# Epistemology, literary genre and knowledge organisation systems

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**Abstract**

This theoretical paper considers genre as the epistemological foundation for fiction retrieval systems, in particular the relationship between the individual work and generic systems. It explores the characteristics of literary genres, and how they are determined, and examines ontological and historical aspects of genre. It considers the relationship between historically contingent generic transformations and literary genre as categorising principle. Finally, it offers some suggestions for future design of fiction KOS.

**Keywords:** Fiction, Genres, Knowledge organisation systems, Tagging.

## 1. PREFACE

Traditionally, where knowledge organisation systems (KOS) have dealt with fictional works, the approach has generally been through genre (see Beghtol, 1989, 1990, for an overview of fiction classification schemes). The notion of genre as categorisation principle comes to library science, relatively unexamined, from literary theory. It underpins many of the assumptions that fiction KOS has about fictional texts, even when the focus of the fiction retrieval system is predominantly based on user-warrant (e.g. *The Book House*, Pejtersen, 1994, 59).

Raymond Williams wrote "the recognition of the relation of a collective mode and an individual object …is a recognition of related practices. That is to say, the irreducibly individual projects that particular works are, may come in experience and in analysis to show resemblances which allow us to group them into collective modes" (Williams, 2001, 179). This paper, which considers genre as the epistemological foundation for fiction retrieval systems, is interested in the relationship between the individual work and generic systems. The aspects of genre theory that are of most interest to the current study are the notion of the horizon of expectation, the perceived gap between macro-level discussions of genre as abstracted systems and micro-level perspectives on the specific, individual texts which constitute the generic system, and the notion of diachronic transformation. Reflection on literary theory approaches to genre allows us to return to the issue of using genre as an organising principle in fictional KOS with some questions and observations.

## 2. GENRE AS CATEGORISING PRINCIPLE IN FICTION KOS

Jarmo Saarti's 2002 paper on fiction literature knowledge organisation systems (KOS) offered an overview of some of the issues and reported on a number of solutions. He divides studies on the classification of fiction into two categories: the first focusing on shelf classification and the second focusing on classification as a means for the content description of fiction and explains that:

> The oldest and most used one is to separate a few well-known genres from the rest of the fiction stock. Usually these genres are also the most used ones in a library. Thus e.g. detective novels are used as a shelf class nearly in every public library. (Harrell 1985, 14; Juntunen & Saarti 1992, 108.) The second step in shelf classification is to separate popular fiction from the fiction stock and arrange it according to genres (see e.g. Alternative arrangement 1982, 75-76).
>
> The third and the most challenging way are to try to classify the whole fiction stock. Here we can find two different approaches. In one the whole stock is divided into classes without the distinction to recreational and serious fiction (see e.g. Burgess 1936 and Saarti 1997). In the other model the fiction stock is firstly divided into two main classes - recreational and serious fiction - and those main classes are the divided into subcategories (see e.g. Spiller 1980, 241).

In this extract, we see reference to a number of concerns in the history of library science relating to fiction. Even to this day, there hangs over library science a faint but still persistent shadow of guilt relating to the management of "popular" fiction. Historically, there have been questions about whether this is really what libraries should be involved with. At the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century, as the study of English literature began to become institutionalised in the UK, there were letters in the letter pages of the Library Association journal about whether libraries should be encouraging the reading of novels and the consumption of fiction for pleasure alone, or whether libraries should be concerned with the intellectual "improvement" of its patrons, by encouraging the reading of serious knowledge based literature (Barr; Sturges, 1992). This concern about reading for pleasure leaves its trace in Saarti's reference to the common library approach to shelf classification of separating serious (literary) and entertaining (popular) fiction. Secondly, there underpins Saarti's review a notion of genre that is relatively ontological. There is an assumption that there are some well-known genres. What is less clear, however, is whether acknowledgement of these "well-known genres" is shared across fiction KOS. "Detective novels" is a generic category cited in Saarti, though, interestingly, it does not figure in OCLC's WorldCat genres listings, where detective fiction is subsumed under the category "mystery fiction".

Saarti discusses a number of fiction retrieval solutions, including OCLC's *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction Dramas etc* (GSAFD) and the Finnish thesaurus Kaunokki. He explains that the editorial board of Kaunokki decided that the thesaurus should be "made to follow the facets mentioned in the previous studies on the classification and indexing of fiction". These facets are:

- Fictional genres and their explanations

- Events, motives and themes

- Actors

- Settings

- Times

- Other, mostly technical and typographical.

