CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374
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Volume 18 | (2016) Issue 3 Article 1

Genre Categorization in Contemporary British and US-American Novels

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Recommended Citation

Ceia, Carlos. "Genre Categorization in Contemporary British and US-American Novels." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18.3 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2895>

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
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Volume 18 Issue 3 (September 2016) Article 1

Carlos Ceia,
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<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss3/1>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*** **18.3 (2016)**
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss3/>

Abstract: In his article "Genre Categorization in Contemporary British and US-American Novels" Carlos Ceia discusses a certain type of resistance to genre categorization in many novels in contemporary literature. Many British and US-American contemporary novels show patterns in narrative creativity where novel-writing techniques are sometimes more important than the traditional subject matter driven work of fiction. Ceia reviews experimental/metafictional novels which do not show intent to fulfil an aesthetic role pre-determined in a certain moment in history. Not having this kind of burden before them, many contemporary British and US-American novelists devote their artistic imagination more to the "potential" of the narrative text rather than to the "act" of the work of a specific literary art.

Carlos CEIA

Genre Categorization in Contemporary British and US-American Novels

There are many novels in contemporary British and US-American literature which contain narratives about the theorization of the novel within the novel and resist genre categorization at the same time. Authors of such novels do not assume an authoritative compromise with the historical moment of their writing and tend to escape the traditional patterns of plot narratives. For instance, the labels "romantic novel," "romantic short novel," "romantic novella," "modernist novel," or "postmodernist novel" are critical views or pedagogical forms for the canonization of literary texts deemed necessary to create the notion of "novelism" (see, e.g., Siskin).

I resist the idea of a poetics of genre in the contemporary novel as suggested in Tim Lanzendörfer's 2016 *The Poetics of Genre in the Contemporary Novel*, because it implies that we could determine a set of principles for novel writing and reading. Ever since Aristotle's *Poetics*, in literary theory genre has been used rather informally thus disregarding the element of creativity that lays behind the Western critical tradition in literary studies. The contemporary novel has taught us, precisely, that creativity opens all boundaries to a "fixed" genre or a pre-determined model. Along with the trends based on the novelist's creativity towards pre-established taxonomies and designations, there is a kind of anxiety affecting many novels today, in particular those trying to find a way to avoid linear plot narratives. We could start an inquiry on such literary texts with authors like James Joyce who tried to reproduce the non-linear nature of thought in stream-of-consciousness narratives, but the trend of novelism is not a creation of the modernists writers: it can be mapped out anywhere in the history of the European novel. This type of narrative against the linear plot is not the kind known as PWP ("Plot, What Plot?," or, similarly, "Point, What Point?") narratives connected to fanfiction, because one cannot transfer this type of narrative into the reader's literary creative mind and the sense of "nothing occurs" in fanfiction can be the real drive in PWP postmodern narratives. PWP can be enlarged to more serious fiction than B, C, or Z series movies and it can also mean those works of fiction without an explicit plot organization. But PWP postmodern narratives are not out-of-character or out-of-timeline necessarily. They either invite us to imagine what is going on or they tell us what to imagine or what the text itself is imagining it means. This is a challenging form of textual self-reflexivity we learned in former models, e.g., Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Since the eighteenth century, the English novel has this practice of resistance to the definition of the limits of the novel often stated by the author in prefaces or introductions (see, e.g., Fielding; Robinson). I suggest that novelism begins in its own presupposition that a shortlist of PWP novels can include Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Borroughs's *Naked Lunch*, Heller's *Catch-22*, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Berger's *G.*, Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, and Byatt's *Possession*. It is relevant that these novels have been and remain at the center of scholarship and teaching despite the texts' lack of a fixed plot. Teachers of literature use them as examples of experiments in literary production, students read them as expressions of the far-reaching possibilities in literary writing, and literary historians are at a loss to place them in an indisputable genre and/or period. Further examples include experimental novels such as Litt's *Finding Myself* or Sullivan's *Occupy Me* or Baty's *No Plot? No Problem!: A Low-Stress, High-Velocity Guide to Writing a Novel in 30 Days*. Most of these novels are PWP narratives and thus I undertake to construct a theory of the novel further than genre categorization and not excluding the possibility of its definition or taxonomic demonstration. Instead, I concentrate on the modes of novels resisting as plot-narratives and diverting to certain forms of novelism or self-referentiality, where the plan, design, scheme, or pattern of events in a work of fiction resist to give direct answers to questions like: why did that happen, why is this happening, what is going to happen next and why? (note that these questions are at the front line of self-help books for aspiring novelists). I follow the idea proposed by Terry Eagleton in his book *The English Novel: An Introduction*: "The point about the novel is not just that it eludes definitions, but that it actively undermines them. It is less a genre than an anti-genre. It cannibalizes other literary modes and mixes the bits and pieces promiscuously together" (1). Another way of putting this issue to debate is to follow Ralph Cohen's rhetorical question in "Do Postmodern Genres Exist?" where he comments on how postmodern critics have sought to work without genre theory: "terms like 'text' and 'écriture' deliberately avoid generic classifications. And the reasons for this are efforts to abolish the hierarchies that genres introduce, to avoid the assumed fixity of genres and the social as well as literary authority such limits exert, to reject the social and subjective elements in classification" (13). And in *Literary Cannibalism: Almost the Same, but Not Quite / Almost the Same, but Not White* Felisa Vergara Reynolds adds an appropriate argument: "propose that literary cannibalism occurs when Aimé Césaire takes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and gives us *Une tempête*; when Boubacar Boris Diop takes on Prosper Mérimée by re-writing *Tamango* as *Le Temps de Tamango*; when Assia Djebar seeks to right history in *L'Amour, la fantasia* by challenging the "official historical" account of the French invasion of Algeria in 1830; and when Maryse Condé creates *La Migration des coeurs* based on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" (iii).

