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APROPOS OF EVERYTHING:

NAVIGATING LIFE WITH GENRE

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ABSTRACT

Apropos of Everything: Navigating Life with Genre (AoE) is a hybrid critical/creative portfolio which proposes a new theory of Genre, Creativity and Consciousness, named The Social Consciousness Theory (SoCo). By reclaiming and recalibrating the concept of Genre as conceived by literary tradition, the thesis reconceptualises Genre's function in the creative process and in human life through a comprehensive interdisciplinary investigation. Synthesising knowledge from Biology, Sociology, and Psychology with Creative Writing theory, scholarship, and practice, SoCo proposes a comprehensive, critical and scientific theory of Genre which asserts its central function in the processes of creativity and consciousness. Furthermore, SoCo investigates Genre's potential as a heuristic or analogy for understanding how humans achieve creativity.

The thesis identifies a significant gap in a variety of current biological and psychological theories which utilise an approach centralising the concept of *story*. The gap emerges because of a failure to recognise the pivotal function served by *Genre* in story-construction. This thesis argues that by recognising Genre's role in the creative process, profound interdisciplinary insights can be achieved with regard to two fundamental critical concepts; creativity and consciousness. The thesis proposes Genre as a heuristic with significant analogical reach which aids the conceptualisation of *creative development* from biological evolution to the trajectories of literary genres. Existing Genre Theory does not account for the breadth of Genre's applicability as a concept nor realise its interdisciplinary indications. Writing in 1999, Simonton predicted the construction of "a distinct theoretical system that will accommodate all creative activities in a coherent fashion" (247). This thesis attempts to construct the "modern synthesis" which Simonton writes about.

This enquiry asks to what extent and in what ways Genre can be conceptualised as a process analogous with *non-explicit sense-and-respond* mechanisms present in the most basic organisms, drawing largely from Antonio Damasio's body of work, and, furthermore, considers the implications that such a conceptualisation invokes with regard to creative, therapeutic, and critical practice; creative and critical literary, psychological, sociological, and biological theory; and, finally, the benefits of utilising the concept in everyday life. The thesis constitutes a rich mutual exchange across multiple disciplines as opposed to traditional "one-way" perspectives. The approach illuminates the utility of Genre when conceptualised in a *different way* based on scientific research, and thus facilitates a reassessment of the concept in terms of creative practice.

The major conclusions, implications, and outcomes of the thesis are as follows: (1) That consciousness is analogous to the creative process, product, or *play*, and that consciousness emerges, and thus creativity is born, too, from *generic competence* and individual *experimentation*. (2) That our "self" can be defined as a genre and furthermore adopts and is shaped by a perspective early in childhood experience; that the perspective is, broadly speaking, tragic or comic; that this comic or tragic perspective shapes our behaviours, interpretations, and social identity; and, finally, that with the help of the new conceptual tools provided by SoCo, we can *change* that perspective; (3) That through utilising the new SoCo theory it is possible to mount a new theory of Comedy; and (4) That SoCo can be utilised to

reconceptualise and start meaningful and affective dialogues about contentious social issues and to effect real change in the dominant social consciousness and its current codes about different genres of experience. Not only does the current thesis constitute significant and innovative development of existing Creativity, Creative Writing, Consciousness, and Genre Theory, but each one of these implications has vast potential for a wide-range of contributions to multiple fields including creative practice; psychological and therapeutic practice; self-help; intersectionality, social justice and reform; and experimental scientific research. Two appendices demonstrate the immediate utility of the theory presented in the field of Creative Writing Theory and Practice-Based research: (1) *Towards a SoCo Prosaics* – a creative foray and critical apparatus for applying SoCo to literary practice; (2) *CANADA* – a novel informed by SoCo theory and the *prosaics*. The three elements of the thesis come together to achieve a comprehensive and creative bid for a new way of understanding both literature and also life.

Key words: Genre; Consciousness; Creativity; Social Consciousness; Comedy; Tragedy

PREFACE

The work to follow may strike those accustomed to more “traditional” PhD theses as unusual. This preface operates as an expectation-primer. It is not expected that all pre-conceived expectations be abandoned, in fact the thesis argues against the plausibility of such an expectation. I don’t ask you to abandon *any* single expectation, in fact. Instead, I ask you to pay attention to what your expectations and to investigate their foundations; to approach the whole endeavour of expectation *differently*. Most prominently, I want you to engage in the process of expectation with an *open-mind*.

My approach could be interpreted as unconventional because it is intensely interdisciplinary, purposefully general, positioned from a practitioner’s perspective, based on theoretical research and personal experience. I did not decide on such an approach as a way to upend scholarly convention. In some ways the thesis is unconventional because it attempts a much broader scope than the traditional doctoral thesis. Yet, in other ways, it is highly conventional. Like any academic thesis it has emerged from rigorous scholarly research; it achieves a standard suitable for publication; it shows creative leadership and innovation, underpinned by original contributions to knowledge; it demonstrates a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of existing research, at the forefront of various disciplines and areas of practice; it displays the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project of research; and it proves a detailed understanding of varied research methodologies.

So, it is conventional, then. *And* unconventional. I will argue that both qualities are required for a product which can be considered creative and, as a Creative Writing student, I am aware of my responsibility to produce creative work. Further still, this thesis operates based on hypotheses such as that convention changes with surprising regularity, that what is interpreted as conventional or commonplace or perhaps even missed entirely by one person may seem completely odd, unusual, or unconventional to another person, and that conventions shape, despite their ambiguity, the minds of the people who uphold or reject them. I posit that their responses - maintenance or rejection - emerge as a product of their engagement with those very conventions. I posit that from the sum of all of those engagements with a wide variety of conventions emerges a whole constituting “more than” all of its individual parts; *the self-genre*. Such propositions are to be expected to sound unconventional because they challenge conventional thought. I believe that by subverting the traditional expectations of the parameters of a doctoral project, I have achieved much more than would have been possible through a conventional approach which tends to be much narrower in scope. I ask you to extend your expectations accordingly.

Secondly, I ask you to consider what is meant by the notion of a PhD in *Creative Writing*. What should an academic research project based in the field of Creative Writing achieve? I present an interdisciplinary creative and critical package which tackles the remit of Creative Writing from three angles as follows; a piece of creative work; a theory of creativity; and a prosaics for creative writing practice. I have attempted a wide-scale investigation into my discipline – the very basis of scholarship.

