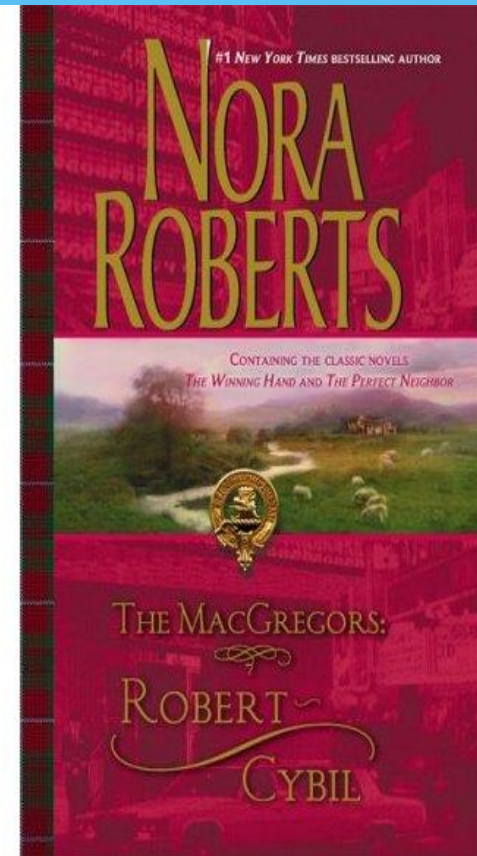


Theory and Methodology for the Study of Classics

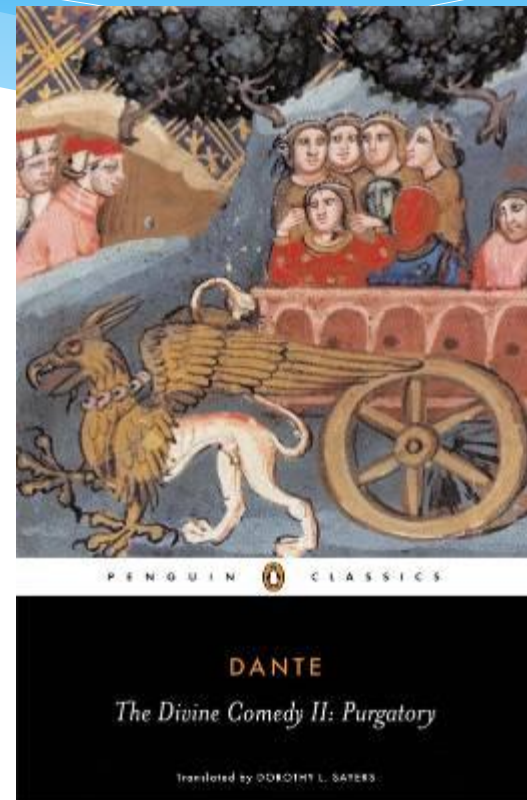
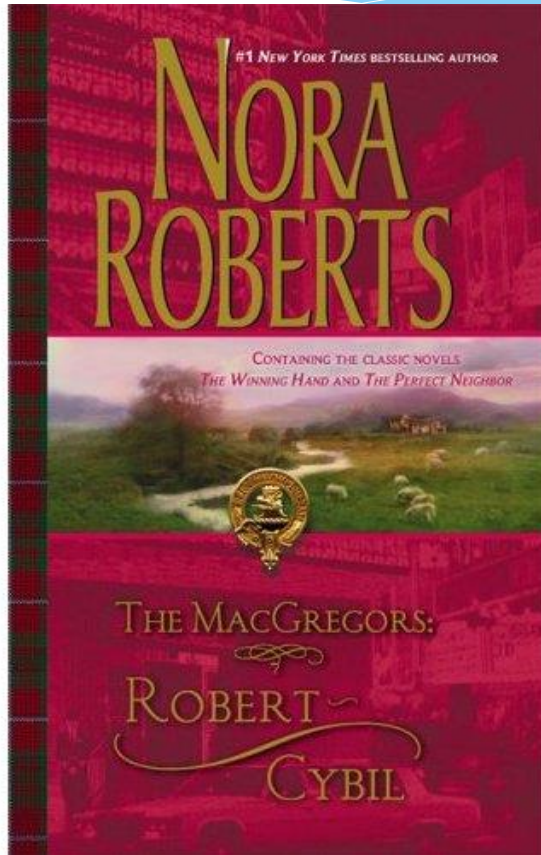
Unit 3: Genre

Genre today

- * Any work of art guides the audience how to understand it by giving parameters ('framings') for how to understand it, what context to view it in, etc.
- * Today, good examples of clear framings for text are our book covers: different types and genres of books will have different types of covers to signal what the reader can expect.
 - * This applies to other types of media as well – consider the difference in a trailer for a TV comedy and for a thriller. Use of sound, lightning, colours, will be significantly different and guide us as audience members.
- * In the ancient world, other framings were given, signalling belonging to a specific type of text/speech/drama.
- * Genre (or *genus*, in the Latin) is the term used for the different types of text etc.

