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10
Questions of Genre

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This article will discuss some of the issues, concepts, and concerns arising from work on film genres published over the last decade or so. It seeks to highlight a number of questions and problems that may pinpoint some possible directions for future research. I will be particularly concerned with the constitution of generic corpuses – the extent to which they are constituted by public expectations as well as by films, and the role of theoretical terms, on the one hand, and industrial and institutional terms, on the other, in the study of genres. The concept of verisimilitude is central to an understanding of genre, as is the question of the social and cultural functions that genres perform. These, too, will be discussed. Throughout I shall stress the changing, and hence historical, nature, not just of individual genres, but of generic regimes as well.

I shall be referring to several books and articles (thus, to some extent, this piece will serve as an extended review). But at a number of key points I shall be taking my cue, explicitly or otherwise, from an article by Alan Williams entitled "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" (an article that is itself a review of Thomas Schatz's *Hollywood Genres* and, to some extent, of my own book, *Genre*).[1]

Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that it raises so many fundamental questions, Williams's article has not been discussed as much as it deserves. In saying this, however, I should note that, insofar as I shall be concentrating here on American cinema and American genres, I shall be ignoring (or at least setting to one side) one of Williams's most important points – that "'genre' is not exclusively or even primarily a Hollywood phenomenon" and that "we need to get out of the United States."[2] I concentrate on American cinema partly because, as Williams himself notes elsewhere in his article, there is still an enormous amount of research to be done on what is still the most powerful national cinema in the world, and partly because most of the work published on genre to date has tended overwhelmingly to concern itself with Hollywood. In order to engage with this work, it is necessary to engage with its object. However, I should like to note too that a number of the more general, conceptual points I wish to make are equally applicable to film genres in India or Japan or Italy or Britain.

Expectation and Verisimilitude

There are several general, conceptual points to make at the outset. The first is that genres are not simply bodies of work or groups of films, however classified, labeled, and defined. Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis that spectators bring with them to the cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process. These systems provide spectators with a means of recognition and understanding. They help render films, and the elements within them, intelligible and therefore explicable. They offer a way of working out the significance of what is happening on the screen: why particular events and actions are taking place, why the characters are dressed the way they are, why they look, speak, and behave the way they do, and so on. If, for instance, a character in a film bursts into song for no reason (or no otherwise explicable reason), the spectator is likely to hypothesize that the film is a musical, a particular kind of film in which otherwise unmotivated singing is likely to occur. These systems also offer grounds for further anticipation. If a film is a musical, more singing is likely to occur, and the plot is likely to follow certain directions rather than others.

Inasmuch as this is the case, these systems of expectation and hypothesis involve a knowledge of – indeed they partly embody – various regimes of verisimilitude – various systems of plausibility, motivation, justification, and belief. *Verisimilitude* means "probable" or "likely."[3] It entails notions of propriety, of what is appropriate and therefore probable (or probable and therefore appropriate).

Regimes of verisimilitude vary from genre to genre. (Bursting into song is appropriate, therefore probable – therefore intelligible, therefore believable – in a musical. Less so in a thriller or a war film.) As such, these regimes entail rules, norms, and laws. (Singing in a musical is not just a probability; it is a necessity. It is not just likely to occur; it is bound to.) As Tzvetan Todorov has insisted, there are two broad types of verisimilitude applicable to representations: generic verisimilitude and a broader social or cultural verisimilitude. Neither equates in any direct sense to "reality" or "truth":

> If we study the discussions bequeathed us by the past, we realize that a work is said to have verisimilitude in relation to two chief kinds of norms. The first is what we call *rules of the genre*: for a work to be said to have verisimilitude, it must conform to these rules. In certain periods, a comedy is judged "probable" only if, in the last act, the characters are discovered to be near relations. A sentimental novel will be probable if its outcome consists in the marriage of hero and heroine, if virtue is rewarded and vice punished. Verisimilitude, taken in this sense, designates the work's relation to literary discourse: more exactly, to certain of the latter's subdivisions, which form a genre.

> But there exists another verisimilitude, which has been taken even more frequently for a relation with reality. Aristotle, however, has already perceived that the verisimilar is not a relation between discourse and its referent (the relation of truth), but between discourse and what readers believe is true. The relation is here established between the work and a scattered discourse that in part belongs to each of the individuals of a society but of which none may claim ownership; in other words, to *public opinion*. The latter is of course not "reality" but merely a further discourse, independent of the work.[4]

There are several points worth stressing here. The first is the extent to which, as the example of singing in the musical serves to illustrate, generic regimes of verisimilitude can ignore, sidestep, or transgress these broad social and cultural regimes.

The second is the extent to which this "transgression" of cultural verisimilitude is characteristic of Hollywood genres. This has implications for conventional notions of realism. There is, of course, always a balance in any individual genre between purely generic and broadly cultural regimes of verisimilitude. Certain genres appeal more directly and consistently to cultural verisimilitude. Gangster films, war films, and police procedural thrillers, certainly, often mark that appeal by drawing on and quoting "authentic" (and authenticating) discourses, artifacts, and texts: maps, newspaper headlines, memoirs, archival documents, and so on. But other genres, such as science fiction, Gothic horror, or slapstick comedy, make much less appeal to this kind of authenticity, and this is certainly one of the reasons why they tend to be despised, or at least misunderstood, by critics in the "quality" press. For these critics, operating under an ideology of realism, adherence to cultural verisimilitude is a necessary condition of "serious" film, television, or literature. As Todorov goes on to argue, realism as an ideology can partly be defined by its refusal to recognize the reality of its own generic status or its own adherence to a type of generic verisimilitude.

A third point to be made is that recent uses of the concept of verisimilitude in writing on genre tend to blur the distinction between generic and cultural verisimilitude, vitiating the usefulness of the term. Both Christine Gledhill and Kathryn Kane, for instance, in writing about melodrama and the war film respectively, tend to use "verisimilitude" simply as a synonym for "realism" or "authenticity."[5] This is a pity because, as both Gledhill and Kane implicitly demonstrate, melodrama and the war film are genres that often seek to blur the distinction between the cultural and the generic, and they are often particularly marked by the tensions between the different regimes.

