rainbow*, the aspects of Menippean satire visible there can be historically linked to Sterne, Jonathan Swift, and François Rabelais, and their precursors Erasmus and Lucian, via Joyce and Melville, because we can be confident that Pynchon knew the latter two and that the latter two knew the others, even if Pynchon did not. At the same time, Menippean satire has subprototypes in its subcategories of period/region/subgenre. Kirk's *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism* (1980) names various periods and types of Menippean satire, such as "The Paradoxical Encomium in Antiquity" (chapter 3) and "Menippean satire in

the Early Sixteenth Century” (chapter 6). For the former, Lucian is prototypical, and then imitators of Lucian, like Rabelais and Pietro Aretino, become prototypical for the Renaissance version (Kirk 1980: xvii–xix). For the latter, Erasmus was the principal reviver and promoter of the genre for the use of humanists (ibid.: xxii–xxiii). In Ingrid A. R. de Smet’s 1996 study of neo-Latin Menippean satire in the Low Countries and France during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the works of Justus Lipsius (especially his 1581 *Somnium*) are central in reviving the genre and influencing local imitators. This period/place subtype also has different exemplars and prototypes: Lipsius followed Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* and its dream framework for narrative rather than the texts of Lucian and Petronius (which tend to be prototypical Menippean satire for other authors and critics). Similarly, *Gravity's Rainbow* is now also often grouped with more closely contemporary American Menippean texts. As Kharpertian (1990: 13) points out, “In American literature, Melville, West, Gaddis, Vonnegut, and Barth use the form in differing degrees.”

Further, knowledge of the exemplar sequence also enables critics and authors to perceive the nature of originality in relation to a genre category. Critics can see exemplars as “realizing possibilities” in relation to the existing history of a genre, and authors can see “unrealized possibilities” that could be added to such a history. Recall Kharpertian’s (ibid.: 108–9) claim that Pynchon’s Menippean satire achieved “an encyclopedic extension of the genre’s possibilities” and Mendelson’s (1976b: 179) claim that *Gravity's Rainbow* developed a new worldview which stresses the role played in human identity by work and “relations to large social and economic systems.”

We may try to specify the kinds of concepts to which this unusual role for exemplars may apply. Such concepts should be strongly historical, allow for expert knowledge, and be the foci of human interest and value. Other categories in the domain of the arts seem to fit this description, but so too, in some respects, do domains for other kinds of human artifacts, for people, and for societies. (Of course, what kinds of exemplars hold interest and value, and why, is to some degree relative to individuals, groups, times, and places.) Many other kinds of human concepts seem to be centered on prototypes based on experience with commonplace local exemplars, for which it does not matter which particular exemplars we learn and for which there is no historical sequence. Again, think of “bird” and its subtypes. In fact, for many nonliterary genres, like phone bills or billboards, particular exemplars and their histories are inconsequential for most purposes.

4.3. Category Factors in Genre Mixture

Framing means not only categorizing but also making, and I will conclude by considering how writers combine genres to create texts. Genre mixture, as a central aspect of what was referred to above as genre “fluidity” (and a form of intertextuality), is a central issue in genre theory. Many of the articles in the special issues of *PMLA* (Dimock 2007b) and *New Literary History* (Cohen 2003b, 2003c) address it, and this emphasis is anticipated by Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Rosalie Colie (1973), Tzvetan Todorov (1990 [1978]), Derrida (1981), and Fowler (1982), with a much longer history before that (Colie describes the Renaissance debates on genre mixture, for example). The phenomenon invites the lens of Conceptual Blending theory, which is concerned with the variety of ways conceptual schemata connect and interact and with many kinds of creative conceptual mixtures, including complex metaphors; counterfactuals; compound words and phrases; grammatical constructions; imagined figures, scenes, and narratives; theory change; and artistic representations of all kinds (see Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Turner 2009).

In conceptual blends, several “input spaces” project structure into a “blend space,” where new conceptual structure emerges through the interaction of input-space structure. Projection and interaction of structure operate according to specific processes and principles. For example, in the expression “you’re digging your own grave,” the input spaces are the metaphor of failure as death, the scenario of grave digging, and the general idea of self-defeating action. In the blend, someone who acts in such a way as to defeat his or her own goals and actions is digging a grave for himself or herself. The blend connects the metaphor of failure as death with the scenario of grave digging: the digger is preparing a grave for a dead person and therefore preparing for the failure of someone’s action. But the blend also connects this metaphoric scenario with the idea of self-defeating action, so that the digger is digging the grave for himself or herself and thus causing his or her own failure. The blend develops emergent conceptual structure—structure available only in the blend, not in any of the input spaces, which enables new inferences. For example, in the blend grave digging causes death: once the grave is dug, the digger will die. Further, the depth of the grave corresponds to the extent of the problem or defeat: the deeper the grave, the worse the problem. Furthermore, blends can be connected with more specific situations and can be elaborated in creative ways. We can speak of digging one’s financial grave and even of digging oneself out of a financial grave (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 131–34). To offer a more topical example, one related to a crisis in the economy, we could even speak of bailing out a fleet of sinking corporate ships with one hand while

digging ourselves out of the financial graves they have dug for us with the other.

Analyses of examples of blending, then, typically involve specifying the input spaces, the projection processes, and the emergent structure in the blend. Such analysis therefore requires a proper characterization of input spaces based on (what can be inferred about) what the blender knew (whether consciously or not). So if we want to know how genres blend in a text, we need to ask how they are represented in the mind of that creator, such as Pynchon's mind here. To answer this question, it helps to know our three category factors (exemplars, prototypes, and knowledge) and their interrelations. A genre may be known in any combination of factors, and a given feature may be associated with several genres; but we can look at the available evidence to clarify how genres seem to be represented and thus understand better how they can be connected and blended.