A Creative Writing PhD thesis should not consist of a 75,000-word novel accompanied by a forced critical description of that novel, stretched over 25k. The Creative Writing scholar is just that – a scholar. Serious scholarship and rigorous academic research must be undertaken as in any other degree. The Practice-Based Research movement argues for the scholarly merit of creative practice. I agree with these aims. But, in order to support this argument, as practitioners, we need to engage fervently with theoretical development and, where theory is lacking, take it upon ourselves to fill the gaps. *The buck stops with us*. It is our responsibility as Creative Writing scholars and practitioners to guide and shape the creative development of the field, rather than merely engaging in personal novel projects. What does your personal novel project add to the field? Nothing – if, of course, it is not accompanied by critical engagement which tells us new things about writing. If you want to write a novel, write a novel. If you want to do a PhD in Creative Writing, then I propose that you must aim to develop that field and propose new ideas and perform experiments and investigate theories in the same way that any researcher from any other field is expected to do.

I have interpreted my task of “doing a Creative Writing PhD” in a way which investigates the very meaning of the term “Creative Writing” – of the very term “Creative”. In doing so, I seek to challenge the standard expected from the Creative Writing PhD Candidate, and beyond that the standard expected from the Creative Writing scholars who teach and supervise and examine them. At University of Salford, where I have undertaken my research, the undergraduate Creative Writing programme has been recently transformed into a multidisciplinary enterprise. I argue that for Creative Writing scholarship and practice-based research to be taken seriously and to prove worthwhile beyond solipsism, candidates must begin to investigate the notion implied by the title of their award. Admittedly, this endeavour requires a lot more work than a personal novel project.

Finally, and following on from my last request, I ask you to remember that *I am*, in fact, a creative practitioner, a Creative Writing and Shakespeare Scholar, and I am not formally trained in any scientific area beyond high-school level. My understanding of the scientific and psychological material presented in the thesis is based on self-directed reading and intense amounts of critical and creative thinking and practice. I embarked to construct a sophisticated theory of Genre for application in creative practice. What has emerged is a theoretical framework which includes hypotheses not only about Genre but about creativity, consciousness, and the comic and tragic genres, too. SoCo provides a way of understanding evolution which accommodates the development of conscious human creativity by viewing it through the lens of Genre. If I have done the science justice, then the work can be expected to have significantly wide-reaching implications and multi- and interdisciplinary outputs and applications.

Recent attempts to marry scientific research with creative writing theory are lacking in the respect that they operate from only a single line of inquiry, a one-way street, so to speak. 2020 saw the release of a creative non-fiction collection edited by Sean Prentiss and Nicole Walker called *The Science of Story: The Brain Behind Creative Nonfiction*. Prentiss and Walker introduce the collection by explaining that it seeks to examine “how creative nonfiction works (and how the human mind works) and offer suggestions on how we can understand and use this science to improve,

complicate, or expand our writing lives, our craft, and our teaching of writing” (2). But, by limiting their investigation through the one-way mirror of creative non-fiction (just one genre), they fail to realise the potential to create a mutual exchange. The perspective that these theorists operate from is that they want to understand the science behind creating effective writing. I operate from a *bird’s eye perspective* which utilises the rich potential for reciprocal insights. Prentiss and Walker set about using science as “a metaphor to examine our writing and our writing lives” (2). In this thesis, I set about proving that the same process underpins effective writing and effective conscious experience, using *Genre* as a metaphor for an interdisciplinary examination of creativity and consciousness. I show that it is, indeed, a two-way street; a mutual enrichment. Yes, science can help us to write stories. But, as I demonstrate in the thesis, story can tell us more about science, too. It can tell us the most when we recognise the functional power its central regulation device: *Genre*. Where Prentiss and Walker stick a toe in the water – and admirably so, I aim for complete submersion.

The SoCo Theory which is presented in the thesis does not stand or fall on the science. Its basic premise is that we can use *Genre* to change our lives. I have edited my findings to include only the most valuable implications of the theory, interlaced by the supporting material deemed crucial to elucidate my points. I aimed generally for breadth over depth as matter of necessity in consideration of the parameters of the PhD thesis genre. I want to talk across fields, disciplines, and backgrounds, to all kinds of people, about a process which we all *do*.

Arthur Koestler prefaced his own theory of creativity in *The Act of Creation* with the following disclosure:

I have no illusions about the prospects of the theory I am proposing: it will suffer the inevitable fate of being proven wrong in many, or most, details, by new advances in psychology and neurology. What I am hoping for is that it will be found to contain a shadowy pattern of truth, and that it may stimulate those who search for unity in the diverse manifestations of human thought and emotion.

(xx)

I can think of no better introduction to the current work, which deals in high abstraction with lots of shadowy and hard-to-describe patterns of truth. As for my basic rationale, it is very simple: *Genre* is not given the credit it deserves as a prerequisite for creativity. What I have achieved constitutes, by my own critical evaluation and estimation, far more than I could have hoped at the beginning of my PhD and enough, certainly, to warrant the award. In light of what I have attempted, I hope that the thesis can be interpreted in the same spirit with which it was constructed; curious; creative; *comic*.

PART I

/ INTRODUCTIONS

1. ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players.

William Shakespeare

As You Like It, (II.vii.138-139)

I have spent many of the hours of my life trying to “*figure out*”. Mainly, trying to figure out my *self* but, also, trying to figure out the people around me; the world. *Trying to figure out* is the curious activity which has led me to write this thesis and also which underpins the theoretical propositions put forward in the following chapters.

“To make sense of the world” says Phillippe Rochat, “is literally to figure it out... we create meanings by acts of *re-presentations*, conveying to others or to ourselves simulations of what real things *might* be, not what they are” (193). I have always been drawn to literature as a medium which facilitates and enhances my attempts to understand and convey my feelings. When I was “starting out” as a writer, or at least when I started to take writing seriously, I didn’t want to “call” my writing anything – I didn’t want to label my work *generically* or in terms of or using traditional generic labels. In fact, I felt strongly about this issue; my writing was *just writing*. I certainly wasn’t following any “rules”. Genre seemed an affront to my creativity. It may be that we all start off our careers in this way. I battled against Genre. I loved to write academic essays (and I still do) yet I would occasionally receive feedback that my work was *too* creative. What does that *mean*? And, more pertinently, I struggled with the task of *positioning* my creative writing within a specific genre. What I was creating just didn’t seem to “fit” anywhere.

After my initial attempts to reject Genre, I did reach a place of acceptance albeit a contemptuous one. I began to delve into the fields of Neuroscience, of Cognitive Science and Linguistics, of Psychology and Sociology, alongside my continued reading in Literary theory. I decided that “experimental” literature was the only worthwhile genre. Of course, I still had no real idea of what “experimental literature” was or could be defined as, nor of Genre, for that matter. I wrote my Master’s thesis under this nebulous shadow. My shallow dallying into science had piqued an interest in perception. I wrote the masters dissertation with the idea that experimental literature was good for expanding our perception. I agree still with the sentiment of the work but I was not quite ready to fully understand its implications.