The fourth point is that, at least in the case of Hollywood, generic regimes of verisimilitude are almost as "public," as widely known, as "public opinion" itself. It is not simply in films or in genres that the boundaries between the cultural and the generic are blurred: the two regimes merge also in public discourse, generic knowledge becoming a form of cultural knowledge, a component of "public opinion."

Fifth, and finally, it is often the generically verisimilitudinous ingredients of a film, those elements that are often least compatible with regimes of cultural verisimilitude – singing and dancing in the musical, the appearance of the monster in the horror film – that constitute its pleasure and thus attract audiences to the film in the first place. They too, therefore, tend to be "public," known, at least to some extent, in advance.

These last two remarks lead on to the next set of points, which concern the role and importance of specific institutional discourses, especially those of the press and the film industry itself, in the formation of generic expectations, in the production and circulation of generic descriptions and terms, and, therefore, in the constitution of any generic corpus.

Genre and Institutional Discourse

As John Ellis has pointed out, central to the practices of the film industry is the construction of a "narrative image" for each individual film: "An idea of the film is widely circulated and promoted, an idea which can be called the 'narrative image' of the film, the cinema's anticipatory reply to the question, 'What is the film like?' "[6] The discourses of film-industry publicity and marketing play a key role in the construction of such narrative images; but important too are other institutionalized public discourses, especially those of the press and television, and the "unofficial," "word of mouth" discourses of everyday life.

Genre is, of course, an important ingredient in any film's narrative image. The indication of relevant generic characteristics is therefore one of the most important functions that advertisements, stills, reviews, and posters perform. Reviews nearly always contain terms indicative of a film's generic status, while posters usually offer verbal generic (and hyperbolic) description – "The Greatest War Picture Ever Made" – as anchorage for the generic iconography in pictorial form.

These various verbal and pictorial descriptions form what Gregory Lukow and Steven Ricci have called the cinema's "intertextual relay."[7] This relay performs an additional, generic function: not only does it define and circulate narrative images for individual films, beginning the immediate narrative process of expectation and anticipation; it also helps to define and circulate, in combination with the films themselves, what one might call "generic images," providing sets of labels, terms, and expectations that will come to characterize the genre as a whole.

This is a key point. It is one of the reasons why I agree with Lukow and Ricci on the need to take account of all the component texts in the industry's intertextual relay when it comes to studying not only films but genre and genres. And it is one of the reasons why I would disagree with Rick Altman, in *The American Film Musical*, on the limited significance he assigns to the role of industrial and journalistic discourses in establishing a generic corpus.[8] (One of the many merits

of Altman's book, however, is that he devotes the best part of a chapter to this issue. Most books and articles on genre fail to discuss it at all.)

For Altman, the role of industrial and journalistic terms is crucial in establishing the presence of generic consistencies but of limited use in defining them:

> The fact that a genre has previously been posited, defined, and delimited by Hollywood is taken only as *prima facie* evidence that generic levels of meaning are operative within or across a group of texts roughly designated by the Hollywood term and its usage. The industrial/journalistic term thus founds a hypothesis about the presence of meaningful activity, but does not necessarily contribute a definition or delimitation of the genre in question.[9]

The identification of an industrial/journalistic term, then, is for Altman merely the first step in a multistage process. Having established a preliminary corpus in this way, the role of the critic is next to subject the corpus to analysis, to locate a method for defining and describing the structures, functions, and systems specific to a large number of the films within it. Then the critic, using this method as a basis, reconstitutes and redefines the corpus:

> Texts which correspond to a particular understanding of the genre, that is, which provide ample material for a given method of analysis, will be retained within the generic corpus. Those which are not illuminated by the method developed in step three will simply be excluded from the final corpus. In terms of the musical, this would mean admitting that there are some films which include a significant amount of diegetic music, and yet which we will refuse to identify as musicals in the strong sense which the final corpus implies.[10]

Having thus established a final corpus, the critic is finally in a position to produce a history of the genre and to analyze "the way in which the genre is molded by, functions within, and in turn informs the society of which it is a part."[11]

Before explaining my disagreement with this reasoning, it is important to recognize, along with Altman, that it is not possible to write about genres without being selective, and that many of the deficiencies of a good deal of writing on genre stem from defining and selecting on the basis of pre-established and unquestioned canons of films. As Alan Williams points out, this is one of the central deficiencies of Schatz's book, in which coverage of any given genre

> depends not on historical or theoretical even-handedness but on tacitly agreed-upon landmarks. Thus the chapter on the musical covers mainly Warner Brothers/Busby Berkeley, Fred Astaire at RKO, and the Freed Unit at MGM. So where is Lubitsch and the operetta? (Maybe the latter is not a "Musical," but *Hollywood Genres* does not explain.) Al Jolson and the crucially important melodramatic musicals of the early sound years? Who decided that these points alone would suffice?[12]

In contrast, Altman's book is impressively wide in its range of references and refreshingly free from established canons of taste and categorization, including

not only Jolson, operetta, and Lubitsch, but also the Elvis Presley films of the fifties and sixties and films like *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978) and *Flashdance* (Adrian Lyne, 1983). It is important to say, too, that I agree with Altman that journalistic and industrial labels rarely, on their own, provide a conceptual basis for the analysis of genres or for the location of generic patterns, structures, and systems, just as I agree that such analysis is vitally important.

Where I disagree, however, is on Altman's assertion that the importance of industrial/journalistic terms is restricted to the first step of generic analysis. I disagree with this because I do not believe the aim of generic analysis is the redefinition of a corpus of films. Such an aim is in the end no different, in effect if not in intention, from the highly selective categorizations of Schatz or from the worst pigeonholing inheritances of neo-classical literary theory. We can easily end up identifying the purpose of generic analysis with the rather fruitless attempt to decide which films fit, and therefore properly belong to, which genres. We can also end up constructing or perpetuating canons of films, privileging some and demoting or excluding others. (Thus even Altman, despite his broad range and the power of his method, finds himself excluding films like *Dumbo* [Ben Sharpsteen, 1941] and *Bambi* [David Hand, 1942] and nearly excluding *The Wizard of Oz* [Victor Fleming, 1939].)