To take just one example, consider again the role of Menippean satire in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The text does "fit" the genre well, and the term is effective as a classification: it is more informative than "novel" in that it can evoke rich information about features and how they fit together (as do terms for subgenres of the novel). But there is a problem with this classification. It is doubtful that Pynchon had any mental representation of this genre by name or by theory, nor is it clear that *Gravity's Rainbow* was influenced by the Menippean texts that seem most similar to it. Pynchon never uses the name "Menippean satire" or mentions Bakhtin or Frye, the best-known analysts of the genre. He knew exemplars of the genre, some quite central (*Candide*, *Rasselas*, *Alice in Wonderland*), some mixed (texts by Vladimir Nabokov, Joyce, Melville, possibly William Gaddis, *The Education of Henry Adams*).²³ But was he influenced by Rabelais, Cervantes, and Sterne, the writers who are recognized as bringing the tradition of Menippean satire into the early comic novel (Frye 1971 [1957]: 312–14; Bakhtin 1981: 22–28, on Menippean satire in the novel, and 366–434, on the novel's two stylistic lines)? Oddly, although Frye links these writers to Melville and Joyce and Melville and Joyce are often linked with Pynchon, it seems to me that there is less similarity in the Melville-Joyce-Pynchon nexus than in the Rabelais-Cervantes-Sterne-Pynchon nexus, given the overall sense of extravagant comic fantasy in the latter group. I want to suggest that recog-

23. Charles Hollander (1995–96) notes that in a course with Abrams that Pynchon took while at Cornell, Pynchon wrote a paper (which Abrams later quoted to students) comparing Voltaire's *Candide* with Johnson's *Rasselas*. Both of those books are linked with Menippean satire. As Abrams also reviewed Frye's *Anatomy* around this time, it is possible that Pynchon picked up the idea of the genre from that class (Hollander 2008). Hollander does not give the year Pynchon took the course but says Pynchon graduated from Cornell in 1959.

nizing how generic representation differs—among prototype, exemplar, and theory forms—allows us to understand this apparent conflict between *Gravity's Rainbow's* fit with the Menippean satire prototype and the seeming lack of influence by those Menippean-satirical comic novel exemplars most similar to it.

Our question about the role of Menippean satire in this text might focus on the first few pages of *Gravity's Rainbow*, in which we run into one of the most noticeable Menippean features, often repeated throughout the book: in the middle of an event that is at least quasi-realistic, we find characters “breaking into song.” Clearly, we are not in the world of the typical novel. Mixing verse with prose, known as “prosimetrum,” is a long-standing Menippean convention, going back to the genre’s earliest extant exemplars, including Lucian and Petronius (see Relihan 1993: 13–19).²⁴ This kind of prose-verse mixture also embodies the Menippean features of seriocomedy, generic mixture, and comic fantasy: the sudden outbreak of Hollywood musical-style song and dance is fantastic and comical against the background of the serious novelistic scene from which it departs, yet the song and dance seem to be part of the story world, not just imagined by character or narrator. But we have no reason to think Pynchon knew any exemplars in which prosimetrum is prominent except Lewis Carroll (which is a partial match, because in Carroll’s books the technique is not woven into a novelistic story). So this feature of *Gravity's Rainbow* fits the Menippean prototype but *accidentally*. Far more likely sources for this feature would be Pynchon’s prototypes of popular genres in other media: musical theater, (mock-)opera, radio, television, Hollywood musical, and cartoons—in such exemplars as William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, Spike Jones, Groucho Marx, and others. We know Pynchon was influenced by these sources, and he also mentions taking a course covering surrealist art, which indicates related folk-theoretical knowledge about how artists “combine inside the same frame elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling effects” (Pynchon 1984: xxx–xxxi).

So if we were to attempt a genre-blending analysis of the role of Menippean satire in *Gravity's Rainbow* as a whole, or in some part of it, our characterization of the input spaces should reflect what we know of Pynchon’s influences. That is, the Menippean satire input space would be represented in this analysis not primarily as prototype or knowledge but as certain exemplars (*Candide*, etc.). These exemplars contribute some Menippean

24. Note that Joel C. Relihan (1993: 18) insists that what is essential to Menippean satire is not merely a mixture of prose and verse but that characters actually speak in verse and that the narrative is advanced through verse passages.

features to the text (such as intellectual quests and comic fantasy), but the extempore songs are drawn from other genres and seem meant to parody the prototypical novel: “breaking into song,” with its artificial staginess, at once breaks up two of the novel’s major markers, prose and realism. Depending on what aspect of the text we were analyzing, we might use other input spaces for genres such as the novel, musicals/mock-opera, slapstick films, radio comedy, and surrealist art. For each, we could try to specify exemplars, prototypes, and knowledge.

So considerations about how to develop a genre-blending analysis help us understand something of how genres can overlap and contrast. In this example, the relations of overlap and contrast among prototypes and exemplars of different genres is rather complex. Pynchon produces a text that embodies some features of one genre (Menippean satire) in virtue of some exemplars of that genre known to the author rather than in virtue of the author having knowledge of the genre by name, or by prototype, or by folk theory. *Gravity's Rainbow* embodies other features of this genre due to its exploiting the prototype of a second genre (musical) to parody the prototype of a third genre (novel). In order to analyze generically complex texts—to frame monsters—we therefore have to look carefully at how features, histories of influence, prototypes, and folk theories are interconnected and not just assume genre membership based on the “fit” of some limited set of features.