Writing about contemporary novelists who have turn to other past novelists to recreate or create new lives and stories such as Cunningham's *The Hours*, Boylan's *Emma Brown*, Boorstin's *The Newsboys' Lodging-House, or the Confessions of William James,* Moses's *Wintering*, Tóibín's *The Master*, Lodge's *Author, Author*, Caryn James claims that "These contemporary novelists go inside other writers' minds, pilfering their language -- a phrase here, a whole diary passage there -- feeding off their bodies of work in acts of literary cannibalism" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/25/books/critic-s-notebook-stop-thief-an-author-s-mind-is-being-stolen.html?_r=0>). I do not suggest that the cannibalization of genres and forms of literary texts

can be placed in the same level of discussion of the particular case when an author recovers the style of a canonized author of the past and reinvents his/her writing. There are two levels of discussion here: one sort of cannibalism can be seen in the sole fact of the return to the old author, a rebirth not to be assumed as a fact, but as part of simple literary playfulness and a second sort refers exclusively to the modes of fictional writing. I am focusing my study in the latter.

One recent attempt of cannibalizing a well-established literary genre like the Victorian novel is John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He recreates the modes of gothic and romantic narratives with recurrent authorial intrusions and mystery plots, but, ingeniously, semi-hiding a critique to those values that Victorian readers and artists proclaimed. The Victorian narrative mode was built under the laws of reason and rationality and a novel was not expected to surprise the reader or question his/her knowledge about the limits of a work of literary art. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles admits from the beginning that "This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind … I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word" (97). The age of Roland Barthes is the age of the novelization of real life where only *êtres de papier* can dwell. The novel is now a playground for the author to expand his/her imagination to all sorts of experiments including in-novel appearances of himself to spy on the characters and rewind time so he/she can provide multiple endings, not necessarily respecting the Victorian laws of reason and rationality, which this novel tries to deconstruct through what I call the polyandric discourse using and mixing epigraphs, intertextual references, abundant footnotes, and long extracts from contemporaneous Victorian novels. Fowles wants to insist in the impossibility of genre stabilization when we are dealing with literary material. His novel can be, in the end, a non-genre novel? We should not read a novel as a novel or as what we thought a novel should be in the first place: we should read a novel using our previous knowledge of novel theory and expect that a new reading of such an experimental novel will bring a new insight to that knowledge. Fowles wrote that "perhaps I am writing a transposed autobiography; perhaps I now live in one of the houses I have brought into the fiction; perhaps Charles is myself disguised. Perhaps it is only a game. Modern women like Sarah exist, and I have never understood them. Or perhaps I am trying to pass off a concealed book of essays on you" (97). It is in this way that the novel as a genre is always in revision when the author invites us to the "game" of retelling a story already told and perhaps no other literary genre has ever been under such strong revisionism.