After further reading, it occurred to me that I must first try properly to define Genre if I was ever to understand and utilise it. I began to understand the importance of Genre. It wasn’t a case of refusing it: we cannot create *outside* of Genre. In fact, we cannot *live* without Genre. That’s what I have learned. It is on the back of this

journey that I decided to construct my own comprehensive theory of Genre, a new theoretical framework for *literary* genre stemming from the scientific fields in which I had launched my research. It occurred to me that some of this new research in science could update some of the older theories about Genre. I could not have foreseen the emergence of such far-reaching implications, which I am about to present for the award of my doctorate.

As I embarked upon writing-up my findings, I realised that I needed a strong metaphor which could anchor the reader as they navigated the complex interdisciplinary work to follow. Because I am a Shakespeare scholar, Shakespeare has performed through his work as a reliable and consistent companion, of sorts, with whom I have been able to bat my ideas back and forth, finding answers through his characters who navigate their own worlds, and do so *consciously*, like *real people*, according to centuries of criticism (see Samuel Johnson; 1765; Hazlitt, 1817; Wilde, 1930; Ralli, 1959; Berman, 1962; Bloom, 1998; Budra & Werier, 2018, to list a few). Over the last few years, the well-known adage “***all the world’s a stage***” spoken by Jaques in *As You Like It* has come to constitute a sort of personal life-motto of mine, just as the original Latin, *totus mundus agit histrionem* (roughly, “the whole world plays the actor”), is oft-said to have provided the motto for *The Globe Theatre* (Greenblatt, 2005). I realised that my motto was also the perfect gem around which to arrange my new theory, namely, SoCo. If there is any possible shorthand for the conceptualisation or lens of SoCo, which is a complex interdisciplinary theoretical framework, it is *all the world’s a stage*. *All the world’s a stage* is like the *gist* form of SoCo theory. Incidentally, *gist* is an important concept for understanding SoCo. I did not anticipate the broad resonance and synthetic, multifunctional, and interdisciplinary value which has emerged from the motto, and, hence, from the *generic lens*. Genre is, apparently, *Apropos of Everything*.

We need not engage in “uncritical admiration” of Shakespeare, which Oscar Wilde denounced as harmful (to Art), in order to engage with SoCo. The idea of the world as a theatre was not Shakespeare’s invention but certainly he popularised it and more importantly he understood, apparently implicitly, its implications for literature, for theatre, for emotion, for consciousness, for real living people, and, as I will spend the rest of this thesis arguing, it’s implications for an age-old, oft-maligned, -ignored, or -abused concept not commonly understood - in fact, resistant to definition, not commonly recognised let alone thought about, and yet intimately intertwined through Shakespeare’s life: *Genre*. It is why he was able to create such *memorable, authentic people* out of his characters.

When the “melancholy” (or, more accurately, *satirical*) character Jaques begins his monologue in the second act of *As You Like It* with the words “*all the world’s a stage*”, he paints the metaphor tragically, lamenting that life is predictable and *generic*; that we all play the same roles and answer the same cues. But, because the play is a comedy, we are forced to consider the opposite perspective; “*all the world’s a stage*” can be seen from a *comic* perspective, too. Moreover, it can be utilised for comic efforts as well as determining our lives tragically. Shakespeare shows us a comic utilisation of the concept in the very same play through his delightful construction of the radiant Rosalind. But, at the same time, because Jaques is character of *satire*, we understand that such a reading of life is limited and over-simplistic, that humans act with nuance and complexity and contradiction.

Steven Pinker called Shakespeare “one of our first and greatest psychologists” for recognising the constant relationship between generic ideals and the “all-too-fallible” reality of human interpretation. Furthermore, Jaques says “all the men and women” but then goes on to describe only rigid stages of *male* life. Quite clearly, Rosalind’s construction and performance proves that life isn’t rigidly generic as Jaques implies. It *is* generic. But, as is communicated consistently throughout Shakespeare’s plays, *Genre’s central feature is plasticity*. When Genre is utilised in a rigid and limited manner, *tragedy* might ensue, depending on perspective. Such utilisation of Genre in *comedy* can be incredibly funny.

For these reasons, and because of my expertise, examples from Shakespeare’s work are utilised here to provide illustrations of the concepts which have emerged to form my new theory. I engage with Genre from the perspective of my training, too, and so my conceptualisation stems from *literary* genre. However, the SoCo concepts can be applied using the broader generic lens which defines Genre as a mechanism for creativity. Any creative product is interchangeable, then, with what I refer to variously as the play, the text, the book, the story, the performance; the creative product; the piece of art, the song, and where appropriate I have engaged with examples from each of these types of creative product. SoCo is a new theoretical *framework* which emphasises the socially-constructed nature of consciousness, and attempts to reconceptualise Genre for much broader application by utilising both seminal and also cutting-edge research from the fields of Neuroscience, Psychology, and beyond.

If *all the world’s a stage*, then what is *Genre*? What does “*all the world’s a stage*” say about *self, creativity, consciousness*? At this stage in my research I have come to believe that *the conscious mind is analogous to a play in action; a creative process/product*. In the same way, Genre is both a process *and also* a “thing”. It is my aim in this thesis to argue that the analogy has the potential to facilitate major developments in understanding Genre both in its rightful role as central to creativity and also as a process which mirrors our evolutionary development and our incredible achievement of creating conscious minds. I use the play metaphor centrally because of its useful repertoire of vocabulary and concepts such as performance, scripts, roles, and Genre, of course. However, SoCo deals with creativity as a broad concept and its ideas are not limited to theatre and performance. For instance, my interpretation of terms such as “play” and “performance” does not produce simple, specific, narrow definitions. I interpret such terms as any kind of interaction, any kind of response in action. These interpretations will become clearer as the thesis progresses. I am not invoking dualism or the homunculus when I call the body and external world a theatre and the experience of a conscious mind a play. All of the required elements are pre-existing and decidedly not dualistic. Or, at least, not in the traditional sense. My stance will emerge from the indicative material, which we must acquire in order to fully comprehend SoCo’s conceptualisation of conscious minds. Descriptions of consciousness must adhere to historical boundaries. Any computer analogy must be thrown out. We were conscious long before computers. I argue that my Genre analogy fulfils the criteria demanded by a plausible theory of consciousness.