Such an aim is, therefore, inherently reductive. More than that, it is in danger of curtailing the very cultural and historical analysis upon which Altman rightly insists as an additional theoretical aim. The danger lies not only in the devaluation of industrial/journalistic discourses, but in the separation of genre analysis from a number of the features that define its public circulation. These features include the fact that genres exist always *in excess* of a corpus of works; the fact that genres comprise expectations and audience knowledge as well as films; and the fact that these expectations and the knowledge they entail are public in status. As Todorov has argued (while himself tending to equate genres solely with works):

> One can always find a property common to two texts, and therefore put them together in one class. But is there any point in calling the result of such a union a "genre"? I think that it would be in accord with the current usage of the word and at the same time provide a convenient and operant notion if we agreed to call "genres" only those classes of texts that have been perceived as such in the course of history. The accounts of this perception are found most often in the discourse on genres (the meta-discursive discourse) and, in a sporadic fashion, in the texts themselves.[13]

As far as the cinema is concerned (Todorov here is writing about literature, and High Literature at that), this meta-discursive discourse is to be found in the intertextual relay. Clearly, generic expectations and knowledge do not emanate solely from the film industry and its ancillary institutions; and, clearly, individual spectators may have their own expectations, classifications, labels, and terms. But

these individualized, idiosyncratic classifications play little part, if any, in the public formation and circulation of generes and generic images. In the public sphere, the institutional discourses are of central importance. Testimony to the existence of genres, and evidence of their properties, is to be found primarily there.

A distinction needs to be made, then, between those studies of genres conceived as institutionalized classes of texts and systems of expectation and those studies that use critically or theoretically constructed terms as the basis for discussing classes of films. (Studies of film noir are obvious examples of the latter.) A distinction also needs to be made between institutionally recognized subgenres, cycles, and categories (operetta and the singing Western) and theoretical or scholarly classifications (the fairy tale musical, the show musical, and the folk musical). This is not to argue that theoretical studies and classifications are somehow illegitimate. (Far from it. These examples all illustrate how productive they can be.) It is, however, to insist on the pertinence of Todorov's distinction for an understanding of what it is that is being studied.

Institutional Discourses and Genre History

Not only do industrial and journalistic labels and terms constitute crucial evidence for an understanding of both the industry's and the audience's generic conceptions in the present; they also offer virtually the only available evidence for a historical study of the array of genres in circulation, or of the ways in which individual films have been generically perceived at any point in time. This is important for an understanding of the ways in which both the array and the perceptions have changed.

Let me give some examples. Both "the Western" and *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903) are firmly established in genre studies, the latter as an early, highly influential example of the former. However, in his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, Eric Partridge dates the first colloquial use of the term *Western* in anything other than an adjectival sense to around 1910. The first use of the term cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* with reference to a film dates from 1912, occurring in a review of *The Fight at the Mill* (1912) in a July 1912 issue of the trade magazine *The Moving Picture World*. This was nine years after *The Great Train Robbery* was released.

Now it may be argued, of course, that this is merely quibbling. While the specific term *Western* may not have been available to audiences in 1903, Westerns themselves, in the form of dime novels, Wild West shows, paintings, illustrations, short stories, and the like (as well as one or two films), had been around for some time.[14] Thus audiences of *The Great Train Robbery*, well accustomed to these forms, would have drawn on the paradigms they provided in understanding and reading the film. Charles Musser, however, has convincingly argued that this was not the case, that the paradigms used both by the industry and its audiences were

different and that it was the confluence of paradigms provided by melodrama, the chase film, the railway genre, and the crime film, rather than the Western, that ensured the film's contemporary success:

> Kenneth MacGowan attributed this success...to the fact that the film was "the first important Western," William Everson and George Fenin find it important because it is "the blueprint for all Westerns." These, however, are retrospective readings. One reason for *The Great Train Robbery*'s popularity was its ability to incorporate so many trends, genres and strategies fundamental to the institution of cinema at that time. The film includes elements of both re-enactment of contemporary news events (the train hold-up was modeled after recently reported crimes) and refers to a well-known stage melodrama by its title. Perhaps most importantly, *The Great Train Robbery* was part of a violent crime genre which had been imported from England a few months earlier. Porter was consciously working (and cinema patrons viewing) within a framework established by Sheffield Photo's *Daring Day-light Burglary*, British Gaumont/Walter Haggar's *Desperate Poaching Affair [Affray]* and R. W. Paul's *Trailed by Bloodhounds*....[Thus,] when initially released, *The Great Train Robbery* was not primarily perceived in the context of the Western. Its success did not encourage other Westerns but other films of crime – Lubin's *Bold Bank Robbery* [Jack Frawley, 1904], Paley and Steiner's [*Avenging a Crime; Or,*] *Burned at the Stake* [1904], and Porter's own *Capture of the Yegg Bank Robbers* [1904]....It was only when the Western genre emerged as a vital force in the nickelodeon era that *The Great Train Robbery* was interpreted from this new perspective.[15]

Musser's argument here serves to indicate, in addition to the change in generic status of *The Great Train Robbery*, the extent to which different periods in the history of the American cinema have been marked by different generic systems, different "generic regimes." It is an important theoretical point that genres "do not exist by themselves; they are named and placed within hierarchies or systems of genres, and each is defined by reference to the system and its members."[16] Furthermore, "Each era has its own system of genres."[17] Company catalogues are a particularly useful resource in establishing the generic regimes of the earliest years of the cinema. Their terminology and their groupings indicate the considerable differences between these regimes and the regimes of the studio era. Thus, instead of the Westerns, horror films, and war films of later years, the Kleine Optical Company's catalogue for 1905 lists films in the following groupings:

1 Story
   (a) historical
   (b) dramatic
   (c) narrative
2 Comic
3 Mysterious
4 Scenic
5 Personalities[18]

Meanwhile, Biograph's "Advance Partial List" of films for sale in 1902 lists its "subject" under the following titles and headings: Comedy Views, Sports and Pastime Views, Military Views, Railroad Views, Scenic Views, Views of Notable Personages, Miscellaneous Views, Trick Pictures, Marine Views, Children's Pictures, Fire and Patrol Views, Pan-American Exposition Views, Vaudeville Views, and Parade Pictures.[19] (The number of "documentary" or "actuality" categories here is, of course, indicative of the extent to which these genres far outweighed fiction in the period prior to 1903–4.)