My idea of novelism goes beyond what Clifford Siskin proposes in "The Rise of Novelism." The conditions in which Siskin recognizes, since the origin of the English novel, a self-reflexive work on the very nature of the novel itself are the same we recognize in literary texts and that are not necessarily novels or that do not resist to genre conventions. For this reason, novelism should be a concept that does not leave out any text in a literary equation. The common condition in the construction of the contemporary novel, according to the self-reflexive spirit, is an ingenious participation in the fictional game that is characterized by an autotelic work chained with what we might call the "anxiety of genre." This is to define those disturbances of spirit (translated into fictional writing) about the ability or inability to set the produced text within the canon of a certain literary genre that it must or intends to belong to. It depends on the artistic genius of the writer the portraying of the anxiety of the genre itself in the very process of novel-making. We are talking about the ability to build a private poetic within the novel itself no matter the intention is a fun-for-fun making or a serious philosophical work of art. Novel writing in particular has become a kind of individual workshop, circumspect about the genre of the novel. It is precisely this type of authorial work on the limits of the literary genre in production, a work close to an obsession, that we should call novelism and that includes not only those experimental/metafictional novels meeting the expectations of a given aesthetics (as was the case with the novel in realism and neo-realism, for example), but also those who challenge any previously existing code of values. It is only in those experimental/metafictional narratives that we see how troubled the creative mind before the blank page was. A novelist engaged with a certain, pre-established aesthetics will hide to the best of his/her knowledge the quandaries of writing: an experimental/metafictional novelist uses these predicaments as a subject matter for his/her literary work driving the reader into that controlled and creative madness.

G.: A Novel, John Berger's Booker winner novel in 1972, is the non-story of G., an ambiguous and shadowy character always present in the narrative, but with a reserved manner to communicate with others including the reader. Plot is not the focus of the novel and we will never be able to determine the nature of this genre through the construction of the text. Berger uses fragmented details of G.'s life to build a multi-layered novel: it is not a fictional biography in terms of form, but belongs to that genre because of its scope. For instance, G.'s early life on the farm is narrated using as many layers as possible, hiding any prospective desire or wishful thinking for G.'s future, and including layers with comments from the author about the nature of the conventions of storytelling. The laws of genre are discussed within this kind of novel assuming the form of an internal critique of the reader's expectations towards the development of a single story. There is this conviction in the impossibility of stabilization of storytelling. Any creative course on the contemporary novel should start from traditional learning that a story must have 1) a clear beginning, 2) an introduction to the conflict, 3) rising action, 4) a climax, 5) falling action, and 6) a clear and concise resolution and then teaching why and how novelists are shuffling these premises to experiment a multitude of possibilities. For example, pretending to know everything related to a character's life including his/her thoughts is just a convention (or "schematization" in Berger's words) for planning to know everything a fictional text can give us. The author of the fictional text does not have that prerogative anymore and does not want to be reminded of that kind of lost privilege. "Stories" are no longer required to begin, introduce a conflict that is resolved for good or ill, and end: they can even be non-stories, whatever this concept may imply to any reader, the reader's acknowl-

edgment of the traditional structure of the narrative is consistently abandoned with little apparent concern for that matter, and pointless digressions coupled with unexpected changes in chronology and point of view are dominant. The building of a novel combines what is expected by readers and not accomplished with what the author wants to show and what he/she wants to hide. This literary playfulness serves the objective to stop readers from analyzing what they read if a single perspective is used. A postmodern genre must survive through multi-perspectives of a single scene. We can see this in the following passage when Berger interrupts the narrative of G.'s life to start a private conversation with the reader, right in the middle of a scene where G. is seducing a woman: "Some say of my writing that it is too overburdened with metaphor and simile: that nothing is ever what it is and is always like something else. This is true, but why is it so? … I am forced to use another method to try to place and define events. A method which searches for co-ordinates extensively in space, rather than consequentially in time … I do not wish to become prisoner of the nominal, believing that things are what I name them. On the bed, they were not such prisoners" (136).