The Social Consciousness Framework (SoCo) is an extended synthesis of hypothetical components, existing theories, and research from disparate fields and a

variety of their concepts. What I hope to have achieved is conceptually greater than the scope addressed by a traditional thesis. The term framework suggests the expanse, the interdisciplinarity, and the interconnectivity of the propositions that I will put forward. My chief addition to existing theory about consciousness, self, and creativity is the centralisation of the role of *Genre* – otherwise known as *perspective*, *categorisation*, and “*what kind?*”. Unique individuals engage with the social consciousness in order to produce novel instantiations. Learning and interpreting *Genre* from our unique individual experience – early childhood experience where our development is co-dependent and malleable – *enables us to learn and change and in turn change the social consciousness*.

What began as an attempt to mount a new critical conceptualisation of *Genre* has resulted in a rigorous recalibration and scientific reinvigoration of traditional *Genre* theory from which has emerged, to my continued amazement, multiple, major theoretical implications for both literary scholarship and practice and also experimental, applied, and interventional research in various scientific fields and across various sectors, most prominently the Education and Health sectors. SoCo offers a “two-way street”, so to speak, it is a reciprocal conceptual enterprise, an interdisciplinary interaction. I aimed to undertake a scientific investigation of *Genre* because I was sure that I could prove its importance. My interdisciplinary investigation has facilitated a constant stream of thrilling insights about both fields. I translate everything through the generic lens, I find answers for science problems in Shakespeare, and answers for Shakespeare problems in science. The *connective tissue*, the *conceptual apparatus*, the *translation device*, the *habitus*, is *Genre*.

Science and psychology both recognise the broader implications of the *all the world's a stage* metaphor, evidenced by a wealth of developments over the last century, including but not limited to the explicit influences apparent in *Narrative Psychology* (see Sarbin, 1986) and *Drama Therapy* (see Jones, 1996). Theorists of all disciplines typically turn to storytelling to elucidate their points but for some reason *Genre* has never taken the fore in scientific narratives. Most shockingly, *Genre* mostly does not take the fore even in *literary* narratives. Obviously, the idea that we deal in stories is not new but there seems to me to be a glaring omission from any theoretical or conceptual narrative that uses the concept of story: *Genre*. The question that I find myself asking repeatedly when reading books from various disciplines which highlight storytelling as a crucial human capacity and stories as playing a significant if not unmitigated role in our experience of life and interaction with others is “*what about Genre?*” Why has *Genre* been overlooked in all of these discussions about story? *Genre* and story are *inseparable*. What I have achieved with my new *Genre* conceptualisation bears the potential for a valuable exchange and mutually enriching insights between the fields of health, science, and the humanities.

After considering the available science, and supporting and spring-boarding from Antonio Damasio's work on conscious minds, emotions, and the self, in many ways, I offer a novel interpretation of existing scientific and *Genre* theory, synthesising these theoretical components, and producing, as expected by SoCo, a whole which emerges as more than the sum of its parts. It is the pursuit of thinkers such as Damasio to understand the initial, underlying mechanisms of emotions and feelings and consciousness from an evolutionary and biological perspective. It is the

pursuit of this thesis to assert that such mechanisms work in ways similar to the conscious generic work that we do when we create and interpret art. I argue that SoCo provides valuable tools for current practice and pre-existing approaches. For instance, imagine how much more useful a drama-therapy session would be if the patient and their practitioner were generically competent? The physiological processes of emotional interaction have been investigated but because emotional responses are always at least somewhat subjective this task is not an easy one. What if we consider that the organising principle of creative products might provide us also with more insight into the emotional interaction that they produce and are constructed upon? Genre – the organising principle of art, literature, music, and cultural production and consumption – should be able in theory to tell us about the underlying physiological mechanisms of our emotional responses to creative products. The hypotheses put forward in the following chapters and which emerged from my conceptual synthesis enables unavailable insights for both creatives and also scientists.

Though Genre is currently understood as a term that refers mainly to creative consumption, by instead understanding Genre to be an extension of our inherent physiological processes of categorisation we can backdate Genre's distinctive functional importance in evolution and its analogical potential for understanding basic sense and response mechanisms. Categorisation is acknowledged almost unfailingly in scientific accounts of consciousness, social interaction, and evolution. However, it is never given the credit which SoCo believes it is due. SoCo proposes that our inherent capacity to categorise information and structure *functionally*, long precedes the development of brains. By paying closer attention to the way in which we utilise our capacity to categorise, or to “do Genre”, I open new insights into both science and literature, and the relationship between them. In fact, my lens allows me to situate them in a continuum rather than as binary opposites. SoCo therefore also provides a different way of understanding evolution, by viewing it through the lens of Genre.

I allowed the *arrangement* of the key themes of the thesis “come to me”, a fruitful practice which has emerged from utilising the generic lens. I begin by engaging in critical and practical consideration of the matter. Following, I engage in a period of “rest”. In this period, I will think about other things, get on with my day, sleep, wake. With regular practice, this simple sequence provides all sorts of tasty morsels to work with. Of course, we engage in this practice *unconsciously* all of the time. Whenever an answer or an idea or a memory “just comes to us”, we have been engaging in this creative process. It mirrors the generic process, of course. Creativity is defined by SoCo as follows: *generic competence plus experimentation equals creativity*. I refer to the process with various other formulas, too, such as the following: *experience plus experience equals new experience*; and “*how much?*” *plus “what kind?” equals conceptualisation*.

SoCo attempts to explain the basic principle in social interaction: sorting out the information of experience into genres, *doing* Genre; and accounts for both micro and also macro events (with varying degrees of specificity). According to SoCo, Genre works as metaphorical tool for understanding different processes of regulation which lead to extended consciousness, and beyond. SoCo provides a useful vocabulary with which to tackle material often difficult to conceptualise. Furthermore,

it provides a neutral or objective vocabulary with which to discuss otherwise highly emotional issues. Conceptualising the self as a genre, for example, addresses several problems which occur in psychotherapy – continuity, frequency of work, labelling, interpretation, classification, and so on. Genre is a concept of which most individuals have at least some basic understanding, as opposed to “neurotic trend” or “attachment pattern” or “functional category” or other such term. Studying the nuanced ways that humans *use* categories produces new insight into human perception and thus consciousness (and much more). Using the conceptual framework provided by a broader understanding of Genre enables us to achieve a sort of objectivity about our lives and the feelings and actions and stories which we create and experience. From the perspective of the new SoCo theory, our engagement with “storytelling” can be extended in ways that are crucial and exciting for psychotherapy and also “DIY” self-development.