In demonstrating the degree to which genre categories and generic regimes have changed, these examples illustrate the historical character of all genres. Genres are inherently temporal: hence, their inherent mutability on the one hand and their inherent historicity on the other. In disagreeing with Altman on the significance of institutional discourses, I now wish to focus attention on a further aspect of that temporality.

Genre as Process

It may at first sight seem as though repetition and sameness are the primary hallmarks of genres, as though, therefore, genres are above all inherently static. But as Hans Robert Jauss and Ralph Cohen (and I myself) have argued, genres are, nevertheless, best understood as *processes*.[20] These processes may, for sure, be dominated by repetition, but they are also marked fundamentally by difference, variation, and change.

The process-like nature of genres manifests itself as an interaction between three levels: the level of expectation, the level of the generic corpus, and the level of the "rules" or "norms" that govern both. Each new genre film constitutes an addition to an existing generic corpus and involves a selection from the repertoire of generic elements available at any one point in time. Some elements are included; others are excluded. Indeed, some are mutually exclusive: at most points in its history, the horror film has had to characterize its monster *either* supernaturally – as in *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1930) – or psychologically – as in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). In addition, each new genre film tends to extend this repertoire, either by adding a new element or by transgressing one of the old ones. Thus, for instance, *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1979) transgressed the division between psychological and supernatural monsters, giving its monster the attributes of both. In this way the elements and conventions of a genre are always *in* play rather than being simply *re*played;[21] and any generic corpus is always being expanded.

Memories of the films within a corpus constitute one of the bases of generic expectation. So, too, does the stock of generic images produced by advertisements, posters, and the like. As both corpus and image expand and change with the appearance of new films, new advertising campaigns, and new reviews, so also

what Jauss has termed the "horizon of expectation" appropriate to each genre expands and changes as well:

> The relationship between the individual text and the series of texts formative of a genre presents itself as a process of the continual founding and altering of horizons. The new text evokes for the reader (or listener) the horizon of expectations and "rules of the game" familiar to him from earlier texts, which as such can then be varied, extended, corrected, but also transformed, crossed out, or simply reproduced.[22]

This is one reason why it is so difficult to list exhaustively the characteristic components of individual genres, or to define them in anything other than the most banal or tautological terms: a Western is a film set on the American western frontier; a war film is a film that represents the waging of war; a detective film is a film about the investigation of criminals and crime; and so on. More elaborate definitions always seem to throw up exceptions. Altman provides an example. He cites Jean Mitry's definition of the Western as a "film whose action, situated in the American West, is consistent with the atmosphere, the values and the conditions of existence in the Far West between 1840 and 1900."[23] He then goes on to cite an exception, the "Pennsylvania western":

> To most observers it seems quite clear that films like *High, Wide and Handsome* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1937), *Drums along the Mohawk* (John Ford, 1939), and *Unconquered* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1947) have definite affinities with the western. Employing familiar characters set in relationships similar to their counterparts west of the Mississippi, these films construct plots and develop a frontier structure clearly derived from decades of western novels and films. But they do it in Pennsylvania and in the wrong century.[24]

Exclusive definitions, lists of *exclusive* characteristics, are particularly hard to produce. At what point do Westerns become musicals like *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, 1955) or *Paint Your Wagon* (Joshua Logan, 1969) or *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954)? At what point do singing Westerns become musicals? At what point do comedies with songs (like *A Night at the Opera* [Sam Wood, 1935]) become musical comedies? And so on.

These examples all, of course, do more than indicate the process-like nature of individual genres. They also indicate the extent to which individual genres not only form part of a generic regime, but also themselves change, develop, and vary by borrowing from, and overlapping with, one another. Hybrids are by no means the rarity in Hollywood many books and articles on genre in the cinema would have us believe. This is one reason why, as Marc Vernet has pointed out, "a guide to film screenings will often offer to the spectator rubrics like: western, detective film, horror film, and comedy; but also: dramatic comedy, psychological drama, or even erotic detective film."[25] Indeed, in Hollywood's classical era, as Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson have shown, nearly all its films were hybrids

insofar as they always tended to combine one type of generic plot, a romance plot, with others.[26] Moreover, it is at least arguable that many of the most apparently "pure" and stable genres, both inside and outside the cinema, initially evolved by combining elements from previously discrete and separate genres either within or across specific generic regimes. Ernest Mandel, for example, has argued that the detective genre emerged in this way by combining three such generically disparate elements: the "reverse story," developed by Godwin (*Caleb Williams*, 1794); the divination deduction technique, which originated in Persia and was introduced into modern literature by Voltaire (*Zadig*); and the *coup de théâtre*, borrowed from melodrama.[27] Similarly, Richard Traubner has shown, in painstaking detail, how operetta emerged by combining the features of *opera buffa*, German *Singspiel*, and British ballad opera and how it subsequently evolved by replacing some of these features with elements of burlesque and revue; then, in America at least, these were displaced in turn, until the genre finally emerged as the "musical play" with shows (and films) like *Show Boat* (filmed in 1936 by James Whale and in 1951 by George Sidney), *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon* (filmed in 1954 by Vincente Minnelli), *Carousel* (filmed in 1956 by Henry King), *West Side Story* (filmed in 1961 by Robert Wise), and *My Fair Lady* (filmed in 1964 by George Cukor).[28]

Hence the importance of *historicizing* generic definitions and the parameters both of any single generic corpus and of any specific generic regime. For it is not that more elaborate definitions are impossible to provide, just that they are always historically relative and therefore historically specific. It is not that the process-like nature of genres renders generalizations invalid. Genre films, genres, and generic regimes are always marked by boundaries and by frameworks, which always have limits. Thus even hybrids are recognized as hybrids – combinations of specific and distinct generic components – not as genres in their own right. (This is why I would prefer not to say, as Jim Collins has recently done, that a genre text always "remakes" norms, but rather that a genre text always either reworks them, extends them, or transforms them altogether.)[29] The point, though, is that if these limits are historically specific, they can be determined only empirically, not theoretically.