5. Conclusion

I have tried to sketch some ways category research can join with genre studies. All of these connections might be developed in more detail, but I hope I have conveyed some of the potential I see in reaching across disciplines to work out new approaches to shared questions. A cognitive perspective on genre affords a better view of those monsters that “burst the inclosures of regularity”—partly by looking at how people build and use those enclosures and partly by looking at how they make those monsters.

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Genre theory and family resemblance – revisited *

David Fishelov

In the following discussion I will examine the application of Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance to genre theory. Despite its popularity among literary theorists, there is sometimes a discrepancy between the loose concept of family resemblance, at least in its negative-radical version, and the practical assumptions made about genres. In order to overcome the inadequacies of existing applications of the concept, I will propose two ways in which Wittgenstein's concept can be fruitfully applied to genre theory. First, by using certain working hypotheses in cognitive psychology, based on the concept of family resemblance, I will argue that literary genres are perceived as structured categories, with a 'hard core' consisting of prototypical members. These prototypical members are characterized by the fact that they bear a relatively high degree of resemblance to each other. Second, by focusing on the analogy between the internal structure of literary genres and that of families one can establish a 'genealogical' line of literary genres, i.e., the series of writers who have participated in shaping, reshaping and transmitting the textual heritage established by the 'founding father' of the genre, including the dialectical relationship of 'parents' and 'children' in genre history.

The dominant trend in modern critical theory in attempting to establish a philosophical foundation for a flexible and dynamic approach to literary genres, is to introduce Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance into genre theory. According to this view:

'Representations of a genre may then be regarded as making up a family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having any single feature shared in common by all.' (Fowler 1982: 41)¹

This notion seems, at least *prima facie*, to be a happy medium between the Scylla of closed, rigid concepts of genre, and the Charybdis of denying any

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¹ The 'family resemblance' approach, with different stresses and degrees of sophistication, is advocated by Paul Alpers, Robert C. Elliot, Claudio Guillen, Graham Hough, Uri Margolin, John Reichert (1978), Marie Laure Ryan (1981), and Morris Weitz (1956, 1964, 1977), among others.

generalizations concerning literary genres (e.g., by Croce). Wittgenstein's appealingly loose concept began permeating genre theory during the sixties, and its popularity made Eliseo Vivas refer ironically to the new 'handy' solution to the problem of literary class (Vivas 1968: 101).

I would like to raise the question of whether Wittgenstein's concept, at least according to one of its interpretations, has not become too fashionable, too little scrutinized. Instead of being a *last methodological resort*, it has become the first and immediate refuge in the wake of disappointment with some or other rigid definition composed of a confined list of characteristics.

In the following discussion, I will, first, show that the very transfer of the concept from Wittgenstein's philosophical framework to genre theory involves some shift that may call into question the outcome of the application. More fundamentally, I will argue that there is sometimes a discrepancy between the loose concept of family resemblance and the practical assumptions made about genres, even by the very advocates of the concept. And finally, I will propose two ways in which Wittgenstein's concept can be, after all, fruitfully applied to genre theory.

Instead of presenting a homogeneous description of language, centered around its cognitive function, Wittgenstein proposes a highly pluralistic picture (Wittgenstein 1978: 11–12). In so doing he is opposing some of the logical positivists of his time (Schlick, Carnap and others), as well as the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, namely himself, in an earlier phase of his philosophical development.

In order to illuminate the radically heterogeneous character of language, Wittgenstein introduces the games analogy. This analogy is meant to illustrate the crucial statement that linguistic activities not only differ from each other in various respects, but have, as a set, nothing in common:

'Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.' (1978: 31)

And only then, after explaining and discussing the analogy of games for a while, does Wittgenstein introduce the new analogy that interests us most, the one concerning the family:

'I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblance"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: "games" form a family.' (1978: 32)

Thus the wish to illuminate the nature of language leads Wittgenstein to use the analogy of games, and this, in turn, leads him to the analogy of family, in

order to illustrate the idea of a network of similarities.² Different kinds of language-use are compared to different kinds of games, which in turn are compared to members of a family, who resemble each other only partially. In all cases, the terms 'language', 'game', or 'family' cannot and should not be defined via finite lists of necessary and sufficient conditions, simply because the diverse kinds of phenomena they designate do not have any one feature in common (which is stipulated by the concept of a necessary condition).

An attempt to apply this fundamental statement of Wittgenstein's to the literary field will most likely result in claiming that different kinds of literature (i.e., genres) do not necessarily have anything in common.³ In other words, 'literature', like 'language', and like 'game', may be a term that cannot be defined by a finite list of conditions. Note that there is no claim here about the internal structure (and hence the possibility or the impossibility of attaining a definition) of specific language games, and consequently of genres. One may even claim that the possibility of formulating a definition as far as specific language games are concerned is implicitly assumed rather than denied. Wittgenstein's target is the all-embracing term 'language', not the specific language uses that constitute it.

According to this line of argument, a feasible way to apply Wittgenstein's concepts to the literary field would be as follows: 'language' (denoting the multiplicity of diverse language uses), which is analogous to 'game' (denoting the variety of specific games), should be seen as analogous to 'literature' (referring to a complex of different genres). This, however, is not how literary scholars have applied Wittgenstein's concepts to the literary field. Instead, they have isolated one element – the family – from his network of analogies and, ignoring its function in the entire conceptual set, used it exclusively to establish the analogy frequently found in genre theory: between a 'family' (designating some group of related individuals) and a 'genre' (designating the various texts that are considered to be its members).