The postmodern author is willing to build this kind of dialogism which is different in literary terms from the one used by eighteenth-century novelists who would talk with the reader for humoristic purposes mostly and not with this kind of self-awareness critique of the limits of a literary genre which is now always at stake. To defy a literary genre is now a program assumed by authors within the literary text and not just a mere recreation with readers. When telling the story of a single hero, memory will be a fragile tool and that vulnerability is a predetermined way of building a fleeting and unpredictable narrative, which in turn must follow the apparent unbalanced mind of the narrator. Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, which won the Whitbread and Guardian fiction prizes in 1985, is, for the record of the history of English contemporary literature, a historical detective novel that moves in alternating chapters between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries. Experimentalism in the contemporary historical novel has been one key feature of the postmodern novel, although not necessarily turning it into a highly experimental type of literature. The predominant postmodern impulse towards the novel has been not to destroy past models but to mutate and fuse them as a process of making the novel different. *Hawksmoor* is, then, less a novel in the conventional sense of the word than a personal treatise on evil using all the possibilities of the novel of ideas, the thriller, and the detective story. Ackroyd has not felt the need to discard storytelling in order to develop his own type of literary fiction, which includes well-organized historical plots with an extremely self-consciousness about some artificiality of predetermined theories on literary genres and the constructedness of history in a work of fiction.

Hawksmoor and Byatt's *Possession* do not serve to prove that the "realism versus experimentalism" debate that consumed scholarship during the 1960s ended with the victory of inventive and non-conventional novels. These two novels teach us how to reconstruct historical truth. In a certain sense, Ezra Pound's dictum "make it new" has been the slogan of many novelistic works for a century, even when we are aware that a certain kind of experimentalism is not at all new when compared with the origins of the European novel. New, in postmodern terms, can only be a matter of voice or content rather than a matter of formal innovation, although we can see both in many contemporary novels, for example Litt's *Finding Myself.* There is no such thing as the end of the age of experimentalism and the opposite direction of an age of recapitulation when you can repackage the old literary genres is also erroneous as when many contemporary writers announce the impossibility of recreating the old models. *Possession*'s subtitle -- *A Romance* -- points to its architextual relations with the genre of the romance in the nineteenth century, (mis)leading the reader to the interpretation of Byatt's novel as a romance. This double-coded novel, both the imitation of the romance as a literary genre and patterns of Victorian poetry as well as their critical re-examination from a contemporary point of view, does not want to be appraised as a model for other forms of novelization. Byatt's irony towards contemporary theories of postmodernism, post-structuralism, and feminist criticism is always present. A clear example of a mode of cannibalization of the predominance of academic theory over novel construction is seen in the feminist interpretation of LaMotte's poem about Melusina: "The feminists are crazy about it. They say it expresses women's impotent desire … the new feminists see Melusina in her bath as a symbol of self-sufficient female sexuality needing no poor males. I like it, it's disturbing. It keeps changing focus. From the very precise description of the scaly tail to cosmic battles" (33-34).

Where conventional modernist novelists would declare their critical points of view of the influence of theory over the free creation of a novel, Byatt draws some of her contemporary icons into a metafictional ambush: Fergus Wolff is then presented as a disciple of Barthes and Foucault; now, he "was writing a deconstructive account of Balzac's *chef-d'oeuvre Inconnu"* and facing the challenge "to deconstruct something that had apparently already deconstructed itself" (32). It seems that the construction of a new code for the contemporary novel has just found a way through the dismissal of the theories originated by the critical attempt to create new foundations for the novel as a (post)modern literary genre. Although Christabel and Maud are separated by over a century, they share a common deviation from romance: possession. Possession is precisely the effect that the contemporary novel cannot have after any possible cause for its foundation. The contemporary novel should be a form neither entirely decoded by its creator nor a code totally understood by its reader/interpreter. In "People in Paper Houses: Attitudes to 'Realism' and 'Experiment' in English Postwar Fiction," Byatt discusses how some writers of the 1960s and 1970s discarded nineteenth-century realism because they believed it to be a "convention now leading novelists into bad faith" (147). She looks for a synthesis between the two traditions of realism and experiment and drives us to a realism colored with both a formal imagination and a curiosity concerning the real objects of the world. For Byatt, realism provides the reader with an easy access to a fictional world, which can be rebuilt without any fixed rule and not necessarily against a past and deep-rooted convention. And the epigraph of Byatt's novel taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne defending romance as a valid literary genre, which has "fairly a right to present [the truth of the human heart] under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation" (n.p.) is confronted

with the realist novel, which "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (n.p.). Here, experimentalism is used as an anti-naturalist predicament.