Genre History: Three Approaches

There currently seem to exist three major ways in which genre history has been conceived. The first is what Jauss has called "the evolutionary schema of growth, flowering, and decay."[30] This schema is open to several objections: it is teleological; it is (for all its organic metaphors) highly mechanistic; and it treats genres in isolation from any generic regime.

Similar objections apply to a second model of evolutionary development, used by Thomas Schatz, in which genres progress toward self-conscious formalism. Here is Williams's description of Schatz's approach:

As genres change over time, and their audiences become more and more self-conscious, genres progress from transparency to opacity, "from straightforward storytelling to self-conscious formalism" (p. 38). Not all genres complete this cycle unimpeded. Gangster Films, for example, were disrupted by the threat of censorship as were, at various points, War Films.

To this Williams poses a theoretical objection:

Note that Schatz locates this shift to opacity *within individual genres*, such that a "new" genre in the 1980s would have to go through a "classical" stage before evolving into self-conscious formalism. It is not the filmmaking system or the social context that has changed, but the genres that have evolved. (In my opinion, this is clearly wrong.)

And here is an empirical objection: "One can find self-conscious Westerns, such as Fairbanks' *Wild and Woolly* [John Emerson, 1917], as early as the late teens. In fact, the entire mid-to-late silent cinema seems remarkably 'formalistic,' which is possibly one reason it is wholly absent from Schatz's book."[31] (A similar point has been made at greater length, and to equally devastating effect, in an article by Tag Gallagher.)[32]

The third historical model is the one provided by the Russian formalists.[33] It has the virtue of embedding the history of individual genres within the history not just of generic formations but of wider cultural formations as well. It is perhaps best known for Tynyanov's concept of "the dominant" (with its correlative concept of genre history as the displacement of one dominant genre by another),[34] and by Shklovsky's idea that such displacements occur according to a principle known as "the canonization of the junior branch": "When the 'canonized' art forms reach an impasse, the way is paved for the infiltration of the elements of non-canonized art, which by this time have managed to evolve new artistic devices."[35] Quoting from Juri Streidter's introduction to a German anthology of Russian formalist texts, Jauss describes the formalists' conception as a whole:

The Formalist conception of genre as a historical system of relations participates in the attempt to replace the classical notion of literary tradition – as a steady, unilinear, cumulative course – with the dynamic principle of literary *evolution*, by which they do not mean an analogy to organic growth or to Darwinian selection. For here "evolution" is supposed to characterize the phenomenon of literary "succession" "not in the sense of a continuous 'development,' but rather in the sense of a 'struggle' and 'break' with immediate predecessors through a contemporary recourse to something older." In the historical evolution of literature thus understood, literary genres can be grasped in the periodic alternation of the dominating role as well as in a sequence of rivalries.

In addition,

From a diachronic perspective the historical alternation of the dominating genre manifests itself in the three steps of canonization, automation, and reshuffling. Successful genres... gradually lose their effective power through continual reproduction; they are forced to the periphery by new genres often arising from a "vulgar" stratum if they cannot be reanimated through a restructuring (be it through the playing up of previously suppressed themes or methods, or through the taking up of materials or the taking-over of functions from other genres).[36]

There is clearly a great deal here that is both attractive and useful. As a theory or model, it takes account of the historicity not only of genres but of specific generic regimes; it takes account of their process-like nature; and, in its insistence on the importance of an interplay between canonized and non-canonized forms of representation and between canonized and non-canonized genres, it takes account both of the transience of generic hierarchies as well as the role of hybridization in the formation and dissolution of individual genres.

In sketching the application of this model to the American cinema, one could argue, for instance, that the cinema itself arose in and as the conjunction of a variety of art forms – canonized and otherwise: from photography, through pictorial entertainments and spectacles like the diorama, the zoëtrope, and the magic lantern show, to magic itself and to the vaudeville routine. Its earliest generic regime, in America as elsewhere, was dominated by the genres associated with these forms: the moving snapshot or "view," re-enacted and reconstructed news, trick films, and slapstick and gag-based comedy. Subsequent to this, there is a shift to a predominance of fiction, in particular melodrama (whether in its thrilling, mysterious, domestic, or spectacular guise) on the one hand and comedy on the other. With accompanying subdivisions and with the addition of genres like the musical, this "dominant" came to be stabilized in the era of oligopoly and studio control. Later, in a period of crisis and readjustment, "adult" drama and "epic" values – marked by, and derived principally from, the epic itself and spreading from there to the Western, the war film, the musical, and even, with films like *The Great Race* (Blake Edwards, 1965) and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (Stanley Kramer, 1963), to slapstick comedy – gained a position of dominance, though by now they were beginning to jockey for position with "exploitation" genres and the "juvenilization" of Hollywood's output. Finally, more recently, the process of juvenilization has continued, with the emergence of the "teenpic" and the predominance of science fiction and horror. Meanwhile, in exemplary illustration of Shklovsky's thesis, some of these genres, in combination with serial-derived individual films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981) and *Romancing the Stone* (Robert Zemickis, 1984), have been promoted from the "junior branches" of Hollywood's output to achieve hegemony within the realms of the family blockbuster.