While this is a possible reading of Wittgenstein's text, it is by no means the most feasible, nor the most fruitful one. My essential objection to this formulation of the analogy is that whereas rigid, Platonic or Neo-Classical, concepts of genre are justifiably rejected, the alternative presented by the radical version of the family resemblance seems to go too far in implying that genres are totally open and undelineated categories.

If all that is shared by members of a class is a partial network of similarities, how can we explain that we (as a community of speakers and readers) decide to delineate the field of phenomena in the way that we do? In

² One may mention another analogy introduced by Wittgenstein in this context, that of the thread made up of interwoven fibers 'and the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length' (p. 32).

³ Such a view is elaborated by John Reichert in his *Making Sense of Literature* (1977).

other words, why is there a relatively high consensus about the boundary lines between different kinds of language use, or different kinds of literature, if what we have 'objectively' is merely a continuum of loose networks of similarities?

If the concept of a definition consisting of a closed set of necessary and sufficient conditions is inadequate because it is too closed, the extreme alternative, based on a problematic application of Wittgenstein's concept, appears too open. The interesting point is that despite declarations concerning the adoption of Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance in its radical version, some of its advocates find themselves, in their practical criticism, relying implicitly on 'closed' concepts, more closed than they would want to admit.

Morris Weitz is perhaps the critic who has contributed in the most consistent and elaborate manner to the application of Wittgenstein's notion to genre theory.⁴ In a genre, according to Weitz, each work will share only some characteristics with another, and it is virtually impossible to give genre a definition satisfying necessary and sufficient conditions. Thus, whether a text N is a novel is not a factual question

'but a decision as to whether the work under examination is similar in certain respects to other works, already called "novels," and consequently warrants the extension of the concept to cover the new case.' (Weitz 1956: 32)

This elusive situation where every new work re-shapes and re-shuffles the entire defining system, and consequently blocks the establishment of a definition, derives from the innovative nature of art. In a later work, Weitz refers to the impossibility of defining tragedy, because 'its use must allow for the ever present possibility of new conditions. It is a simple historical fact that the concept, as we know and use it, has continuously accommodated new cases of tragedy and, more important, the new properties of these new cases' (1977: 103).

Definitions, though, Weitz believes, are not totally impossible in genre discussions. As long as we have 'closed' the domain to which we refer (one specific period in one specific literature), definitions may be attempted, and a definition of Greek tragedy, let us say, is conceivable. But a definition of 'tragedy'? According to Weitz, never. At one point, however, he states:

'they [*Hamlet's* representative critics] are unanimous on all the defining properties of a hero, his suffering and calamity; dramatic conflict involving important values; and the tragic effect. But there is little agreement on the cause of his suffering, and the particular response of the ideal spectator.' (1956: 304)

⁴ First in an article (1956) and later in two books (1964, 1977).

From these formulations one can easily infer that a suffering hero and a 'dramatic conflict involving important values' are (even according to Weitz's reluctant presentation) necessary properties of tragedy set by all the diverse theories that he surveys. Now, these conditions may sound self-evident or trivial, but this is usually the fate of necessary conditions. It is only when one tries to add more substantial conditions that a definition is found to be truly enlightening and informative.⁵

Still, trivial or not, it seems that it is possible to find some necessary conditions for defining a tragedy even according to Weitz's own presentation. And if this is the case, there is no reason to retreat to the much looser concept of family resemblance.

The point that there are some necessary conditions for tragedy may become clearer if we consider, from a different perspective, many disputes among critics about the 'true nature' of tragedy. No critic, for instance, suggests that the tragic hero is a buffoon; or that the tragic action consists of joyful and cheerful events; or that readers (or spectators) can feel no similarity between themselves and the tragic hero while experiencing the tragic effect. In other words, disputes among critics about the 'true nature' of tragedy, vehement and radical as they may be, are ultimately confined to some distinguishable area of human experience and artistic structure. And whereas there is serious debate over the exact lines of demarcation, from a bird's-eye-view these disputes are diminished. In less metaphorical language, one may argue that by raising the level of abstraction one finds that most readers and critics do share some basic assumptions about tragedy. One might remind oneself in this context of the very basis for conceptualization about genres, namely, that 'the definition of a genre works by a process of abstraction' (Rosenmeyer 1969: 3). It is possible, of course, to capitalize on existing disagreements and present them as a conglomeration of incompatible, Babel-like critical approaches, as Weitz does, but I do not think that this would be a very faithful picture of the way genres are in practice written, read, and discussed.

The novel seems to offer, at least at face value, an excellent case for the advocates of the concept of family resemblance. This move by some genre theorists seems natural because the novel, a relative newcomer to the generic repertoire, has always been characterized by its elusiveness and lack of strict conventions.

Morris Weitz, for instance, immediately after introducing Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance and its relevance to the theory of art, turns by way of illustration to the example of the tradition of the novel. When facing new, modernistic works such as Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* or Woolf's *To the*

⁵ For a discussion of the criteria that guide the formulation of definitions, see Irving M. Copi (1978), especially pp. 154–158, and Raziel Abelson (1967), especially pp. 322–323.

