



Do I Bend Genre? Or Does Genre Bend Me?": Toward an Ageneric Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Our discipline operates as a hegemony where we unquestioningly adopt (or reject) the practices through which we learned. We are indoctrinated by that hegemony to believe that genre distinctions matter and that genre is a power to which we must submit. Whether this ideology comes from within our department by our adoption of Aristotle or Iowa's workshop model, or from without, from libraries or marketing, it has nevertheless permeated all that we do: who we teach, who we hire, our pedagogies, the very infrastructure of our departments, and most importantly, our identities as writers. Our system of genre is much older than even our word for it, and, despite its persistence, our systems of classification have continued to change: Plato and Aristotle couldn't agree on anything but epic, and Frye swapped half of theirs out with our contemporary genres, fiction and drama. But it was a librarian who decided that nonfiction is a genre, and only in the 20th century, and big box retailers create new genre for each passing fad. Yet we teach genre as if it is monolithic. And yet, this is precisely how we teach genre. Our failure to recognize that genre exists only through indoctrination rather than through textual artifact is makes us complicit in the hegemonic power that adamantly marginalizes students and would-be students, their writing, and their voices. I examine our current departmental hierarchy of genre, genre representation in the introduction to creative writing classroom, and the experiences of underrepresented writers, such as Bouilly, Diaz, and Salesses, to demonstrate how this marginalization manifests. Next, I examine the ways in which these authors and such intergenre/ageneric writing more accurately represent our conceptions of creativity than adhering to generic rules and conventions. Finally, by examining classrooms and pedagogies that disregard gender or encourage liminality, queerness, and transversal thinking, I mean to suggest that we may leave teaching genre familiarity to literature courses while we, instead, teach how to write creatively, which means transversally—which is to say, without or against genre.

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