It was decided that the terms that describe the genre of the fictional work correspond to the personality facet. While this would seem, as Saarti argues, a logical application of facet analysis, it gives rise to the following question: what are these genres that should be incorporated into a controlled vocabulary given that Saarti and OCLC have differing views about even such an arguably essential fictional category as "detective novels"?

Saarti's work has inspired others to consider the ideal information system for fiction using his model as a starting point. Hypén and Mäkelä suggested that the FRBR model might offer possibilities not available in the 1990s when Saarti originally published his model, and they have used it to develop Kirjasampo, an interactive web service for fiction. Kirjasampo distinguishes between the "abstract work", which refers to the contents of the work "that which is the same in all translations and versions" (p. 285), and "physical

work" which describes "features inherent to each translation or version" (p. 285). At the abstract work level there is a field labelled "genre", and some examples are offered: "fantasy literature, one-day novel, detective novel etc". The Kirjasampo project is about presenting similarities and relationships between works, and there is an assumption that the more that different works share the same keywords, the more they will resemble each other and "the more they will exist in an intertextual relationship with each other" (p. 287).

The authors describe the addition of a novel field in this system which allows librarians to recommend works and link them together. This is seen as a form of library professionals' tacit knowledge, based on extensive literary knowledge. It is "the intuitive knowledge that guides the librarian and which he or she relies on when searching for 'something similar to read' or 'good literature' for the customer". Genre is never unpacked in the reporting of this project, and the inclusion of the intuitive knowledge of librarians might suggest that underpinning this approach is a view about "literature" nearer to the notion of the intuitive good taste of the critic assumed by literary hermeneutics as literary theory than post-modern and post-structuralist approaches to analysing literature.

For Adkins and Bassaller, writing in 2007, genre is "included as an objective fiction access point because many books claim to be part of a particular genre" (p. 359). In their study, which compared and contrasted online bookstores readers' advisory databases and public library catalogues in relation to fiction access points, it was discovered that all sources in their study used genre classification. Studies such as this one suggest that for all the problems inherent in genre classification, and despite all the fudging about the specific relationships between genres, about the relationship of work to genre, about the scope of generic categories and indeed the existence of generic categories, genre, in a fairly ubiquitous and quotidian way, is considered a categorising principle in the broader discursive regime of bibliography

## 3. LITERARY APPROACHES TO GENRE

The concept "genre" is clearly and demonstrably important to fiction librarianship. It allows certain links to be made between individual fiction works and can contextualise individual works. It has pragmatic and operative power, but it is a concept that as a categorising principle has been subject to debate from within literary and cultural theory. The theoretical study of genre began with Aristotle and Plato (Frow, 2006, Cobley, 2006). The Aristotelian approach to genre is a "model of taxonomy in which a relationship of hierarchical belonging between a class and its members predominates" (Frow, 2006, 26). Cobley (2006) writes that "[i]t is commonly noted that there is little genre theory in the period between Aristotle and the twentieth century. [...] The fragmentary observations in Aristotle's *Poetics*, generally taken to inaugurate genre theory, set a tone for Aristotle's successors" (p. 43). Frow suggests that since Aristotle, genre theory has focused either on the "history of empirically existing genres, without concern for the grounds on which they are differentiated" (p. 58) or "it has attempted to develop a systematic account of genre

on the basis of a misreading of the Socratic triad" (58). The first, Frow writes, is the most prevalent and least interesting. The tone, Cobley argues, was a prescriptive one, although there have been notable sceptics, including Dr Johnson, who doubted that prescriptive rules for literary works could be sustained over a period of time. Frow's second tradition depends on dividing the universe of literary genres into "epic" (or narrative), the dramatic and the lyric (p. 59). Many critics have expanded on this system including Hegel and even the fictional literary critic and writer, Stephen Dedalus, in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Frow, 2006, 61).

More recently, genre theory has started to question the structure of genre, seeing genre rather as a process to instantiate particular contextualized readings of texts than as a normative set of rules. Cobley argues that the recent focus of genre theory has shifted to a consideration of "a new 'synchronic' bearing in the humanities. Synchronic study, as with Saussure, entailed the questioning of the very basis and conditions which allowed phenomena to exist and function" (p. 44). Emphasis on "synchronic study", and the notion of phenomena as idealist essences tends towards an ahistoric and abstract view of genre, despite claims of the centrality of historicity in studies of genre theory (Fowler, 1982, Frow, 2006, Dowd; Stevenson; Strong, 2006), however examining the basis and conditions facilitating the existence and function of genre potentially leads back to considering genre in relation to society, history and communicative practice.