Lighthouse, one may ask whether the term 'novel' can be applied to them. Weitz argues that formulating the question in this form is misleading:

'what is at stake is no factual analysis concerning necessary and sufficient properties but a decision as to whether the work under examination is similar in certain respects to other works, already called "novels," and consequently warrants the extension of the concept to cover the new case. The new work is narrative, fictional, contains character delineation and dialogue but (say) it has no regular time-sequence in the plot or is interspersed with actual newspaper reports.' (Weitz 1956: 31–32)

The main problem in Weitz's argument here seems to be that instead of demonstrating the point that genuine genre definitions face problems whenever new, innovative, works are produced, it shows us only that *unrealistically restrictive and rigid definitions* may face many problems in trying to accommodate new works. After all, who would seriously stipulate a 'regular time sequence in the plot' as part of a definition of the novel? Such a postulation might automatically exclude the bulk of the genre. Weitz's claims might have gained much more credibility had he offered more realistic criteria, actually used in genuine theories of the novel.

Robert Elliot follows the basic argument presented by Weitz and applies it to satire, claiming that satire is too evasive a genre to be defined in the traditional way, and that 'there are no properties common to all the uses' (1962: 22). Yet, after pronouncing this Wittgensteinian principle in such unequivocal terms, Elliot adds one sentence that in my view undermines his whole argument:

'or, if I could find an essential property, it could be so general as to be useless for purposes of definition: "All satire attacks something," for example.' (p. 22)

This small addition, qualified and hesitant as it is, calls into question the concept of family resemblance in its truly radical interpretation. Because what is this condition that 'all satire attacks something' but a classical example of a *necessary condition* in a definition? ⁶

Note that I can heartily agree with Elliot that it is virtually impossible to supply a simple definition that will easily apply to all instances of satire. But this conviction need not dictate an exuberant embrace of the family resemblance solution. There may be some viable position in between. Elliot himself, by pointing to the invective nature of satire, indirectly indicates such an alternative.

According to such an alternative view, one could speak of a necessary condition that applies to all satire, plus an additional cluster of characteristics

⁶ For another example of the explicit pronouncement of the family resemblance approach, together with a tacit, almost unconscious, understanding that some necessary conditions (in the form of 'minimal constraints') can be formulated after all, see: Uri Margolin (1973: 141).

which is dynamic and variable. These additional traits may change (not all of them at the same time) from one literary period to another, from one literature to another, and from one writer to another – or, even more commonly, they may switch their relative status in the hierarchy that defines the genre. This one necessary condition, the one ‘fiber’ that runs throughout the whole thread (to use Wittgenstein’s analogy, but in an opposite way), may also vary in its relative standing and should not necessarily be conceived as most important or central at all times (in satire, the invective may be sharp and central in Juvenal, subtle and sometimes marginal in Horace). In addition to the example of satire discussed above, Elliot takes a cue from Weitz in citing the novel as a prime example for the application of the concept of family resemblance. But before re-formulating Weitz’s argument concerning the novel, Elliot makes a revealing remark:

‘Consider the novel for a moment (and consider the definition that E.M. Forster adopts, with comic despair, from M. Abel Chevalley: the novel is “une fiction en prose d’une certaine étendue.” Beyond this we cannot go, says Forster).’ (Elliot 1962: 22)

Again, as in his discussion of satire (and Weitz’s discussion of tragedy), Elliot is actually offering – in an implied and unconscious move – a necessary condition for the definition of the novel, despite the fact that according to the family resemblance concept there cannot be a necessary condition. The formulation that Elliot is quoting, in fact, might even be recast into three necessary conditions: (1) a novel has to be a work of fiction (as opposed, say, to history or to philosophy); (2) it should be written in prose (as opposed to verse); ⁷ (3) a novel should be of considerable length (as opposed to a short story or a novella).

Stated in this way, Forster’s definition seems less a function of ‘comic despair’ and more a cautious and flexible formulation of certain basic, necessary features of the genre. It is also possible to add to these three elements a fourth one: (4) A novel should be a narrative text (as opposed to merely a description of a landscape, or a logical argument).

These conditions cannot be dismissed as mere truisms, because they do have some informative value. To be sure, one should neither see in these four conditions necessary and sufficient conditions for defining the novel (there may be texts which fulfill the four requirements and still will not be considered novels), nor confuse these conditions with a comprehensive theory of the

⁷ There may be a few exceptions to this condition (e.g., the classical *Eugene Onegin* of Pushkin, or contemporary Seth’s *The Golden Gate*). In the face of such counterexamples I can claim that, as far as the overwhelming majority of novels is concerned, the condition still applies, and that the novel in verse is a ‘marked’ case. It is also evident that the *prototypical members* of the category of novel are written in prose. For an elaboration of this concept of prototypical members of a category see below.

novel. Any serious theory of the novel should elaborate the exact meaning of each of the terms used in the above formulation (how, for instance, to define 'fiction' or 'narrative'). Furthermore, a theory of the novel would examine the way the above four elements are related to one other and to other relevant levels of the novelistic text (e.g., point of view, expository modes). But the crucial fact is that most such theories will accept the above four characteristics as their point of departure. Thus even with the novel, apparently the most elusive and protean of literary forms, the concept of family resemblance is found to be too open.

Instead of once and for all solving the conceptual problems involved in genre theory, advocates of the family resemblance approach tend to create new problems and inconsistencies. These problems seem to stem from their radical, reductive, interpretations of Wittgenstein's concept. Instead of demonstrating the rich network of relations that *does exist* between members of a 'literary family', they have chosen to isolate the 'negative' aspect of the family resemblance, namely, the statement that there is no single trait shared by all members. This reductive-radical commitment has led them to unrealistic and unconvincing claims about specific genres as well as to certain inconsistencies in argumentation.

