2100.758 - Genre Fiction

Class #1

What is genre fiction?
Is it a marketing category?
Is it real?

What defines something as genre? (Literary fiction?)

Name genres -

Currently popular?
Formerly popular?
(Western?)
Most sales? (Romance?)

Harlequin sales model -

Cycles & Styles -
Some genres die & are reborn,
Some go through styles,
Some go through periods of
mainstream popularity

Many genre writers write in more
than one genre, mostly under
multiple names
Why do we like it?
What we know
What we don't know

As readers, we love identifying that
which we know well (often place,
procedure, etc.)
and that which is exciting, new & alien.

genre fiction - we're thinking
popular / fun to read

Does fun to read = easy to write?
no
literary & genre?

your genre(s)
favorite books/authors
think about specific elements
what about this element/genre
Class 2 -

How do we recognize a work as belonging to a genre? Where do the edges blur? Are there any "pure" works?

Genre as a lens to interpret, focus, understand contemporary experience.

We write from now — what we imagine of the past or the future is informed by the present, by our social and personalized economic and political concerns — examples!

Popularity of preternatural romance — Vampire & sexuality
(from V. (Toscan/Dracula)

Exercise - take an incident from your own real life — write within your genre —
Laetz & Johnson -
Get Lois wrong
(terrible sentences!!)
Very cliché notion of fantasy -
they clearly don't know the genre -
be angry!

Plots = incoherent???
svs. true crime

But - they do pose some real
questions -
What makes something fantasy
Pern (Dragons)
or SF or mystery or horror
that element is central to the
structure & construction of the story
What do we mean by "central"?
What is window-dressing
Class #3
Reader-Writer contract:

What do you as a Reader expect from a book of your genre?

How much are you willing to suspend disbelief?
For what? Play by the rules
Play fair

So what must you as a writer provide?
full world
5 senses
full sensory experience
Characters we care about
everything makes sense
"They all got run over by a truck and died. The End."

Problems are Real
Something is at Stake for the Characters
You've done your research

Dangers of research!!!
Too little?
Too much?
Dangers of world building
  too derivative
  too diverting

You need to know EVERYTHING, but your Reader does not need to know everything
(I just learned the history of the dirigible for my skampunk book - I don't know how much I'll use -)

Detail, detail - the specific is important
details

Use 3 sensory details to describe
a restaurant so I know
what kind of food it serves,
how fancy, who is there -

Subgenres - list for your genre
  (we can list on the board)
Some subgenres are popular
crossword (historical, mystery)

Remind them to watch for
Reveals in 9 Tailors!
Class 4-
Structures, Secrets, Sayers -
Playing by the Rules
Revealing Information

Characters must change & grow
(Why episodic tv isn't as good as arc & story)
Short story - the moment of a single realization/revelation
Longer work - more full change or changes/realizations

Every person has secrets
Most people's secrets are "stupid" -
Other people don't care so much.
But we care about our secrets

While the central plot revolves around
"What does the character want?"
There is always "What is the character hiding?"

2 Stories - in mystery, but more
Slightly in all genre
The story today & uncovering
The hidden secrets of the past
There is always a past -

Okay - what are the stories in
Sayers?

Lord Wimsey's story -
The Rector's story?
Will's story (and Mary's) Thaddeus's

The story in the past -
Deacon's story
the emeralds
Cranton's story
Suzanne's story

The revelations -
The bells in the chamber (the sound)
Mary Thaddeus had been married to Deacon
(who was presumed deceased)

Was this story satisfying?
Why?
We have all the information
When did you put it together?
What were the central pieces?
Lit vs. Genre -

inward examination of middle class suburbia vs.
archetypal outward directional action as metaphor
class 5

world building

trope vs. cliche

trope - (dictionary.com)
"a significant or recurrant theme"

a significant or recurrant permission
assumption
free pass of the genre
& FTL

magic
complicated murder

cliche - overuse betrays lack of original thought

Redemption
Meaning

looking in while

ACTING OUT - Genre

not required

Genre & fantastic -

dimensions & uses
In your genre -

1. list 2 tropes & 2 clichés -

Storytelling seems innate to humanity - in all cultures. What we tell stories about and how differs - but we all do -

Impose meaning & pattern

Search for redemption

Central trope & action/Adventure -

Inward > Campbell's Hero's Journey

Outward

Hero's Call - Refusal

Oracle

Guardian on the Threshold (must fight)

Die & go into death

Defeat & go alive to

Tests & opposition

"magical" aid/Helpers

Reward - mystical marriage

Steal knowledge

Return

Save the world
In Your Genre -

- list 2 tropes &
- 2 cliches -

Storytelling seems innate to humanity - in all cultures
what we tell stories about
and how we differ - but we all do -

Impose meaning & Pattern

search for Redemption

Central trope of Action/Adventure -

Inward vs Campbell’s Hero’s Journey

Hero’s Call - Refusal

Oracle

Guardian on the Threshold (must fight)

die & go into death / defeat & go aline to

tests a opposition tests

"magical" aid / helpers

reward! mystical marriage, forbidden knowledge, steals fates

return 12 save the world
Class 6
World building I

Clichés are laziness
(Fantasy can be good but promotes lazy habits)