Of some interest in theoretical approaches to genre theory is the notion the horizons of expectation in relation to genre. The phrase can be traced back to Husserl's "horizon of expectations" modified through Jauss's use of the phrase in a literary historical context to discuss the system of genres considered as an historical process (Frow, 2006, 71). Fowler reuses the term in the phrase "generic horizon", and in using it, Fowler brings to his discussion of genre some of the essentialism that one would expect from phenomenological approaches to literary criticism, as we are told that "whenever we approach a work of an unfamiliar genre – new or old - our difficulties return us to fundamentals. No work, however avant-garde, is intelligible without some content of familiar types" (p. 259). The "familiar types" are seen as essentials. This view of genre is not unlike the view underpinning fictional retrieval systems that refer to but never really unpack the notion of genre as categorising principle.

Fowler also discusses the value of generic horizons in the work of interpretation because a grasp of generic horizons allows us to reinterpret what are sometimes "considered faults in composition" (p. 259), as writers exploiting "an assumed familiarity with forgotten genres" (p. 259). This suggests that the historical contingency of genres is of some significance. In this example, the generic horizon is a "horizon of the anterior genres" (p. 259), but this horizon is not precisely documented, or considered in its empirical specificity. Despite a nod towards historicity, the horizon of the anterior genres seems to be derived from the interpretations of the well-read critic working from a basis of intuition and canonical knowledge rather than the evidence-base of empirical data about specific texts, including, but not limited to canonical texts. For Husserl, the term "horizon of expectations" was one which signifies the impossibility of scientifically testable knowledge, and he argued instead for the view that human knowledges are the products of the self-regulating principles of

the various scientific schools, denying the possibility of scientific method. This is similar to the view that underpins many approaches to literary genres within librarianship: they are there, they are essential, there are a few well-known ones that are used in libraries to classify works and which are easily understood by library patrons, but we have not yet, and possibly never can, quite pin down the concept of genre. What is perhaps of particular interest to librarianship, and indeed to genre theory more generally, is the change in this reader-response framework from the view of genre that rests entirely on literary warrant as early versions of genre theory were apt to do, to a view that sees the meaning of genre as residing in the interaction between the work and the interpreting reader. From a critical theory perspective, what is perhaps of interest is the acknowledgement that the reading subject is born into an already existing discursive regime of genres. We are always readers formed and informed by the textual domains that operate within the logonomic parameters within which we find ourselves. Thus, transformations in generic history are always made within specific parameters.

## 4. GENRE AS CLASSIFICATION

There is some interest in literary approaches to genre theory in the notion of genre as classification and the attendant problems of identifying classes and their unit members (e.g. Dowd; Stevenson; Strong, 2006, Fowler, 1982, Frow, 2006). Of some interest in this discussion, and to librarianship's use of genre theory, are questions about the relationship between the individual text and the "system" of genres. Firstly, there is a question about which genres operate within any such system at any given moment, and secondly, there is the interesting problem of the individual novel that might not possess all characteristics of the genre as "ideal kind", or might mix genres. Underpinning these questions is a sometimes implicit biological analogy. But the relationship between work and genre, between token and type, is complicated. Fowler writes that "loosely speaking, we may say that the work 'belongs to' the genre or is a 'member' of it. But we should no more identify individual works with what constitute genre in them, than regard men merely as biological entities. The literary genre does not define its members, only their forms" (p. 206).

Frow (2006) suggest that the concept of *schema* might be used to explore generic systems, which is to assume that knowledge is organised (p. 84), so that knowledge about a specific domain is not knowledge as unconnected facts but knowledge that coheres in specifiable ways. Genre acts as the cues that enable us to interpret the knowledge in relation to the relevant domain. However, genre is not only an already existing set of concepts and their relationships, but an operative function, which, in the right context, activates the relevant conceptual meaning. The comprehension of concepts as coherent wholes can operate at different levels of comprehension. Frow argues that at the level of the generic frame these coherent wholes can be understood as "projected worlds" (p. 85), by which he means "a relatively bounded and schematic domain of meanings, values, and affects, accompanied by a set of instructions for handling them. Any world can be described through a coherent set of propositions, and generated reality-effects specific to it: some worlds