What is particularly valuable about the formalists' model is that it neither prescribes the conditions for generic outmodedness nor specifies any single mechanism by which non-canonized forms, devices, or genres might find a

place within generic regimes or assume a position of dominance within them. It allows for a variety of factors and reasons. This is especially important in the case of the cinema, where, for example, the initial predominance of actuality genres is as much a consequence of technological factors as it is of their popularity or "canonization" elsewhere in the contemporary culture and where, on the other hand, the promotion and predominance of "juvenile" genres is as much a consequence of market research, the targeting of audiences, and, in some cases, of new special-effects techniques as it is of any new-found aesthetic vitality.[37]

What is particularly striking about this historical sketch, meanwhile, is the extent to which many genres either originated in forms and institutions of entertainment other than the cinema or were (and are) circulated additionally by them. Melodrama, for example, originated on the stage. It fed from there, in a process of increasing and mutual interaction, first into written fiction and then into the cinema. All the while, in all three fields, it generated subdivisions like the crime story, the mystery, the adventure story, the romance, and domestic drama. Comedy came from vaudeville, the circus, burlesque, and the newspaper cartoon strip as well as from the "legitimate" stage and, later, from radio and television. The musical came from Broadway (and its songs from Tin Pan Alley). Cheap hardback and paperback books, meanwhile, together with both "slick" and "pulp" magazines, comic books, comic strips, and mass-produced fiction of all kinds, helped in some cases to originate, and in all cases to circulate, genres like the Western, the detective story and the thriller, horror, science fiction, war, and romance. This generic fiction often appeared in series or serial format with precise generic titles and names: *Adventure Library* (1897), *The Detective Library* (1917), *Western Story Magazine* (1919), *Thrill Book* (1919), *Love Story Magazine* (1921), *Love Story Library* (1926), *War Stories* (1922), *Gangster Stories*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science-Fiction* (1942), *Bestseller Mysteries* (1942), *The Vault of Horror* (1950), and so on.[38]

At this point it is worth signaling the need for a great deal more research both on cross-media generic formation and circulation and, as a corollary, on the particular contributions of individual institutions and forms.[39] More research is needed, too, on the aesthetically specific transformations and adaptations that each genre undergoes in each institution and form.[40]

Aesthetics and Ideology

Finally, I should like to move on to discuss a set of questions about the aesthetic characteristics of mass-produced genres, their institutional functions within the cinema, and their putative social, cultural, and ideological significance.

The first point to make here is, again, a historical one. It concerns the provenance, and status, of the term "genre" itself, its applicability to the cinema, and its role in characterizing not only the cinema but mass-produced art and

entertainment in general. It is a point that, once more, has usefully been focused by Williams:

Perhaps the biggest problem with genre theory or genre criticism in the field of cinema is the word *genre*. Borrowed, as a critical tool, from literary studies... the applicability of "genre" as a concept in film studies raises some fairly tough questions. Sample genres are held to be Westerns, Science Fiction Films, more recently Disaster Films, and so on. What do these loose groupings of works – that seem to come and go, for the most part, in ten- and twenty-year cycles – have to do with familiar literary genres such as tragedy, comedy, romance, or (to mix up the pot a bit) the epistolary novel or the prose poem?

He continues,

For the phrase "genre films," referring to a general category, we can frequently, though not always, substitute "film narrative." Perhaps *that* is the real genre. Certainly there is much more difference between *Prelude: Dog Star Man* [Stan Brakhage, 1961] and *Star Wars* than there is between the latter and *Body Heat* [Lawrence Kasdan, 1981]. It's mainly a question of terminology, of course, but I wonder if we ought to consider the principal genres as being narrative film, experimental/avant-garde film, and documentary. Surely these are the categories in film studies that have among themselves the sorts of significant differences that one can find between, say, epic and lyric poetry. If we reserve this level for the term *genre*, then film genres will by definition have the kind of staying power seen in literary genres. What we presently call film genres would then be *sub-genres*.[41]

In many ways, it seems to me, Williams is right about this. However, apart from the fact that, as he says, it is "probably too late" to change things, there is an important qualification to be made.

As Ralph Cohen has pointed out, the term *genre* is a nineteenth-century term.[42] Thus, although the concept is clearly much older, the term itself emerges precisely at the time that popular, mass-produced generic fiction is making its first appearance (its genres, incidentally, just as susceptible to Williams's strictures). At the same time also there began to emerge a distinct shift in the value placed on generic literature by High Culture artists and critics. As Terry Threadgold has explained, prior to the advent of romanticism "it was *literature* that was generic":

The rest, the "popular culture" of political pamphlets, ballads, romances, chapbooks, was not only *not* literature, but also *not* generic; it escaped the law of genre, suffering a kind of rhetorical exclusion by inclusion in the classical distinction between high, middle, and low styles. It was seen as a kind of anarchic, free area, unconstrained by the rules of polite society and decorum, by *genre* in fact.[43]

With the emergence of new technologies, new capital, mass production, and new means of distribution (notably the railway), with the formation of a relatively

large literate (or semi-literate) population (with the formation, therefore, of [a] market), and with the commodification of all forms of leisure and entertainment, the equation is reversed. Now it is "popular culture," mass culture, that [is] generic, ruled as it is by market pressures to differentiate to a limited degree in order to cater to various sectors of consumers and to repeat commercially successful patterns, ingredients, and formulas. By contrast, "true literature" is marked by self-expression, creative autonomy, and originality, and hence by a freedom from all constrictions and constraints, including those of genre.

It is at this point absolutely crucial to disentangle a number of assumptions and conflations, for this is where a great deal of "genre theory" (indeed "popular cultural theory" in general) tends to go astray. First, of course, it has to be recognized that no artist, in whatever sphere of aesthetic production, at whatever period in history, in whatever form of society, has ever been free either of aesthetic conventions and rules or of specific institutional constraints (whether he or she has reacted against them or not). Second, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has recently re-emphasized, all cultural and artistic production in Western societies is now, and has been for some time, subject to capitalist conditions of production, distribution, and exchange, hence to commodification.[44] (This means, among other things, that High Cultural art, whether it still draws upon "traditional," precapitalist genres like lyric poetry or eschews both "traditional" and modern, popular genres is still itself "generic" insofar as it is thereby still engaged in catering for a sector of the market and still involved in a form of product differentiation.)[45] The third point, therefore, is that mass-produced, popular genres have to be indeed understood within an economic context, as conditioned by specific economic imperatives and by specific economic contradictions – in particular, of course, those that operate within specific institutions and industries. That is why it is important to stress the financial advantages to the film industry of an aesthetic regime based on regulated difference, contained variety, pre-sold expectations, and the reuse of resources in labor and materials. It is also why it is important to stress the peculiar nature of films as *aesthetic* commodities demanding at least a degree of novelty and difference from one to another, and why it is necessary to explore the analogies and the distinctions between cycles and genres in the cinema, on the one hand, and models and lines in the field of non-artistic commodity production, on the other.