After reading and showing his appreciation of *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865) by physiologist Claude Bernard, Émile Zola published in 1880 the essay "Le Roman expérimental" in which he developed the naturalist thesis applied to the novel. Zola tried to legitimate a new kind of novel, one called "experimental" because of its alleged scientific nature, meaning that we could found a process of pre-establishing a model for the novel: "This is what constitutes the experimental novel: to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations, under the influences of heredity and environment, such as physiology shall give them to us, and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily, and in the heart of which he himself experiences a continual transformation" (21). In following Zola's thought, I argue that when we speak of experimentalism in the postmodern novel we are not referring to the possibility, which existed ever since we can speak of the novel as a literary genre, of being able to determine how to transfer the knowledge of human understanding of the world into a literary experience, in such an order that everyone could recognize or even deconstruct the whole process. Contemporary novelists tend to affirm, in fictional terms, that the aim of the novel is to disseminate all those experiences into loosen pieces of a puzzle that no one will be able to reconstruct. Experimentalism in the novel is today close to a process of cannibalization of experiences which we grasp through free reading and interpretation and not through any type of psychology. What is wrong here is just chronology: the postmodern novelist does not seek the unusual, the uncanny, and the endless ways of approaching the external world for his/her work of fiction in a more innovative way than earliest novelists like Sterne. Postmodern novelists cannibalize all known forms of the literary text following the same principle of innovation that presides the creation of any work of art, but use innovation as tool for (self-)criticism of the possibilities of literariness in the novel at the same time that a new awareness is found about the laws of genre and their openness to free creation. The postmodern novelist is now more aware of this openness than the novelist of the eighteen-century. It is creativity applied to the novel that has changed and enlarged, not innovation or novelty in terms of building a new or an experimental genre. Samuel Beckett proved this with his 1950 *L'innomable*, an experimental novel which is pure monologue detached from linked events and blurred with semi-characters. In such an anti-narrative voices are always echoes and knowing who is speaking is the last predicament of the novel: "Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving. Questions, hypotheses, call them that. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on." (Beckett 291).

The novel has always been a self-reflexive genre, now and then concerned with its nature and fortune, from Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the first of work of fiction in English to defy its own fictional nature as stated in the "The Preface": "The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it" (iii). Or from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded,* a plot-novel told through a series of letters to Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* who tried to define the novel within the boundaries of his own fictional work. From its origins, the English novel (in a broad political sense) has been eclectic in the sense that it rejects rigid genre boundaries and elitist categories which grew from the debate over the opposition between novel and romance to postmodern discussions on the relation of the novel with pure art or with high culture or with the post-industrial society or with gender politics or with Lacanian psychoanalysis, and so on. It is the nature and broadness of eclecticism that has been changing in this literary genre and not the novelty of its discussion.

In terms of consumption, the more representative a book is for a particular genre the greater the preference for the book. This can be proved through any simple inquiry to a group of readers of any language. Why are common readers attached to categorization and contemporary learned readers and postmodern writers tend to follow the path of deconstruction of the laws of genre? Litt's *Finding Myself* proves my point. If we could place this book in different genres, example, "chick literature," "general fiction," or "romance" we would find different readers for each copy sold by genre, and, most likely, as "chick literature" would get more customers than the other two, even if this a book is a well-known parody to the genre it pretends to belong to. From the opening paragraphs of the novel, a chicklit novelist announces her new creation as one in a million in this genre: "What I'll be writing, From the Lighthouse, will, if it comes out right, be just the best beach book in the world, ever: naughty, gossipy -- with just the right ratio of tittle to tattle. (You know what I mean, darlings, and don't pretend you don't.)" (8). Victoria is the narrator of *Finding Myself*, a serious parody to a popular genre in Britain, but at same time a metafiction inspired by Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* whose stream-of-consciousness style is now rediscovered in a humorous prose. The justification is revealed from the beginning: "I can't write this in neat, organized sections -- you know how I am. So I'm just going to blather it out whichwise-whatever, and let you on that basis make up your mind" (3). Victoria's novel must be in the spirit of the time, as indefinite as any of those postmodern paradigms we demand for the contemporary novel. Thus, she will invite several people to a beach house for a month where she would monitor them all for the purpose of writing a book about what she observed. In the end, she will offer us a synopsis of what she thinks will happen: who will have affairs, who will develop crushes, who will fall in love, who will propose marriage thus mixing the traditional style of romances, novels, and chicklit stories with the style of a personal blog about someone else's affairs. The novel corrects itself with corrections being visible in the novel text, a technique used when Simona, Victoria's editor, who guesses that a more serious thought is on the way.

Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre" about the mixing of genres suggests that while definition or genre is unreliable, it is also an essential method if we are to scrutinize definitions themselves. Literary genres continue to be, in Derrida's terms, "laws" within classificatory mechanisms, even when we try to

eradicate them. The contemporary novel is more and more submitted to the historical dynamism and mutability of genres: "Can one identify a work of art, of whatever sort, but especially a work of discursive art, if it does bear the mark of a genre, if it does not signal or mention it or make it remarkable in any way? … A text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (60-61). We cannot work without the definition of genre, otherwise we would get only proto-narratives, texts without critical identity, reduced to the most unrefined enunciation of novelism. Again, we (writers and readers) are experiencing a time where literature cannot sustain a non-compromise status with its nature. All forms of literature can be classified, even when classification seems to be pointless. What clearly contributes to this paradox is the modern fall of all boundaries and conventions for being able to write a novel, a poem or a play. Since its early crops in the 17th century, the novel has been subject to a greater freedom of writing than other literary forms, which can explain why we are participating in several debates including the possibilities of genreless texts, the possibility of non-genreless text, along with the desperate need of professional readers to control everything one reads. This kind of reader has been dominant for the past one hundred years: he/she was educated in university undergraduate courses and, afterwards, has disseminate the idea that every literary text must have a fixed classification and, nor rarely, a fixed interpretation, specially within the power of his/her own skills. This reader and his/her followers will be at a complete loss with such authors as Michael Cunningham. Today, we can find evidence of genre-schooling resistance not only directly from the novels but also from the many texts written as pre- and post-publication marketing.

Broadening fiction, including literary genre conventions and variations, is a way to avoid the limitations imposed by those who are in control of literary work of art as Ursula K. Le Guin argues that

> the characteristics of a genre are controlled, systematized, and insisted upon by publishers, or editors, or critics, they become limitations rather than possibilities. Salability, repeatability, expectability replace quality. A literary form degenerates into a formula. Hack writers get into the baloney factory production line, Hollywood devours and regurgitates the baloney, and the genre soon is judged by its lowest common denominator … And we have the situation as it was from the 1940s to the turn of the century: "genre" used not as a useful descriptor, but as a negative judgment, a dismissal … I bear some resentment and some scars from the years of anti-genre bigotry. My own fiction, which moves freely around among realism, magical realism, science fiction, fantasy of various kinds, historical fiction, young adult fiction, parable, and other subgenres, to the point where much of it is ungenrifiable, all got shoved into the SciFi wastebasket or labeled as kiddilit -- subliterature. (<http://electricliterature.com/ursula-k-le-guin-talks-to-michael-cunningham-about-genres-gender-and-broadening-fiction>).

Defying the limitations of genre became a program for modern fictional writing as the anxiety tied to its interpretation. A literary text may not escape the logic of the genre to which it belongs, but you can challenge the logic of the contextualization that imprisons it and work with it no matter how many *ungenrifiable* modes you establish. This logic is characterized by a total openness to the definition of its mechanism. It is worth remembering the defense that Mikhail Bakhtin makes of the novel as a genre that does not fear its constant renewal, by attending its own historic progress. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, he argues that the novel rejects the despotism of its own classification, because it is a genre always in self-evaluation: "a genre that is ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review. Such, indeed, is the only possibility open to a genre that structures itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality" (39). There is no genreless novelism, since there are neither fictional texts deprived of classification nor fictional texts free from any law of genre. If the definition of genre is a general condition of the literary text, the insertion of this text in a school or literary movement is an arbitrary act that depends on several factors and still admits total rejection. Resisting to genre categorization can be the subject matter of literature itself and not a way to announce the end of it. The novel does not need to step outside of itself to mark itself as the genre it claims to be. The contemporary novel is part of an unrestricted landscape adequate to the free use of genres where authors can waltz around leaving nobody out of the dance floor, as suggested by Le Guin: "I love to see people like Michael Chabon and Kij Johnson and David Mitchell and Jo Walton -- and above all, old José Saramago! -- waltzing around the literary landscape, freely using fragments of genres to build up their beautiful stories, finding unclassifiable forms for irresistible narratives" (<http://electricliterature.com/ursula-k-le-guin-talks-to-michael-cunningham-about-genres-gender-and-broadening-fiction>).

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