claim a high reality status, others announce themselves as fictional or hypothetical" (p. 86). Frow explains that his use of the metaphor "world" has affinities with Alfred Schutz's concept of "finite provinces of meaning" (Schutz, 1970, 252) in which "every genre is defined in part by the bounded province of meaning which is specific to it and which it makes available for use" (Frow, 87). This view of genre is of the generic structure as a set of ontological boundaries within which any specific generic text might be recognised as such and interpreted as such. This does not really address the historicity of genre that Frow is at pains to stress in other parts of his book. It may be that this disruption in argument between the ontological and the historical is at a deep level the core of the problems we have with literary genre: logically and empirically we know that genres operate historically, but at another level, perhaps because of our enculturation into genre, we tend to view them as ontological.

Gadamer, who also used the notion of horizons in discussing the interpretation of texts, tries to bridge this tension, arguing that meaning is dynamic and not ontological. The event of understanding a text happens, he suggests, when our own "horizon" of historical meanings and assumptions "fuses with the 'horizon' within which the work itself is placed. At such a moment we enter the alien world of the artefact, but at the same time gather it into our own realm, reaching a more complete understanding of ourselves" (Eagleton, 1996, 63). Thus, the historical transformations of genre are acknowledged but the activity of genre recognition as ontological because part of some unbroken tradition is also contained within this explanation. Eagleton, however, thought this smooth process of assimilation is unlikely because of the specificities of human rupture, conflict and contradiction. It is unlikely that there would one tradition and one unbroken, shared continuum. It is unlikely that the recognition of essential categories of genre is quite so seamless.

## 5. MODELS OF GENERIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Fowler's (1973) model of generic transformations is important in the development of an approach to genre theory that explores the historicity of genres. Reflecting on the formal structures of classic genres, he notes that "[r]ecognition of genre depends on associating a complex of elements which need not all appear in one work" (p. 202), and when a genre becomes obsolete, its characteristic forms "lose significance" (p. 203). This obsolescence is, as Fowler puts it: "the most noticeable change a genre may suffer", but it is one, and not necessarily the final, change in a series of changes through which generic forms pass. Genres, Fowler explains, undergo changes in status in the generic hierarchy (p. 212), which assumes that there is one. The status of different genres in this world-view depends on "current evaluation of its whole conventional subject matter" (p. 211). Fashion plays a key role in this, as do the "distribution and temperaments of authors" (p. 211), though a critical theorist might suggest that more important in capitalist discursive regimes would be profit margin available for the publisher from the publishing of any given genre.

In this model, there are at least three principal phases in the history of genre:

Phase 1: the genre-complex assembles until a formal type emerges (p. 212);

Phase 2: a "secondary" version of the phase develops as authors consciously base their writings on earlier primary versions;

Phase 3: is when the author uses the secondary form in a radically new way. The form may then be burlesque, or antithetic, or a "symbolic modulation of the secondary" (p. 213).

These phases are not always distinct; moreover, they may interpenetrate and may even be in doubt in a single work (p. 213). Fowler distinguishes between genre and mode, the difference being that genre is "limited by its rigid structural carapace" (p. 214), while mode is more pliable. The mode is an attitude, a structure of feeling perhaps. Gothick as a genre in the British novel is passé, but the gothic mode lives on even in the teenage *Twilight* series. The mode might generate new genres, as "[m]uch of literature's proper enjoyment depends on interweaving the pleasurably familiar with the strangely novel" (p. 215).

Operating out of a cultural theory/information science background, I attempted to develop the notion of transformation of genres, proposing a cultural materialist model of generic transformation inspired by Williams' notion of structure of feeling and Hall's encoding/decoding model. It is dependent on the observation that every author of a literary work is firstly a consumer of literary works in the society in which we live, necessarily, as we are all, in various ways, encultured into the prevailing generic discursive regime. Within any given society at any specific historical juncture, there may be a number of different ideologies circulating in a range of media, published through a variety of different means. The parameters of what is considered marketable, and thus in terms of economic production, acceptable at any given moment in history is a product of changing logonomic systems, themselves a product of material historical changes. Changes and transformations in the ideologies operating in and through cultural production in current western society are asymmetrical. The categories developed in this model are:

• Replication: this category is used to describe specific novels which adhere closely to the conventions of the genre identified through an examination of the earliest texts.

