

Narrative Mode and Fiction
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Lecture No # 04
Module No # 01
Genealogy of Genre IV

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative modern fiction so we are discussing Genology a study of genres. Today we are going to discuss genre and cultural text.

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Genre and Cultural Text

- Genres are cultural categories that surpass the boundaries of media texts and operate within industry, audience, and cultural practices as well.
- Audiences use genres to organize fan practices (such as generically determined organizations, conferences, and Websites), personal preferences, and everyday conversations and viewing practices. Likewise, academics use generic distinctions to delineate research projects and to organize special topic courses.
- Media scholars imply that genre is a component of a text through a number of practices – they are interested in situating a genre within larger discussions of texts (say, as opposed to industries, audiences, or culture), in mapping an internal/external distinction to understand texts versus "other factors," or in methodologically examining a genre primarily through textual analysis.

So genres are cultural categories that surpass the boundaries of media texts and they operate within industry audience and cultural practices as well. So the question of genre genealogy can be extended to the study of a, non-literary texts such as the industry. The audience or reader response and even you know even performance of different kinds let us say TV series. So, audiences use genres to organize fan practices such as generically determined organizations conferences and even websites personal preferences and everyday conversations and viewing practices.

In the same way academics use generic distinctions to delineate research projects and to organize a special topic courses. Media scholars imply that genre is a component of a text through a number of practices - they are interested in situating a genre within larger discussions of texts say as opposed to industries audiences or culture. In mapping and internal external distinction as a

way of understanding text versus other factors, or in methodologically, examining a genre primarily through textual analysis.

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- Genres are not intrinsic to texts; they are constituted by the processes that some scholars have labeled as "external" elements, such as industrial and audience practices.
- Texts exist only through their production and reception, so we cannot make the boundary between texts and their material cultural contexts clear. Genres transect these boundaries, with production, distribution, promotion, and reception practices all working to categorize media texts into genres.
- Genres exist only through the creation, circulation, and reception of texts within cultural contexts. Textual analysis cannot examine media genres adequately, as genres operate at the categorical level – there are texts that are categorized by genres, but their textual sum does not equal the whole of the genre.

So genres are not intrinsic to texts; they are constituted by the processes is that some scholars have labeled as external elements such as industrial and audience. Texts exist only through their production and reception, so we cannot make the boundary between texts and the material cultural contexts very clear. Genres transect these boundaries, boundary between text and context with production, distribution, promotion and a reception practices all working in tandem to categorize media texts into channels.

So genres exist only through the creation, circulation and reception of texts within a given cultural context. So, textual analysis cannot examine media genres adequately as genres operate at the categorical level. There are texts that are categorized by genres but their textual some may not equal the whole of the genre.

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- More popular genres may center on different characteristics :
- For film, following act as determinants for classification:
 - Setting: who, what, where, when—visual and verbal;
 - Character: gender, status, communication norms;
 - Plots: problems, markers of transition (e.g., cuts, dissolves), timeline;
 - Visual logic and point of view: camera focus, depth of field, framing, lighting, soundtrack;
 - Sound and spatial logics: foregrounding, backgrounding, cutting strategies and effects.
- For advertisement, a pivotal factor is how the visual semantics act as a correlate of verbal semantics.

So most popular genres may center on different characteristics so for example film have a certain determinants that enable us to classify. One being the, setting who, what, where and when so here we are talking about the visual and verbal traits. And then we are talking about characters the gender of the character the status of the character and even the norms of communication. These are all the different determinants that classify the genre of film.

When we talk of plot we are referring to the central problem, the markers of transitions for example cuts and dissolves and the timeline. In terms of visual logic and point of view we can also distinguish and here we are talking about camera focus depth of field, framing, lighting, soundtrack. Then we can distinguish also in terms of sound and special logics so foregrounding, back grounding, cutting strategies and subsequent effects.

So in the case of another population or such as advertisement a pivotal factor is how the visual semantics act as a correlate with the verbal semantics.

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- A key work in this area is **Rick Altman's** recent book *Film/Genre*. The structuralist textual tradition is not easily compatible with his poststructuralist and revisionist treatment of generic processes and pragmatics. Despite Altman's foregrounding of cultural processes, textual structure still remains central to his approach, making it difficult to provide an account of how genre categories operate outside the bounds of the text.
- **Margaret Rogers** (2000) notes that in text-based genre analyses there is a strong tendency to conceptualize communicative purposes in terms of the strategies of the speakers or writers, but she argues that such purposes cannot be fully understood without some understanding of how these purposes are interpreted by members of the specialist community, for which she recommends user-based analyses.

A key work in this area is Rick Altman's recent book *Film or Genre*. The structuralist textual tradition is not easily compatible with his poststructuralist and revisionist treatment of generic processes and pragmatics. So despite Altman's foregrounding of cultural processes textual structure still remains central to his approach, thereby making it difficult to provide an account of how genre categories operate outside of the bounds of text.

Another critic Margaret Rogers notes that in text based genre analysis there is a strong tendency to conceptualize communicative purposes in terms of the strategies of the speakers or writers. However she argues that such purposes cannot be fully understood without some understanding of how these purposes are interpreted by members of a given community, and so she recommends user-based analysis.