If we abandon this radical-negative emphasis and embrace a more 'positive' reading of Wittgenstein's concept, some fruitful implications for genre theory may arise. Weitz himself, in a comprehensive defense of the use of 'open concepts' in various areas of the human experience, points to different models of definition that are not based on a closed set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but can still show different degrees of 'openness':

'The investigation of the logical grammar of certain concepts may reveal concepts with no necessary, no sufficient, and no disjunctive set of sufficient criteria; or concepts with a necessary criterion but no necessary and sufficient set of criteria; or concepts with no definitive set as well as no undebatable necessary criteria.' (1977: 34).

I do not think one has to embrace, in the field of genre theory, the most negative-radical model according to which the concept of tragedy, for instance, is open 'in the precise sense that it has no necessary and sufficient conditions but only a disjunctive set of nonnecessary, nonsufficient conditions' and is 'perennially flexible as well as perennially debatable' (1977: 103). Even if we grant that there is no necessary condition shared by all tragedies, I think Weitz's own description suggests that the open concept of a disjunctive set of sufficient conditions may be applied to the history of tragedy, every historical phase having its special characteristics. Further, when we think of the heterogeneous field of the literary genres ranging from genres mainly characterized by formal structure (e.g., the sonnet), to more thematic-oriented genres (e.g., historical novel), there is no reason to assume that the family resemblance

approach, especially not in its negative-radical version, is appropriate for all, or for most of the literary genres. Admitting that a close, real, definition is not available does not mean that we are left with a relativistic position. Even in using loose concepts, there are some things that are not vague and loose, as Max Black has argued: 'In using a loose concept, I must know that there are instances that are indisputably "clear" and must be able to recognize such cases; and I must also be able to recognize "border line cases" ' (Black 1970: 12). There are, in short, some more fruitful and positive methodological positions, some of which are indicated in Weitz's own formulations (or his actual analyses), that also take into account the more stable aspect(s) of our 'open' and 'loose' concepts.

Such a positive model, based on the concept of family resemblance, has been developed by Eleanor Rosch in the field of cognitive psychology for studies in the internal structure of categories.⁸ Although Rosch's research is primarily concerned with common categories of natural language, I would like to suggest that some of its principles are also applicable to the more complex area of literary genres. Rosch's research project offers a powerful model, combining the concept of family resemblance with that of a prototype. Her basic hypothesis is that

'members of a category come to be viewed as prototypical of the category as a whole in proportion to the extent to which they bear a family resemblance to (have attributes which overlap those of) other members of the category. Conversely, items viewed as most prototypical of one category will be those with least family resemblance to or membership in other categories.' (Rosch 1975: 575)

The intriguing implications of these principles to genre theory seem almost inescapable. Rosch's basic hypothesis seems valid and illuminating in the field of literary genres as in the field of common natural language categories. One major implication of these principles is that literary genres are perceived neither as rigid and unified categories, nor as a conglomeration of literary texts, randomly collected, sharing merely a loose network of similarities. Rather, literary genres are perceived as structured categories, with a 'hard core' consisting of *prototypical members*.⁹ These prototypical members are characterized by the fact that they bear a relatively high degree of resemblance to each other. Marie Laure Ryan, in her highly illuminating presentation of the goals and perspectives in genre theory, also emphasizes the important role of 'typical' and 'archetypical' members of genres in constituting our notion of

⁸ See Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis (1975), and Eleanor Rosch (1978).

⁹ Sometimes there may be only one prototypical member 'par excellence', but that should not necessarily lead to E.D. Hirsch's claim that 'a type can be *entirely* represented in a single instance' (1967: 50). The emphasis, indicating my disagreement, is mine.

a genre within the framework of the family resemblance approach:

'there would be highly typical and less typical members of every genre ... This approach invites us to think of genres as clubs imposing a certain number of conditions for membership, but tolerating as quasi-members those individuals who can fulfill only some of the requirements, and who do not seem to fit into any other club.' (Ryan 1981: 118)

Thus, when we wish to describe tragedy, we should neither adopt the rigid criterial approach, nor deny the existence of a structured 'hard core' in the 'literary category', i.e., the genre, of tragedy. Instead, in order to understand the way 'tragedy' functions in the literary system, we should look for the prototypical members of the genre, i.e., for those texts considered to be the most representative tragedies. In trying to characterize 'tragedy', the most fruitful approach is to focus on works such as *Oedipus Rex*, *King Lear*, and *Phèdre*, because they are perceived as prototypical tragedies. And one of the reasons why they are deemed typical is because they share many traits with each other (e.g., a tragic hero with a *hamartia*, a structured plot that includes a relatively distinct *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, etc.). The term 'many' is used in this context, of course, in a relative manner: *Oedipus Rex* and *King Lear* have more thematic and structural traits in common than either (or the two of them) might share with works such as Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, although it is possible to read the latter as a tragedy, as Stanislavsky did in his interpretation of the play.¹⁰

By focusing on the prototypical cases of a literary genre, we should not, of course, overlook or underestimate those texts that are not prototypical of that particular generic tradition. The 'marginality' of these texts could, sometimes, be hailed as the source of an aesthetic merit. What is perceived as a fault from a classicist point of view may be described as an advantage when judged by modernist standards. But my major concern is neither to condemn those 'marginal' cases nor to praise them. Rather, I simply wish to argue, in a purely descriptive manner, that in our perception of generic categories the prototypical cases play a major role. Furthermore, the 'prototypical-hypothesis' enables genre theory to break the conceptual deadlock implied by the approach despairing of any generalizations on literary genres that permeates modern criticism. This hypothesis opens up new *empirical projects for examining the actual ways* in which the literary community perceives and uses generic categories, or, as Marie Laure Ryan says: 'to lay out the implicit knowledge of the users of genres' (Ryan 1981: 112).¹¹ The implicit knowledge involved in

¹⁰ For an interesting analysis of the essential schema of tragedy that focuses on prototypical tragedies but at the same time pays due attention to marginal and questionable cases, see Dorothea Krook (1969).