• Modification: this category is used to describe specific novels which generally adhere to the conventions of the genre identified through an examination of the earliest texts, but which display specific differences.

• Challenge: this category is used to describe specific novels that do not adhere to the conventions of the genre but construct alternative representations. Within this category are also included novels which critique conventional representations. It is expected that in most genres this category will be much smaller than the other two.

This model operates at the Phase 2 and Phase 3 levels of Fowler's model. These models are evidence of a world-view that seeks to acknowledge the importance of seeing genre as dynamic, historically contingent and fluid. This work attempted to map out the

transformations in genre at a micro-level, and argues at the same time, that this process allows also for the analysis of genre at the synchronic moment, tapping into the structure of feeling operating within a genre at a very specific given moment.


## 6. DESIGNING FICTION KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATION SYSTEMS

Reflecting on these issues allows us to return to the issue of using genre as an organising principle in fictional KOS with some questions and observations. Fictional KOS, as we have seen, often use genre as a categorising tool, but the question of how to decide on the constitution of genres within a generic system is evaded, or perhaps glossed over. In this respect, librarians are probably not dissimilar to the literary theorists who construct normative lists. Like modern literary critics, librarians feel that there exist literary genres, which are generally known, although they are less likely to name them precisely. The OCLC World Cat genres list is interesting in this respect. Developed out of the earlier Genreflecting tool, the World Cat genres tool, which more or less takes the form of a thesaurus, is introduced with the qualifying paragraph:

> WorldCat Genres allows you to browse dozens of fiction genres for hundreds of titles, authors, subjects, characters, locations, and more, ranked by popularity in the world's libraries. It is a joint experiment from OCLC Research and the WorldCat.org team. As an experiment, expect it to evolve and grow over time. We hope you find it valuable and invite you to offer feedback (at the bottom of every page) on what you like, what you don't like, and what more you'd like to see. Thanks and enjoy!
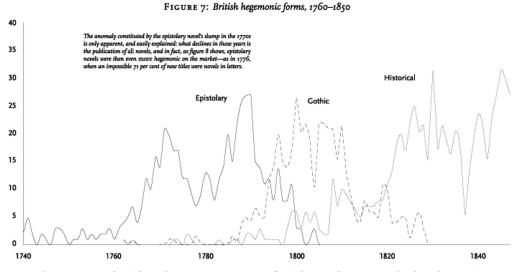
The interest here is that the emphasis is on the tool as an experiment and as the start of an interactive and dialogic process in developing the thesaurus.

The second question concerns the representation of the individual work in relation to genre as system. One of the problems in treating fiction is that the work is always individual but arguably, also always a member of a generic set, however the novel does not have to reproduce all or even many of the generic characteristics. Some types of novels might be considered more self-consciously generic than others, and this to some extent perhaps underpins current distinctions between popular and literary fiction in bookshops and libraries. There is also a question about reader interpretation in actualising genre. If genres operate as cues to actualise certain reading processes, the recognition of the novel as part of a genre depends on the reader having an understanding of the generic cues. If genres change over time, contextualising the products of obsolete genres could be tricky, particularly as not all fictional products outlive their moment of production.

Approaches to mapping genres in KOS have tended to take the form of listings of generic terms or the construction of generic thesauri. The process of identifying the genre and the work is to attach one or more labels to a surrogate record representing the work. Current solutions do not attempt any systematic mapping of literary genres themselves. It was noted earlier in the paper that literary critics are wary of mapping or listing of generic

terms, rightly arguing that these are subjective, and at best merely contemporary views of genre, but this might well be exactly the kind of information that would be of use in the development of creative KOS, and if captured and preserved, in the historical mapping of genres.

It might be that genre-mapping would benefit from using the wisdom of crowds in the form of user-indexing and tagging solutions. If genre is about cues and facilitating specific reading processes, then the readers themselves may be best placed to decide on the generic mappings at any given moment and on the generic makeup of any work. The World Cat genres list, for all its limitations, might act as a starting point for the development of a generic tool. The problem with this list, apart from its cultural bias and debatable choice of terms included (Christian fiction but not detective novels), is that it is static and still controlled from the centre. There is, as has already been noted, an invitation for feedback and for interaction, but perhaps for a really useful generic mapping tool to be developed, this interaction could be opened up to a freer form of tagging, the products of which might be displayed in a tag-cloud which could visually represent the relationships between genres and the relative popularity of genres. Such a tool might provide an overview of the shape of fictional genres in the bibliographic universe at a particular moment in time – a synchronic view – but as the tagging continued over time, so a picture of diachronic transformations (e.g. Fowler, 1971, Rafferty, 2005) might emerge. Individual novels could be tagged with genre labels using a form of democratic indexing that might give broad percentages for generic characteristics. So Jane Eyre might be tagged by 60% of the tagging community as "romance" and by 40% as "gothic novel". Such labelling would hardly be scientific, but might tap into the notion of genres as cues for reading to offer interesting representations and access points to fiction.