It may seem superfluous to retitling “categorisation” as “Genre” but what I argue in this thesis is that to do so – and, of course, it is not a simple retitling, but a re-conceptualisation – opens up new possibilities for research about the brain and mind, new ways of achieving self-development, and new tools with which to engage actively and responsibly in the social world. Translating category to genre broadens the scope of what is thought of as a rigid and arbitrary concept. Genre is not merely a new label but, then, there is nothing mere about labelling (we need only to be labelled by someone else in a way that we don’t agree with in order to understand how impactful they can be). Generic categories enable us to reach a shared understanding of experience: *a social consciousness, a social memory*. We use genres on a rapid, ad-hoc basis – creating new ones as and when we see fit. And, amazingly, we do this work unconsciously. Many people rely on old, stubborn, and illogical genres which no longer make sense in modern life. Tom Vanderbilt explains that “the great peril of this reliance on categorising is that we could miss something that lies outside our perception...[something] hard to place, hard to explain” (2016). What this thesis offers is a framework for working with Genre *creatively*.

Most literary theorists fall victim to the same classificatory error, and it is hard to avoid doing so personally. We tend to view genres as sets of rules. In many ways, genres *are* sets of rules. But, only in the same way that Damasio calls homeostasis a set of rules. They are rules about how to respond to different types of stimuli. But, as Damasio makes clear, “a set of rules” is an extremely simplified interpretation of the process. Genre must be understood in the same way. We can understand genres as sets of rules so long as we understand that this is a basic interpretation. What Genre does and is and what homeostasis does and is are both much trickier problems to solve and to describe. As soon as I reach a conclusion about the genre of a particular trope or action or character type or feature, I realise that it can be utilised equally well by its apparent “polar opposite” genre. It is because we are conceptualising Genre as a set of fixed rules or a list of compulsory features, instead of a *perspective* or a *style of response*; a way of *interpreting* the features of life. The perspective or type of response encapsulates or shapes or translates all features. It helps to understand that Genre is about what we *do* with it, *how* we use it, *how* we interpret it. Understanding this quality of Genre will facilitate a fairly large conceptual leap in understanding consciousness; it pertains to function; utility; interpretation. Still, it is possible to mount a tentative narrative for comedy once we understand that it is a perspective or a way of perceiving as opposed to a collection of songs, props,

gags, and common, happy, silly time-wasting. And so, I put forward as a major implication a new conceptualisation of the comic genre.

Writing in 1999, Simonton stated that “at present, we lack a distinct theoretical system that will accommodate all creative activities in a coherent fashion”. “Darwinian perspectives on creative genius must still be unified into another ‘modern synthesis’ that can subsume the diversity of the more specialized models we currently possess”, he explained, suggesting that “the future should therefore see the arrival of some behavioral scientist – surely a Darwinian creative genius – who will be able to synthesize this conceptual diversity into a comprehensive and precise explanatory framework” (247). I make no claims to be a creative genius, and I do not fulfil the professional criterion. Nor do I have any delusions about SoCo’s preciseness or conciseness. Works of creative genius are those that *reconceptualise* and *develop creatively* the Genre in which they are working and affect that change or creative development at level of the SoCo at large. Whether or not the current work will join the ranks is yet to be writ but it is hoped, at least, that the rather simple concept at the heart of this work – *Genre* – while decidedly complicated to explain might offer some use in navigating the social experience of the creative self and taking some steps towards a “modern synthesis” which attempts to define creativity and consciousness as identical processes.

When Peter Philippon proposed that the self was emergent in his aptly titled work *The Emergent Self* (2009), he began by suggesting that “we need an account of the coexistence of order and disorder, predictability and unpredictability, not just in our lives but as a fundamental fact of the universe... If the world is too ordered, there is no place for us to choose. If it is too disordered, choosing becomes mere randomness” (14). While I agree with Philippon that the self is, indeed, emergent, the demand for a heuristic tool is yet demonstrable still – we are still asking questions about consciousness. I want to consider the various ways in which consciousness is a social process and how its various mechanisms can be seen as performing the same function as Genre facilitates in creativity. Understanding these similarities will require broadening the scope of the current mainstream understanding of Genre, though several critics have grasped its profound function, including Alastair Fowler, Tzvetan Todorov, Mikhail Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev, Heather Dubrow, Adena Rosmarin, Rosalie Colie, and John Frow, to name a few, and their theories have provided invaluable foundations for SoCo. Once we understand the ways in which Genre “works” in literature, we can compare it to processes that make up our conscious life. This comparison will open new doors for Genre study, literary criticism, and creative methodology, as well as offering a heuristic proxy for understanding our conscious experience and the processes which underlie it. I extend the remit allotted to Genre significantly, even in comparison with the theorists listed above.

Finally, as part of his treatise on the origins of creativity (2017), the late E. O. Wilson made an impassioned case for *interdisciplinarity* between the humanities and the sciences. I contend, too, that the only way in which we can achieve creative development and thus novel discovery is through the synthesis of disciplines or genres of research. Scientists regularly turn to literature for examples of how the brain functions, and it makes good theoretical sense to invert this practice.

In order to attempt this aim, the material presented in the chapters ahead needs to accomplish certain goals. These goals can be stated as the following: to provide a justifiable account of a new theory and an extended definition of Genre; to situate this theory of Genre within the SoCo framework; to compound the SoCo framework within existing narratives from Neuroscience, Psychology, and Sociology; to extol the benefits of the framework; and, finally, to invite engagement with the theory. The framework must interconnect a concept usually micro-explained as an arbitrary means for *describing* cultural products with scientific research into evolutionary biology, brain processes, and human behaviour/action. To achieve this goal, the framework compares the process of Genre with a multiplicity of processes from the natural and conscious worlds, and conceptualises the profound implications of utilising my new Genre concept in approaching topics which have consumed our critical and creative minds for centuries: consciousness and the self; creativity; and social interaction.

The theory is by necessity extremely broad – generic – in order to achieve conveyance of what is complicated and unusual material. In *How to Write a Thesis* (2015), Umberto Eco stated, among other things, that “a thesis that is too broad cannot be understood” (10). I hope that I have made a case for the broad approach. We cannot create interdisciplinary insights without a broad approach. By necessity I have taken some liberties with my synthetic interpretations and refashionings of familiar concepts which may upset or interrupt the reader’s own interpretations. These elements align with SoCo’s formulations for creativity. The creative product emerges from the combination of generic engagement and at the same time novel interpretation. So, while it may be disconcerting for me to handle and wrangle and *change the meaning* of conventional terms – such as Comedy, Hamartia, and Genre, and to make generalisations, it is not unusual in terms of literary tradition or in terms of Genre or the social consciousness for me to do so. Creative thinkers have been changing and developing genres since the conception of thought, and evolution has been doing the same since long before the conception of thought. If all that this work can achieve is to reclaim the word “generic” then it will be a success.