Failure to recognize these points results in approaches to genre that are inadequate and simplistic. It is worth specifying two such approaches here. The first is what Altman has called the "ritual" approach, exemplified again by Thomas Schatz (along with Will Wright and John Cawelti, a pioneer of this particular approach).[46] Here is Williams's summary of this approach: "The repetitive nature of genre production and consumption produces active but indirect audience participation; successful genres are 'stories the audience has isolated through its collective response.' Hence genre filmmaking can be examined as 'a form of collective cultural expression'" (pp. 12–13).[47] Quite apart from the doubtful assumption that consumer decision-making can be considered a

[f]orm of "cultural expression" and quite apart from the tendency of such an approach to conflate the multiplicity of reasons for consumer "choices" and a multiplicity of readings of these "choices," the ritual theory of genres is open to question on other grounds. Principal among these is that it ignores the role of institutional determinations and decisions, bypassing the industry and the sphere of production in an equation between market availability, consumer choice, consumer preference, and broader social and cultural values and beliefs. This is an equation open to challenge on its own grounds. During the studio era, for instance, Westerns were regularly produced in large numbers, despite the fact that, as Garth Jowett has shown, such market research as was conducted at this time indicated that the genre was popular only with young adolescent boys and sectors of America's rural population and that it was *actively disliked* more than it was liked by the viewing population as a whole.[48]

Second, objections can also be made to what Altman calls the "ideological" approach to genre, which recognizes the capitalist nature of the film industry and the status of its films as commodities but which treats genres simply as vehicles for "capitalist" (or the "dominant") ideology.[49] This approach is open to the charges of reductivism, economism, and cultural pessimism.[50] It tends to presume, in the final analysis, that representations reflect their social and economic conditions of existence, that institutions and social formations necessarily secure their own reproduction, and, in Colin MacCabe's words, that "the meanings of texts...are always finally anchored in a class struggle which is not to be understood in cultural terms."[51] As both MacCabe and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith have insisted, each in his different way, "Stressing the capitalist character of modern cultural production is in itself neither optimistic nor pessimistic."[52] The ideological significance of any text – or any genre – is always to be sought in a context-specific analysis. It cannot simply be deduced from the nature of the institution responsible for its production and circulation, nor can it ever be known in advance.

Both these theories, for all their differences, suffer from the fact that they pay little attention to aesthetics – for them, form is always, and only, a wrapping for the cultural or ideological content in which they are almost exclusively interested. Insofar as they do discuss form, they tend to stress the repetitive, stereotypical aspects of genres, setting aside the differences within and between them in order to provide themselves with a stable corpus and in order to substantiate their underlying premise: that the reasons for the popularity and longevity of genres are relatively uniform, as are, aside from a few Lévi-Straussian antinomies, the genres themselves, the meanings they convey, and the culture (or ideology) that underpins them. While it may be that repetition is important, it is also true that, as we have seen, variation and difference are crucial. Equally, while it may be that Hollywood genres are in most instances best considered as subgenres of narrative film, and while these subgenres may not be marked by the kinds of apparent discursive peculiarities that tend to differentiate the narrative film from documentary or the structuralist avant-garde, there is still a great deal of scope for the

investigation of specific discursive characteristics. Aside from my own attempt in *Genre*, to explore the ways in which different genres exploit in different ways the features and characteristics of the narrative film (an attempt somewhat marred by an over-schematic approach, by a lack of attention to hybridization, and, above all, by a lack of attention to history), the basis for an approach can perhaps be found in the Russian formalist idea that genres can each involve a "dominant" (or dominating) aesthetic device (or ideological element).[53]

On this basis, particular genres can be characterized not as the only genres in which given elements, devices, and features occur, but as the ones in which they are dominant, in which they play an overall organizing role.

Approaches to individual genres – and to individual genre films – that draw centrally on the notion of a generic dominant are few and far between. However, it could be argued, for example, that the epic is marked by the dominance of spectacle; that the thriller and the detective genre, especially as discussed by Dennis Porter and Kristin Thompson, are dominated by the devices of suspense, narrative digression, and hermeneutic delay;[54] and that, as the Russian formalists themselves have argued, melodrama involves the subordination of all other elements "to one overriding aesthetic goal: the calling forth of 'pure,' 'vivid' emotions."[55] In doing so, however, emphasis must again be placed on the fact that dominant elements are not necessarily exclusive elements, occurring only in the genre concerned. Clearly, spectacle, digression, suspense, and the generation of passion and emotion are properties common to all Hollywood films.

By way of conclusion, I would like to stress the need for further research, for further concrete and specific analyses, and for much more attention to genres hitherto neglected in genre studies, such as the adventure film, the war film, and the epic. In stressing this, I can do no better than to quote Williams for the last time. In his own summation, he calls for a "return to film history," for "genre studies with real historical integrity." This would mean, he says, three things: "(1) starting with a genre's 'pre-history,' its roots in other media; (2) studying all films, regardless of perceived quality; and (3) going beyond film content to study advertising, the star system, studio policy, and so on in relation to the production of films."[56] I would merely add that the scope of this investigation needs to be extended beyond individual genres to encompass specific generic regimes both inside and outside the cinema.

Notes

1   Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 121–5; Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981); Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: BFI, 1980).

2   Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" p. 124.

3.   For discussions of verisimilitude and genre, see Ben Brewster, "Film," in *Exploring Reality*, edited by Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Michael Irwin (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), esp. pp. 147–9; Gérard Genette, "Vraisemblance et motivation," in *Figures*, vol. 3 (Paris: Seuil, 1969); and Tzvetan Todorov, "The Typology of Detective Fiction" and "An Introduction to Verisimilitude," in *The Poetics of Prose* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), and *Introduction to Poetics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), esp. pp. 118–19.

4.   Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, pp. 118–19.