**FIGURE 7:** *British hegemonic forms, 1760–1850*

*The anomaly constituted by the epistolary novel's slump in the 1770s is only apparent, and easily explained: what declines in those years is the publication of all novels, and in fact, as figure 8 shows, epistolary novels were then even more hegemonic on the market—as in 1776, when an impossible 71 per cent of new titles were novels in letters.*

Epistolary    Gothic    Historical

New novels per year. Sources: For the epistolary novel: James Raven, 'Gran Bretagna 1750–1830', in *Il romanzo*, vol. III, pp. 311–2. For the gothic novel: Maurice Lévy, *Le roman 'gothique' anglais*, Paris 1995. For the historical novel, I have taken as the basis the checklist provided by Rainer Schöwerling ('Sir Walter Scott and the tradition of the historical novel before 1814', in Uwe Böker, Manfred Markus, Rainer Schöwerling, eds, *The Living Middle Ages*, Stuttgart 1989), and subtracted those texts that also appear in Lévy's bibliography of the Gothic; for the later period, I have also used Block, *The English novel, 1740–1850*.

FIGURE 1. FORMS OF THE BRITISH NOVEL (SOURCE: MORETTI, 2005, P. 15).

To borrow from literary theory again, Franco Moretti (2005) offers some interesting ways of representing the history of literary products which might inspire designers of fiction retrieval systems. Moretti is interested in the notion of "distant reading", and his literary historiography is explored using bar charts, maps and time lines to represent the literary system. Moretti uses graphs to represent the history of literary genres, of which he writes " 'temporary structures' is also a good definition for – genres, morphological arrangements that *last* in time, but always only for *some* time" (p. 14). Genres are Janus-faced creatures, one face turned to history and the other to form. Moretti produces graphs which map out the rise and fall of three genres of the British novel from 1760-1815 (see Figure 1). It might be that as generic tagging data is gathered over time, some similar representations of the generic spectrum, and indeed of the diachronic transformations within genres would be possible, thus producing a fiction information retrieval system that combines promotion, education, and information access.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Literary genre is used in library science for its functional value, and it is discussion about the pragmatic functions of genre that dominates the treatment of genre in the literature of fiction retrieval. Less often explored are questions about generic form, structure, characteristics of division and historical transformation. It would seem that while library science borrows some of its assumptions from literary theory, it generally does not extend the discussion to these theoretical considerations, and this has consequences, not least that there is no agreement across systems about what constitutes even Saarti's "few well-known" generic categories.

Within literary theory there has been a tendency to view genre ontologically, following Husserl's notion of horizons of expectations, but this paper argues that even within the discourse of literary theory there has been a shift from the idea that genre is based entirely on literary warrant, a viewpoint that underpinned many early approaches to genre theory, to a viewpoint that sees the interaction between the work and the interpreting reader as the basis for meaning-making. This interpretative model allows us to consider the author of genre as always already the reader of genre, so that the act of creating a work is at some level also the act of interpreting work(s) and genres. Analysing and organising literary genre is complicated. Genre is historically contingent and open to diachronic transformation as new contributions replicate, modify, or possibly challenge existing generic conventions. Two models of diachronic transformation in literary genre are described in this paper. Genre also appears to operate at an ontological level as encultured readers identify codes and conventions of the literary genres circulating within contemporary logonomic parameters. This interesting tension offers some opportunity for the development of novel fiction retrieval systems in the age of the social web, indeed in the age of the social semantic web.

In this paper, it is suggested that the social semantic web might offer an environment that could support the development of rich and creative fiction retrieval tools which mesh KOS-like approaches, perhaps based on an existing system such as WorldCat's Genres,

with user-based tagging approaches. Finally, this paper has suggested that it might be that the development of such tools could borrow and make concrete ideas that are being explored already in literary theory. So might fiction retrieval find itself at the vanguard, both theoretically and practically.

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