- places to start building a world -
  - physical planet -
    - have a volcano in Iceland led to the French Revolution
  - Differences (Hyperion -)
    - Necessity (Delany - Babel 17)
      - Navigators / war
  - Culture (base extrapolate)
    - Super realism with OKE twist
      - Harry Potter, protometal
  - Historical Research, China, details of student life early 21st Century

- Sex & Stuff Books
  - (Best sellers & brand names)
    - Mainstream but ALSO world building

- Delany - Babel 17 -
  - Reveals! - Structure -

World -
  - tropes? originality?
Which tropes does Delany use?

\[ \text{world} \rightarrow \]

normal \[ \rightarrow \] weird

Details:

- list/have some details that he uses to build the reality of his world
Class 7 - Workshop Roles

to play by the rules you have

to have rules

The rules have to make sense.
The rules have to be consistent.

writing yourself into a corner

"They were all run over by a truck and died"

"WORLD, PLOT & CHARACTER ARE

ALL INTER-DEPENDENT"

The outsider

we notice what's different

we notice what's wrong

we notice what we don't like

By characters noticing (& whining?)
about what is different, wrong, &
don't like, they can let us
know in contrast what is Normal,
what they consider right, and
what they DO like.

fingers & hand diagram

As we discover the underlying connections/sense of
the rules working
Cross Genre
(Too Many Magicians)

How many genres does Garrett fully satisfy in Too Many Magicians?

(Fantasy, mystery, alternative history, spy)

In cross genre, we don't just borrow tropes or ideas, but fulfill all the expectations of that genre.

Let's consider each of Garrett's genres and think how he does this.

World building - alt. hist. & fantasy -
2 changes - 1 hist, 1 fantasy

how does he reveal his world?

how does he use the different genres to play off each other - to reveal information that we need for a different genre (he does this constantly.)

How many different techniques of revelation did you notice?

Apprentice/journeyman - "stranger" - to a specialty, not to the world -

He sets you in the situation as if you already know the information, and then fills in relevant detail as if it were important to a different matter.
Does Garrett play fair?

Revelation - you don't always know what's going to be important.

Reveal major points very early -
- The bells
- Ashley's precognition

Setting up who you like & who you don't for good guy/bad guy.

We like to dislike the bad guy, but we also know it's - unsophisticated.
Transitions -
beginning of every shift must

give
who, where, when
because we ALWAYS know THIS
As long as you set this up
Clearly, your transitions will work!

Dialog! — Evesdrop!!

summary
indirect

& direct

Sound natural, not be natural
brief, natural rhythm

content
set mood

reveal character
reveal theme

be action —
& reveal the past — (flashback, remember-
talk!)

When we speak we reveal —
class, education, background
region, emotion (tone)
a specific place (type)

smell

verb

Part leaving the dentist's office, which smelled of mint, he went to the airfield to check on the dirigible, which had half-inflated on the ground and remembered. But he wanted to see it alone, without Attlee. And there he saw a man in flying leathers inspecting the craft, a stranger.

(Tomas Byrne)

"She's not much," Byrne said.

"When we're done with her, she'll fly like nothing you've ever seen," Part insisted.

agents

Characters want

Characters Act

Characters CHOOSE
Fact and fancy exercise - 500 words -

Write down a short autobiographical incident, alternate 1 sentence of objective fact and one sentence with focused details, without bias or interpretation. The next sentence should be personal opinion; it should reveal feeling; it should respond to the factual sentence but it need not respond directly.

The best fiction to come from this exercise has been when the sentence pairings are tangential or associative rather than cause and effect.

Agents -

Characters want -
Characters act -
Characters choose -
Exercise for Person 1

What DIDN'T happen

Person 1 (Fantasy Life)

Assign each person a Fantasy for Somewhat Character

Wizard

Romance on Mercury

Space pilot/Trader

You are Some

Exercise for Person 2

What is Character?

Robot?

Fully biological clone?

How is he viewed by his society?

By racists?

Character 1

How is Water more different from Water (up)?

What in pockets?

Images?
Exercise for 

Images / collage - 
Start with the port & the game -
What other images do you get? 
Make an image collage - 
Move out from the port -

Port suggests -

image ∈ images → images
rejection
24 hour rule
rejection letters (kinds)

2 kinds of exercises -

accessing right brain
creativity

(we're very good at getting to
and using left brain, but
right brain is a black box)

left brain - working on language skills
You Lie

Improv scene game to
explore character.
Author is "X" (Character)
Others are people in X's life who
want something

Improv scenes.
Author can stop any scene
by saying "You lie!"
but then tells us why
what really happened!
What's in its pockets?

Off the top of your head, very quickly, list ten things in the character's pockets/backpack/bag.
the Courtyard - central
toxic press

Exposition

slowing down

fleshing

show, don't tell

PACING - an entire subject

event
21W.758 Genre Fiction Workshop
Spring 2013

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