5   Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Introduction," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, edited by Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1987), esp. p. 9: "As a bourgeois form, melodrama is constrained by the same conditions of verisimilitude as realism. If the family melodrama speciality is generational and gender conflict, verisimilitude demands that the central issues of sexual difference and identity be 'realistically' presented." Kathryn Kane, *Visions of War: Hollywood Combat Films of World War II* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1976), esp. p. 121: "The achievement of [*The Story of*] *G. I. Joe* [William Wellman, 1945] however is not really one of historical data providing the truth of what is portrayed.... Rather, its power is the result of an insistence on *verisimilitude*, the stylistic groundwork on which the authenticity props rest."

6   John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 30.

7   Gregory Lukow and Steve Ricci, "The 'Audience' Goes 'Public': Intertextuality, Genre, and the Responsibilities of Film Literacy," *On Film*, no. 12 (Spring 1984): 29.

8   Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989).

9   Ibid., p. 13.

10   Ibid., p. 14.

11   Ibid., pp. 14–15.

12   Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" p. 123.

13   Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," *New Literary History* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 102.

14   On the Western prior to the emergence of the cinema and on all these forms, see *The BFI Companion to the Western*, edited by Edward Buscombe (New York: Atheneum, 1988), pp. 18–22.

15   Charles Musser, "The Travel Genre in 1903–04: Moving Toward Fictional Narratives," *Iris* 2, no. 1 (1984): 56–7. The references here are to Kenneth MacGowan, *Behind the Screen* (New York: Delacorte, 1965), p. 114; and George Fenin and William K. Everson, *The Western: From Silents to Cinerama* (New York: Orion Press, 1962), p. 49.

16   Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 207.

17   Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," p. 103.

18   *Complete Illustrated Catalog of Moving Picture Machines, Stereoptikons, Slides, Films* (Chicago: Kleine Optical Company, November 1905), p. 36.

19   *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908*, compiled by Kemp R. Niver (Los Angeles: Locaire Research Group, 1971), pp. 59–73.

20 Cohen, "History and Genre," pp. 205–6; Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 80; Neale, *Genre*, p. 19.

21 I owe this phrase to an unpublished lecture on genre by Elizabeth Cowie.

22 Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic*, p. 79.

23 Jean Mitry, *Dictionnaire du cinéma* (Paris: Larousse, 1963), p. 276; quoted in Altman, *American Film Musical*, p. 95.

24 Altman, *American Film Musical*, p. 96. See also Altman's discussion of the definition of the Western in "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," reprinted in this volume.

25 Marc Vernet, "Genre," *Film Reader* 3 (February 1978): 13.

26 David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 16–17.

27 Ernest Mandel, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 18.

28 Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

29 Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 46.

30 Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic*, p. 88.

31 Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" pp. 123–4.

32 Tag Gallagher, "Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral: Problems in the 'Evolution' of the Western," *Film Genre Reader*, edited by Barry K. Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 202–16.

33 See, in particular, Boris Eikenbaum, "The Theory of the Formal Method," and Jury Tynyanov, "On Literary Evolution," both in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, edited by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978); and Viktor Shklovsky's views as summarized both in these works and in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 259–60.

34 Tynyanov, "On Literary Evolution," pp. 72–3.

35 Quoted in Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, p. 260.

36 Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic*, pp. 105–6.

37 On exploitation, juvenilization, and the emergence of the teenpic, see Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988). On the role of special effects, see Steve Neale, "Hollywood Strikes Back – Special Effects in Recent American Cinema," *Screen* 21, no. 3 (1981): 101–5.

38 Dates for series titles indicate initial year of publication. On mass-produced fiction, series, and genres, see, among others, Christine Bold, *Selling the Wild West: Popular Western Fiction, 1860–1960* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); *The Pulps: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture*, edited by Tony Goodstone (New York: Chelsea House, 1970); Ron Goulart, *Great History of Comic Books* (Chicago and New York: Contemporary Books, 1986); Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956); Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Quentin Reynolds, *The Fiction Factory, or*

From Pulp Row to Quality Street (New York: Random House, 1955); Frank L. Schick, *The Paperbound Book in America* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1958); and Piet Schreuders, *The Book of Paperbacks: A Visual History of the Paperback* (London: Virgin Books, 1981).

39 The only books dealing with a number of genres across a variety of institutions and forms are, so far as I am aware, John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976); and Robert C. Toll, *The Entertainment Machine: American Show Business in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Research is also needed on the institutional connections between the cinema, the theater, radio, television, and popular music, which in part enable cross-media generic circulation. For a summary and bibliography of some of the work to date, see Calvin Pryluck, "Industrialization of Entertainment in the United States," in *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law*, vol. 2 edited by Bruce A. Austin (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1986).

40 The kind of studies I have in mind are best represented, to date, by Altman's *American Film Musical*, especially his emphasis on edited alternation in constructing a "dual focus" narrative and his concepts of the "audio" and "video" dissolve, esp. pp. 16–27 and 59–89; John Mueller's *Astaire Dancing: The Musical Films* (New York: Knopf, 1985), esp. "Astaire's Use of the Camera," pp. 26–34; and Christine Saxton's *Illusions of Grandeur: The Representation of Space in the American Western* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, Inc., 1988).

41 Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" pp. 121–2.

42 Cohen, "History and Genre," p. 203.

43 Terry Threadgold, "Talking about Genre: Ideologies and Incompatible Discourses," *Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1989): 121–2.

44 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Popular Culture," *New Formations*, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 79–90.

45 For a discussion of this idea in relation to the cinema, see Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution," *Screen* 22, no. 1 (1981): 11–40.

46 Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*; Schatz, *Hollywood Genres*; Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

47 Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" p. 123.

48 Garth S. Jowett, "Giving Them What They Want: Movie Audience Research before 1950," in *Current Research in Film*, vol. 1, edited by Austin.

49 Altman, *American Film Musical*, p. 94.

50 Possibly the worst example I have come across is Judith Hess Wright, "Genre Films and the Status Quo," *Jump Cut*, no. 1 (May–June 1974): 1, 16, 18.

51 Colin MacCabe, introduction to *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, edited by MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 4.

52 Nowell-Smith, "Popular Culture," p. 88.

53 See Tynyanov, "On Literary Evolution."

54 Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 49–86.

55 Daniel Gerould, "Russian Formalist Theories of Melodrama," *Journal of American Culture* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 154.

56 Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" p. 124.