In his 1840 lecture *The Hero as Poet*, Thomas Carlyle made the following remarks about Shakespeare

Perfect, more perfect than any other man, we may call Shakespeare in this: **he discerns, knows as by instinct, what condition he works under, what his materials are, what his own force and its relation to them is.** It is not a transitory glance of insight that will suffice; it is deliberate illumination of the whole matter; it is a calmly *seeing* eye; a great intellect, in short...

...Or indeed... it is in what I called Portrait-painting, delineating of men and things,... that Shakspeare is great... The thing he looks at reveals not this or that face of it, but its inmost heart, and **generic secret:** it dissolves itself as in light before him, so that he discerns the perfect structure of it...

...It is what I call an **unconscious intellect**, there is more virtue in it than he himself is aware of... The latest generations of men will find **new meanings** in Shakspeare, **new elucidations** of their own human being.

(sic) (my emphases).

The gist that I extract from Carlyle's words is that Shakespeare was *generically competent*; he gets to the "*generic heart*" of the matter – any matter. Made centuries ago, Carlyle's commentary on Shakespeare's generic competence bears great similarity to Damasio's recent (2021) definition of the "*non-explicit competence*" or *sense* of single cell organisms such as bacteria.

The utility of the generic lens is, as evidenced already, extensive. I thought, all throughout my work, *all the world's a stage*, and I hope that the reader can adopt the same lens. A lens which I added over the top, and which the reader may choose to do in their own creative endeavours, was the frame of my commitment to creating a kinder world and one in which all kinds of individuals feel that they can thrive. It is only possible to put forward brief discussions of the major implications of SoCo in this thesis. I propose that, like Shakespeare's work, there is a multitude of implications, the extent of which is open-ended. I propose that all creative products are open-ended.

It is customary in a PhD thesis to offer a *preview*, of sorts, of its contents before offering the contents proper (and I will perform the same task, more of a *review*, at the close of the thesis). See below:

First, I will outline some *Key Concepts* for understanding SoCo theory (Chapter 2), and then I will present the *The Social Consciousness Framework* (SoCo) (Chapter 3). Following the introductory material, in *Part II* I provide my interdisciplinary, comparative, and integrative investigations of biological, physiological, cognitive, and psychological processes, tendencies, and theories with my new conceptualisation of Genre: *Sense and Respond*; (Chapter 4); *Categorisation* (Chapter 5); *Memory* (Chapter 6); *Attention, Inference, and Imagination* (Chapter 7); *Attachment, Conflict, and Control* (Chapter 8); and, finally, *Self* (Chapter 9). Chapter 9 straddles the border between indicative and implicatory and thus prepares the stage for *Part III*, in which I will discuss at length three major implications of SoCo theory. Briefly, SoCo has enabled me to conceptualise the following implications: (1) That consciousness is analogous to the creative process, product, or *play*, and that consciousness emerges, and thus creativity is born, too, from generic competence and experimentation (Chapter 10); (2) That our self adopts and is shaped by a perspective early in childhood experience; that the perspective is, broadly speaking, tragic or comic; that our perspective shapes our behaviours and interpretations and social identity; and, finally, that with the new conceptual tools provided by SoCo, we can *change* that perspective (Chapter 11); and (3) That SoCo can be utilised to reconceptualise and start meaningful and affective dialogues about contentious social issues and to effect real change in the dominant social consciousness and its current codes about different genres of experience (Chapter 12). It occurred to me as I was grappling with the implications of SoCo that there was *no classical comic tradition* to draw upon, as there is for tragedy, in order to conceptualise the comic perspective in psychological terms. Thus, a further implication emerged. I have put forward a new theory of comedy based on SoCo in Chapter 11, which includes as well an extended discussion and in some ways a reinterpretation of tragedy. What started as a theory of Genre, then, has evolved into a theory of Genre, Consciousness, Creativity, and Comedy.

2. KEY CONCEPTS

To begin with, it is necessary to grasp various interpretations of the following multilevel and interdisciplinary terms and concepts which are referenced throughout and which are necessary and crucial to conveying and substantiating the SoCo theory:

- ◇ **Genre** as interpreted in literary theory and as reconceptualised by SoCo.
- ◇ **Social Consciousness (SoCo)** as implied by various thinkers including Lev Vygotsky (1978, 2012), Vivien Burr (2003), Louis Cozolino (2010, 2014), and David Oakley and Peter Halligan (2017), and extended by SoCo.
- ◇ Antonio Damasio's concepts of "**as-if**" and "**mapping**"/"**maps**" (1996, 2000, 2007, 2012, 2018, 2021), interpreted and applied in broad and interdisciplinary way under the SoCo lens.
- ◇ Douglas Hofstadter's concepts of "**the strange loop**" and "**the self is a 'strange loop'**" (1999, 2007), interpreted and applied, again, in a broad and interdisciplinary way under the SoCo lens.
- ◇ John Bowlby's concept of **attachment** put forward in his **Attachment Theory** (1980) (1997), reinterpreted and absorbed by SoCo.
- ◇ **Control** – How SoCo interacts with **Control Theory** (Norbert Wiener, 1988, 2013; Carver and Scheier, 1982).

I will demonstrate in the body of the thesis how all of the above constitute various manifestations of the same *kind* of process; a *generic* process.

GENRE

First, for the purpose of clarity I will provide a succinct definition of genre as interpreted by SoCo: Genre; both a process and a thing; *a genre is a type or category of sense and response*, and *Genre* is the process of sensing and responding to different stimuli, and remembering, regulating, and developing those types of response and our sense-repertoires. In these respects, Genre facilitates creativity, communication, control, and, accordingly, consciousness. The core qualities of Genre are as follows: *social; plastic; unconscious; functional*.

Now, I will move on to explain the sustenance behind the definition. Before full comprehension of the interpretation above can be achieved, a basic grasp of the *literary* tool upon which it draws is required. We certainly utilise Genre as defined by SoCo *outside* of literature and without doubt we utilised it *before* we established literature or even language, as will be proposed in the following chapters. Still, the conceptualisation of Genre was developed as a way of interpreting and creating literature.