¹¹ For some fruitful empirical research on generic categories, see the special issue of *Poetics* on 'media genres' edited by Schmidt (1987), and the essay by Schuur and Seegers (1989) on the ways of classification applied by library users in practice.

generic categories can be described also as having a coordinative epistemic and social role, especially when we are dealing with popular and media genres, as Schmidt, for instance, stresses in his research on media genres (1987). The main point, however, is that generic categories, both literary and those of the media, are part of a community's shared linguistic and cultural knowledge.

If dictionaries represent a great part of the tacit linguistic knowledge of a community, including its knowledge of concepts of literary genres, it is instructive to see that many definitions of generic terms mention prototypical examples, or the names of authors of prototypical works. When 'satire' (or 'satirical') is defined and illustrated in the *Random House College Dictionary*, Swift's name is adduced (p. 1171); Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* gives Pope (p. 513); *Petit Larousse* refers to Horace, Juvenal, and Boileau (p. 946). It is this *combination* of certain typical traits with prototypical members of the generic category that constitutes the core of our generic concept. Dictionaries of common linguistic usage are, in that respect, a good starting point for revealing the 'implicit knowledge of users of genres'. Next, we can move to dictionaries and glossaries of literary terms in which there is more room for elaboration. Here the principle of combining a set of descriptive traits with reference to prototypical works is even more central and conspicuous.¹² The list and variety of prototypical works cited will, of course, increase, but without shaking the 'hard core' of the generic concept. Moving to the area of dictionaries of literary terms brings us also closer to those who participate more actively in shaping our concepts of literary genres, namely, critics, writers, scholars, teachers, students of literature, and other active members of the literary community (e.g., publishers, bookshops, etc.). I would like to stress that the critic's basic function in such dictionaries is mainly to pronounce and make explicit the implicit knowledge of the community of users of genres. He may sometimes also perform a more fundamental role by trying to modify the 'hard core' of the generic concept, by adding to that core a work not usually considered a prototypical member of the genre. These attempts, however, are not very frequent, and not always successful. Critics may perform an important constitutive role in assigning literary status to verbal artifacts (Van Rees 1989), but within a given literary community of genre users, their role in describing generic categories is not so much constitutive as it is explicatory. If, however, critics are not describing genres, but are rather engaged in making value judgements, with or without reference to generic terms (e.g., this is a superb detective novel), their activity can be best described as regulative rather than constitutive (Van Rees 1989: 187–197).

In addition to the family-resemblance-prototype assumption, there may be another fruitful application of the concept of family resemblance with regard

¹² See, for instance, the definition of 'satire' in Abrams's *Glossary* and Shipley's *Dictionary of World Literature*.

to literary genres. Wittgenstein's concept was evoked by Paul Alpers in a very interesting discussion of the literary tradition of the pastoral. The significant point in Alpers' article is his constant emphasis on a tacit 'dialogue' between writers of pastoral throughout history. Representations of shepherds' lives, and the way they are made representative of human life in general, are constantly modified. Thus every pastoral can be regarded as 'an interpretation or development or use of the representative anecdote of shepherds' lives' (Alpers 1982: 457). In other words, we have a constant and intimate intertextual relationship between different phases of the genre. Some writers may take the previous phase as an admired model, some as a challenge, but in all cases we will have some kind of textual 'ancestry'. This brings us back to Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance. Maurice Mandelbaum, in a critical account of Wittgenstein's concept, points to the fact that in hailing the 'openness' of the concept of family, Wittgenstein ignored one crucial 'stable' element, namely that members of a family 'are related through a common ancestry' (1965: 221).

Thus the very vehicle supposed to be the emblem of extremely loose relations between its members – the family – has a far stronger 'glue' that binds its parts: common ancestry. This trait, unlike the visible physiognomic features which create only an elusive network of similarities, is shared by all members of the family.¹³ As with the *common ancestral bond* that ties families, so with games; the common feature should not necessarily be sought on the apparent, but rather on some underlying level: an enjoyable activity, governed by constitutive rules, that has no material products.¹⁴

In any event, it is possible to see the fruitful implications of the concept of 'common ancestry' for the theory of literary genres. Alpers's remark about the 'line of descent' of the pastoral may be viewed as an implicit way of pointing to a 'common ancestor' shared by all pastorals, despite the absence of any apparent literary conventions shared by all pastoral works. The intertextual relationships among diverse writers can be traced back to the 'founding father' of pastoral – Theocritus. Virgil, Theocritus' 'heir', represents the first significant bifurcation of the genre into the idyllic and the more 'realistic' version of pastoral, which then evolved and branched out further during the Renaissance

¹³ Weitz, in an attempt to defend Wittgenstein's position, proposes a counterargument according to which Mandelbaum does not succeed in showing that Wittgenstein's doctrine of family resemblance is incoherent (1970: 56–57). I think, however, that Mandelbaum's argument is intended to show that Wittgenstein's doctrine is one-sided and incomplete, not that it is necessarily incoherent.