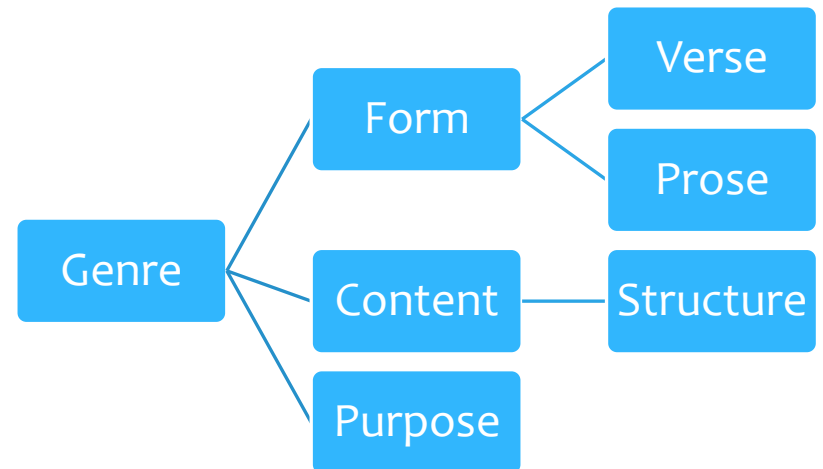


Modern genre framings



Genre signals in the ancient world

- * Genre in the ancient world was signalled in a number of different ways
 - * Scholarly opinion on the weighting of these also differ, cf. the review of Cairns' work on poetic genre
- * Some genres will be signalled more via form, some via content
 - * Cf. the difference between historiography and biography, where structure and content are stronger genre framings than the fact that both types of texts are presented in prose...



Genre theory in the Ancient world

- * As you see from Huss' overview, ancient theory on genre depends to a large extent on comments by Aristotle in the *Poetics*
- * Handbooks on writing are also of key importance
 - * Rhetoric
 - * Cicero *De Inventione*
 - * *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*
 - * Letter writing

*Homer's shown the metre in which the deeds of
captains
And kings, and the sorrows of war, may be written.
First, lament was captured in elegiac couplets,
Then, expressions of thanks for prayers granted, too:
Scholars dispute, though without final agreement,
As to who first composed short elegies in this metre.
Anger armed Archilochus with his own iambus:
His foot fitted both comic sock and tragic buskin,
Suited to dialogue, able to overcome the noise
Of the pit, and naturally appropriate to action.
The Muse granted the lyre tales of gods, and their
sons,
Of the victor in boxing, the winning horse in the race,
The sorrows of youth, and the freedoms of wine.*
(Hor. Ars 73-85)

Claiming a genre

- * Allegiance to a certain genre will usually be expressed at the beginning of the text, as well as at its end
- * For poetic texts, the metre is a very strong instance of framing
- * Other framings are:
 - * Choice of vocabulary to include specific phrases associated with a genre
 - * E.g. Callimachean ‘buzz words’
 - * Choice of vocabulary more generally: archaic or contemporary language?
 - * Allusions to predecessors within the same genre: association
 - * Allusions to predecessors in other genres: disassociation
 - * *Recusatio*

Martial, *Epigrams*: Preface to Book 1

I trust that, in these little books of mine, I have observed such self-control, that whoever forms a fair judgment from his own' mind can make no complaint of them, since they indulge their sportive fancies without violating the respect due even to persons of the humblest station; a respect which was so far disregarded by the authors of antiquity, that they made free use, not only of real, but of great names. For me; let fame be held in less estimation, and let such talent be the last thing commended in me.

Let the ill-natured interpreter, too, keep himself from meddling with the simple meaning of my jests, and not write my epigrams for me. He acted honourably who exercises perverse ingenuity on another man's book: For the free plainness of expression, that is, for the language of epigram, I would apologize, if I were introducing the practice; but it is thus that Catullus writes, and Marsus, and Pedo, and Getulicus, and every one whose writings are read through. If any assumes to be so scrupulously nice, however, that it is not allowable to address him, in a single page, in plain language, he may confine himself to this address, or rather to the title of the book. Epigrams are written for those who are accustomed to be spectators at the games of Flora. Let not Cato enter my theatre; or, if he do enter, let him look on. It appears to me that I shall do only what I have a right to do, if I close my address with the following verses:---

Negotiating Genre

- * Despite this impression of very set 'guidelines', genre is not static even in the ancient world
 - * The need for handbooks?
 - * Sampler, or explanation in a shifting literary landscape?
 - * Cf. the training in rhetoric
 - * As today, the most innovative pieces of work test the limits of their medium
 - * Again, cf. the modern context of both visual and textual media



Andy Warhol, 32 Campbell's soup cans (1962)

The opening of the *Met.*

*Of bodies changed to other forms
I tell*

*You Gods, who have yourselves
wrought every change,*

*Inspire my enterprise and lead
(deducite) my lay*

*In one continuous song from
nature's first*

*Remote beginnings to our
modern times*

- * No lead-up: no extensive prologue – but...
- * Multitude of condensed information here
 - * Compression in expansive form? Gives away something about how this is going to be different epic, too?
- * Transformations – mythological transformations, as betrayed by the invocation to the gods
- * Connection to Callimachus established: *The Aitia*
- * ... continues the interaction with Hellenistic poetry, as in earlier works

Ovid and Callimachus

- * *Carmen deductum* associated with Callimachean-style small poetry
- * Callimachus' *Aitia* in direct opposition to a Homeric-style epic in continual verse
- * ... but Ovid refers to the *Met.* as *perpetuum carmen*, continuous song
- * Yes: Ovid's epic contains one of the key aspects of narrative epic: one central piece of action, the development of the world
 - * Cf. earlier Roman epic: Ennius *Annales*
 - * ... and Lucretius' didactic epic *De Rerum Natura*

Work for this unit

- * The reading recommended for this unit takes you in a range of different directions
- * You should orient yourself about all of these, but focus particularly on those useful in relation to your particular emphasis of study (e.g. more Greek than Roman, more literary than historical, etc).
- * The focus article included for assessment is one that has appeal both for a historian and a literature student