However, as Alastair Fowler acknowledges, the very idea of defining genre is “misconceived” and “genres at all levels are positively resistant to definition” (40). Genre is resistant to definition because *its central characteristic is that it changes*. Of course, these statements about genre may seem to paint it as a profoundly difficult and almost indefinable feature of reading, and, in many ways, it is. Critics throughout the ages have struggled with Genre. Many have sought, in fact, to eradicate Genre completely. Others have expressed the view that while Genre may have been relevant to previous epochs, it no longer offers anything of value to the world of modern literature. But, instead of feeling dismayed by Genre’s mutability, we ought to realise that we have been provided with the first and central tenet of our definition of Genre: *it changes*. From this observation we can add the following qualities which emerge from an ever-changing state: Genre is plastic, fluid, unfinalisable, infinite, accumulative, flexible. Despite its typical misinterpretation as a flaw or obstacle to defining Genre, this feature of mutability constitutes Genre’s central function.

According to Tzvetan Todorov, “failing to recognise the existence of genres is equivalent to claiming that a literary work does not bear any relationship to already existing works” (8). Such a claim is a preposterous notion because it can never reflect reality, nor, in fact, should we desire such a scenario because if it was the case, it would make trying to understand a text – or, as we will learn, *the world* – a peculiar form of hell.

A further misunderstanding about Genre originates from the use of such terms “genre fiction” and “genre piece”. Frow notes that “in certain areas of criticism it is assumed that genre is a term that applies to some texts and not to others: thus we speak of...genre fiction, meaning for the most part such popular genres as the detective story or science fiction”. We should stop to think about how lazy and sloppy such views are as critical thinking. Frow explains that he treats “this way of speaking about genre as irrelevant because it obscures the extent to which even the most complex and least formulaic of texts is shaped and organized by its relation to generic structures” (1-2). In other words, it is impossible to create a work outside of Genre. Todorov states that “there can... be no question of ‘rejecting the notion of genre,’ ...Such a rejection would imply the renunciation of language and could not, by definition, be formulated” (7). What Todorov means here is that we cannot write, cannot use language, without it being preceded and governed and even produced by Genre.

Therefore, the central characteristic of change and its emergent qualities does not explain Genre entirely. Because, of course, genres not only *change* but also they *stay the same*, or they “remember”, too. Our definition will be much improved by considering the etymological root of the word. The *OED*’s principal definition of the word *Genre*, from the French *Genre* is “a kind; sort; style”. Fowler recommends E. D. Hirsch’s term “type”, commenting also that “the literary genre, moreover, is a type of a special sort” because it changes with time and its boundaries “cannot be defined by any single set of characteristics such as would determine a class” and, so, “the notion of type is introduced to emphasize that genres have to do with identifying and communicating rather than with defining and classifying” (38). However, it seems strange that humans could achieve identification and communication without definition or classification, doesn’t it? Genre is the culprit which facilitates this apparent super-power. Because instead of defining and classifying consciously and

informed by literal information, Genre both enables and also requires “merely” *inference* instead. Genre facilitates the unconscious inference of information which we have experienced, learned, organised, cued, signalled, and interpreted by utilising Genre. So, Genre facilitates inference, and more specifically each genre facilitates a kind, type, way, sort, or style of inference. Writers must utilise Genre, then, in order to facilitate and shape the reader’s inferences. They might be aptly described as inferential patterns. Genre doesn’t offer the whole story but, rather, the “gist”, so to speak. A genre can be compared most usefully to a map; it does not have to write every detail of the unique journey of the writer or reader, and these details must emerge through the interaction of both travellers with *the genres or maps at play*, much like the journey of consciousness.

Fowler’s engagement with Genre and his subsequent treatise *Kinds of Literature* (1982) offers us the closest we might get to a “definition” of literary genre. He captures both the simplicity and also the completely abstract nature of Genre which makes it so hard to define. “Genres are functional” he explains, and he suggests that “when we try to define the genre of a work, then, our aim is to discover its meaning” (38). According to Fowler, Genre primarily has to do with *communication* and *meaning*. Based on this understanding, we can see that the use of generic elements, stock characters, stereotypes, and other generic engagement operate as facilitators of the communication of a message and a meaning from the author to the reader. Without these familiar signals, the reader cannot make the inferences required of them to fully comprehend the meaning of the text. Genres are *functional*. In other words, they emerge as a matter of *utility*; they can be used to carry and convey and comprehend meaning in order to achieve control. Control over what? Action, behaviour, response. According to SoCo and the current thesis, without Genre, we could not achieve any *kind* of social communication or, by extension, social control. I add *control* to Fowler’s list of communication and meaning.

We find upon closer inspection that without background knowledge or experience of a genre, or what I will call *generic competence*, we are unable to understand the full or wider meanings of a text. One example outlined by John Frow is that of a news board. We approach the *news* genre with a “layered series of background knowledges and values” (19) and this information calls into being, and shapes, our understanding of that text. Initially, we must infer certain conventions such as that the meaning of certain words will be “played” with, a common feature in newspapers: they often use puns, for example, or play with words in order to bait our attention, and they glorify things, so we expect a particular use of language from newspapers or news boards. We also expect that the story will be true, as opposed to fictional. I know that these days we constantly hear about “fake news” but, essentially, we do tend to expect news to be “real”, so to speak. So, we come to a text with these kinds of expectations already “built into” us, and they are *generic* expectations. Genre feels intuitive. It’s a way of thinking about things, of understanding things. We know this stuff. We don’t actively think, “I am thinking about the genre of this text”. We just know it. We tend to approach most thinking tasks in this unified and compressed way. We do not need to pay attention to specific details; instead we attend to an integrated whole – and more, a whole of a certain *kind*. In this sense, the way that we think is dependent on the information about *kinds* of “things” which genres *remember*. Because they offer a unified vision

or a way of thinking, the specific details, devices, or “rules” are not so important. This downplaying of specifics obviously contradicts what most people would have you believe when they ask you to define Genre or to list its features.

Heather Dubrow offers the following consideration:

Genre...is related both to very specialized technical issues and to very broad human ones. One of the closest analogies to the experience of reading [through different genres]...is that of operating within a social code: genre... functions much like a code of behavior established between the author and his reader. When we agree to attend a formal dinner, we tacitly accept the assumption that we will don the appropriate attire; the host in turn feels an obligation to serve a fairly elaborate meal and to accompany it with wine rather than, say, offering pizza and beer. Similarly, when we begin to read a detective novel, we agree to a willing suspension of disbelief.

(2-3)

We have to follow social codes, or genres, to interpret experience so that we learn how to proceed within them. Genres tell us the same information regarding the texts that we read.