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- This cultural approach to genre is in different order from the traditional methods of genre analysis. The three typical approaches to genres – definitional, interpretive, and historical- all engage in textual generic criticism; they look at genre texts to uncover and identify definitions, meanings, and changes.
- A hypothetical definitional approach might try to isolate the core elements that comprise a genre, for instance positing that a genre is defined by the musical song, with the video elements taking a secondary role. Accordingly, these videos would represent a spectrum from **core** (such as Billie Jean which is a prototypical dance/performance piece) to **periphery** (Thriller as a generic exception, with narrative mixed with song and dance), to Beat It, which is on the genre's **fringe** (with its integration of narrative and a brief nonmusical segment).

Now this cultural approach to genre is in different order from the traditional methods of genre analysis. The three typical approaches of genres definitional, interpretive and historical all engage in textual generic criticism. They look at genre texts to uncover and identify definitions meanings and changes. A hypothetical definitional approach might try to isolate the core elements that comprise a genre.

For instance positing that a genre is defined by the musical song whereas; the video elements take a secondary role. And accordingly based on this assumption based on the set parameters these videos would represent a spectrum starting from core to periphery to fringe. So the core according to such definition where music is or the musical song is at the center and the videos are secondary.

The core would be something like Michael Jackson's Billie jean which is a prototypical dance performance piece and periphery would be something like thriller which is a generic exception where a narrative is mixed with song and dance. And then at the fringe would be beat it and a brief non-musical segment.

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- In 1983, MTV was a comparatively new entity. Still it established its industrial practices and constructed an audience.
 - MTV defined the dominant conception of the genre. Press accounts of the music video in the early 1980s mention that white artists and bands, such as MTV staples – Duran Duran, Culture Club, and the Stray Cats comprised typical music video stars, while only few articles name any black artists before Jackson's breakthrough in 1983. While there were other outlets for music video exhibition, they either directly followed MTV's white-centric lead (such as NBC's *Friday Night Videos*) or offered explicit counterprogramming (such as BET's *Video Soul*), thereby allowing MTV to define the terms of the genre's mainstream.

So in 1983 MTV was a comparatively new entity and still it established its industrial practices and constructed an audience for itself. MTV defined the dominant conception of the genre press accounts of music video in the early nineteen eighties mentioned that white artists and music bands such as MTV staples we are thinking of Duran Duran, Culture Club and this Stray Cats all of these comprised typical music videos stars.

While only few articles had names of black artists before Michael Jackson's breakthrough happened in 1983. So while there are other outlets for music video exhibition they either directly followed MTV's white centric lead. So for music video exhibition the idea such as NBC's Friday Night Videos or they offered explicit counter programming such as we see in bits video song. Thereby allowing MTV in a way to define the terms of the genre's mainstream etch out a mainstream.

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- Genre analyses should account for the particular attributes of the medium.
- Genre studies should negotiate between specificity and generality. By narrowing the focus to a specific aspect of a genre's definition, meaning, history, or cultural value, we avoid the problems of overgeneralization that have been typical of more traditional genre studies.
- Genre histories should be written using discursive genealogies. One needs to realize that generic discourses are not deep repositories of hidden meanings, formal structures, or sub-textual insights.
- Genres should rather be understood in cultural practice. In order to grasp genres as cultural categories, the scholar should first examine the discourses that constitute the category before examining the texts that seem delimited by the genre.

So genre analysis should account for the particular attributes of the medium. Genre studies should negotiate between specificity and generality by narrowing the focus to a specific aspect of a genre's definition meaning history or cultural value one tends to avoid the problems of overgeneralization that have been typical of more traditional genre studies. So genre history is should be written using discursive genealogies. One is to realize that generic discourses are not deep repositories of hidden meanings or sub-textual insights.

So genres should be rather under understood in cultural practice in order to grasp genres as cultural categories a scholar or an investigator should first examine the discourses that constitute the category even before examining the texts that seem delimited by the genre itself.

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- Study of genres should be situated within larger systems of cultural hierarchies and power relations. One of the reasons that genre studies have been generally absent within cultural approaches to the media is that genre has traditionally been conceived as a formal textual element and thus not conducive to the study of mediated politics.
- Television genre analysis – examining genres as clusters of discursive processes running through texts, audiences, and industries via specific cultural practices – places genre analysis back onto the agenda of critical media studies.
- Genres are not neutral categories but are situated within larger systems of power and thus, they come "fully loaded" with political implications.

So study of genres should be situated within larger systems of cultural hierarchies and power relations. One of the reasons that genre studies have been generally absent within cultural approaches to media is that genre has traditionally been conceived as a formal textual element and therefore not something that is conducive to the study of mediated politics. So; television genre analysis refers to examining genres as clusters of discursive processes that are running through texts, audiences and industries via specific cultural practices.

So television genre analysis which; examines genre analysis back onto the agenda of critical media studies. Genre are not neutral categories but are situated within larger systems of power and therefore they come fully loaded with political implications. I would like to stop our lecture here today and let us meet with another round of discussions in the following lectures thank you.