¹⁴ For defining games as activity governed by constitutive rules, see John Searle (1969). I add the elements of enjoyment and of no material products to distinguish games from other institutional activities governed by constitutive rules, but which are not necessarily enjoyable and which have material products (e.g., economic institutions). For some important observations and distinctions on the concepts of institutional fact, constitutive and regulative rules and their applicability to the literary field, see Van Rees (1989: 190–193).

and later through Romanticism. Every writer in this line carries on the *textual heritage* of the genre, or participates in its 'genetic pool' (if one is using a biological metaphor).

Further, generic 'line of descent' often tends to be structured around the figures of either a 'founding father' or even more frequently two 'parental' figures, representing certain basic generic options and directions: Theocritus and Virgil in pastoral, Homer and Virgil in epic poetry, Aristophanes and Plautus in comedy; Horace and Juvenal in satire, Petrarch and Shakespeare in the sonnet, etc. The 'line of descent' tends then to display further bifurcation, but in most cases it is not too difficult to 'trace' later, even modern, manifestations back to the primal figures.

Thus, focusing solely on the conspicuous textual features of a literary genre may sometimes lead a theorist to despair of finding any common specific features. This despair is unjustified for two reasons. First, as we have seen, many genres, even the most elusive ones, usually share at least one fundamental trait. This trait may sometimes be general or vague, but it still may provide us with vital information about the scope and possibilities of the genre.¹⁵ Second, in addition to these fundamental characteristics, every writer who chooses to write in a generic framework (and most writers do work in some generic framework, even if reluctantly) participates in the process of textual heritage transmitted from the 'founding father', or the 'parental' figures onward. In order to understand and to evaluate the writer's work, we are expected to take into account the generic background against which he operates. It follows also that we can establish a 'genealogical' line, i.e., the series of writers who have participated in shaping, reshaping and transmitting the textual heritage established by the 'founding father' of the genre, including the dialectical relationship of 'parents' and 'children' in genre history.¹⁶

What is proposed here is a picture of the 'genre family' consisting of individual writers who have contributed to the generic tradition. And as a family tree maps for us the diverse lines of descent of a family (to use Alpers's image), so does the 'family tree' of a genre.

The determination of whether an individual is or is not part of a given family is a function of pedigree and of legal and cultural norms; similarly, the decision as to whether the works of a particular writer do or do not belong to a given genre is a function of direct influence and of the way that literary genres are perceived and divided in a specific period and literature. Demonstrating that a specific writer was influenced by a particular generic tradition is not enough. One should also show that this generic tradition is recognized as such

¹⁵ Bakhtin and Medvedev refer to such fundamental characteristics when they say that 'every genre has its own orientation in life, with reference to its events, problems, etc.' (1985: 131).

¹⁶ Some of these complex 'parent-child' relationships are explored, though from a different perspective, in Harold Bloom (1973).

by the reading public, as part of its 'horizon of expectations'. This latter aspect is concerned with the institutional nature of literature as a cultural activity. In order to determine whether a given work is perceived against a specific generic tradition by the reading public, one has to check various 'clues' such as the work's title, the author's other works and reputation. In addition, there are some very important literary-institutional factors that are involved in determining the generic 'horizon of expectation' of the literary community: the work's publisher, how it is referred to by critics, presented by salespersons, and, when it becomes part of a curriculum, the way it is grouped with other works.¹⁷

Showing an 'influence' in and of itself is not enough. On the other hand, trying to 'force' the works of a writer into a generic schema without being able to demonstrate any specific line of influence (no matter how intricate) may sometimes result in arbitrary groupings of texts.¹⁸ Being recognized as part of a genre is thus a function of a dialectical relationship between individual influence and reception by a literary community. This becomes especially striking when a new genre tries to establish itself as part of the audience's 'generic worldview'. It took some time before the novel, for example, could be recognized by readers as an autonomous literary genre rather than as Aristotle's camel, a creature that does not fit into the existing generic schemata ('a comic epic in prose').

To conclude my discussion, I want to stress that in criticizing some hasty uses of the family resemblance concept I do not want to deny that it has had a positive role in modern genre theory. It has been a vital force of liberation from certain rigid and inflexible concepts of genre. After granting this important liberating function, however, one should seek a more balanced approach to the issue of describing literary genres. Such a desired model will neither confine itself to a closed set of necessary and sufficient conditions, nor shun the attempt to formulate certain salient characteristics that can be easily found in the prototypical members of a generic category.

Moreover, as we have seen, there may be other aspects of the analogy – related to the idea of a generic heritage passing from 'parents' to 'children' –

¹⁷ The term 'horizon of expectation' is borrowed, of course, from Jauss (1982). The important institutional aspects of the literary activity, especially those performed by the critic, are discussed in Van Rees (1989).

¹⁸ The term 'influence' that I use in referring to generic transmission has been discredited in literary theory, because it may lead to indiscriminate talk of ubiquitous 'influences' and to focusing on the biography of the writer rather than on his work. For an astute criticism of the wishy-washy use of this term in literary history, see the articles of B. Ejxenbaum, J. Tynjanov and the shared articles of Tynjanov and Jakobson in Matejka and Pomorska (1978), especially pp. 59, 76, 79. I think, however, that this term conveys to us the intimate relationships that sometimes exist between the works of two writers especially within a generic tradition, and, when used carefully, should not be dismissed. For a persuasive defence of the concept of 'literary influence' see Guillen (1971: 62).

that seem highly pertinent to genre theory. To explore various implications of this dialectical relationship of 'parents' and 'children', however, goes beyond the scope of the present discussion.

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