Writers therefore use Genre to focus the reader’s attention on certain codes which they use to convey the “message” of their text. Dubrow notices that “the way genre establishes a relationship between author and reader might fruitfully be labelled a generic contract” and she is right in comparing Genre to this kind of social engagement. Readers are offered fairly fixed expectations by which to organise their reaction to texts. Of course, genres must be fixed like contracts but at the same time we blend them constantly. In important and fundamental ways, then, the generic process is completely recursive and creates complex layers and levels of information and allusion for the author to work with, and for the reader to infer. Dubrow continues that the writer “in effect agrees that he will follow at least some of the patterns and conventions we associate with the genre or genres in which he is writing, and we in turn agree that we will play close attention to certain aspects of his work while realizing that others, because of the nature of the genres, are likely to be far less important” (31). Genres organise and recruit attention – they shape our attention but at the same time guide it.

The carefully chosen codes of each work organise our attention to create certain *expectations*: particular kinds of characters, settings, and events cue different expectations or signal different generic cues. We perhaps feel slightly more at home with this kind of conceptualisation regarding Genre because of the commonly taught micro-explanation which reduces Genre to an arbitrary means for *describing* cultural products. From a very broad point of view, we can recognise that there are certain plots, character types, and tropes that “go” with certain genres. This kind of information is usually not so much accurate as it is generally “useful” in terms of enjoying or getting the “gist” or “meaning” of a text or performance. However, they can get in the way of meaning, too. For example, modern readers and playgoers readily expect the genre of tragedy to supply us with a “Tragic Hero” and a “Fatal Flaw”. Despite the questionable accuracy of these “rules”, we still benefit from using

them to “understand” literature on at least a basic, and generally adequate, level. In similar ways, we expect a rural setting from the pastoral, we expect marriage from the comedy, and so on. As with our economic awareness of the “real” world, genres offer maps to focus our attention on specific features within the text. Indeed, similar to the inhibitory functioning of external or social awareness, seemingly we store more information on what *not* to expect, and we recognise Genre most readily when a *digression* or *subversion* has occurred. In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, we are confronted with a tragic hero, but also a tragic heroine in the form of Juliet. Such a subversion makes us question the tradition of the male tragic “hero”. Shakespeare relies on our unconscious expectations and, in fact, Fowler suggests that “the majority of generic features operate unconsciously, until, perhaps, some gross infringement of rule draws them to our attention” (60).

Without knowing the message, or gist, or genre of the work that we are interacting with, we have no hope of deciphering rhetorical choices such as rhythm and figures of speech; we cannot recognise their *meaning*. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses the change of generic register to symbolise mental disturbance, anguish, or confusion. Similarly, rhyming verse is used to draw attention to subverted expectations, as with the rhymes of the Fool’s songs which actually are filled with reason. Through metaphorical language we must attend to constant figures and tropes of blindness. Shakespeare is telling us that Tragedy is about careless categorisation, and the perceptual consequences of unnatural labelling and generic error. Similarly, Dubrow says that “pastoral has a [fundamental] predilection for binary oppositions” (117-118) and that the diction of the epic is “elevated” (9). An author’s use of language is inherently bound by Genre. As readers, we remember what happens in certain places, which kind of people do what sorts of things, and we learn to expect these occurrences to be repeated until our knowledge is modified.

Thus, when a writer “refuses” to follow generic convention, we need to be aware that it is highly likely that they are communicating important points about that code, about that genre, and about the type of experience or social ideology that it conveys. In some cases, they may be using a work to question Genre itself. However, they must be generically competent in order to do so effectively (or at all). Furthermore, for it to be possible for us to become conscious of a transgression of convention during the reading experience, the writer must have done some preparatory work in the preceding action to signal and cue our generic expectations. In turn, we must sense and respond to these generic conventions. Of course, we may be unconscious entirely of this sensing and responding. But, as Todorov remarked, “for there to be a transgression, the norm must be apparent” (8). If you attempt to understand the genre in which a writer is working, and then to understand what he is doing within it, you will be able to make intelligent critical evaluations about what he is doing with characters, plot, setting – indeed of the entire work – as a kind of message to the reader. Regarding the writer, Fowler suggests that “at the very least, they have to know which rules are worth breaking” (32). We need to know the meaning of the rules to know whether or not we want to break them.

Each genre makes significant a variety of literary features ranging from general to specific, enabling us to infer, associate, and assign value. Inference is a key to the processes of focus and attention. When we infer, we go down or along a certain route, recalling memories as we go to strengthen our sense of the “rightness”

or appropriateness of the path. The inferences generate further inferences and memories, some of which we may discard and some of which we may find need more concerted attention. For example, when we encounter the revenge style in *Hamlet*, we recall revenge tropes and themes such as masculinity, honour, and social mobility, inferring that the play is going to “take us” to a resolution typical of the revenge tragedy genre, but when we find certain scenes, language, or images used which undercut the concept of revenge and its usual handling, we begin to recognise that Shakespeare is invoking revenge conventions for a different purpose. We then begin to infer what these purposes might be from clues in the text. Shakespeare’s purpose seems often to be an invitation to question social doxa. Shakespeare all but turns the revenge tragedy on its head, redefining the genre; a feat underestimated by modern audiences due to the sheer success of its execution. He transcended the revenge genre and so reshaped its accepted conceptualisation in the social consciousness. It is argued in the current thesis that this process constitutes *creativity*. Also, the reader comes to understand the text more complexly and completely through this generic process, a process which facilitates memory, imagination, and inference. Once we are able to infer, we can then forge associative links between inferences, and thus assign relative value to generic groups or categories based on experience. Fowler surmises that all genres should be recognised not as “a daunting void” but instead as an extension of “a provocatively definite invitation”. He proposes that “the writer is invited to match experience and form in a specific yet undetermined way” (31) and I think that the same can be said of the reader.

In her book *Shakespeare’s Living Art*, Rosalie Colie notes that Shakespeare “forced conventions” (27) and that his plays are “notoriously mixed in genre” (16). When a writer chooses to subvert or integrate genres, our expectations and attention are subverted as well, or we are provoked to attend to novel combinations. In a similar vein to Fowler, Colie continues, “generic habits are... ‘invitations’ to do something else, something more, something new, with familiar forms” (27). These choices might be understood more usefully as *generic experimentation*. Experimentation tends toward complexity, particularly of structure. Complexity generates interest and attention. Simple narratives may interest us initially but we lose interest when we have read large numbers of texts with the same structure. Complexity expands the possibilities of the genre, making it ambiguous of course, but also more generative of thought. What we experience is the dynamic which Genre creates for the individual and for the group. To view texts from this perspective makes us take seriously the ways in which generic limits are fundamentally plastic in their utility.

Fowler rightly says that “to understand the kinds...we have to take into account a very wide range of features” (60). Of course, this process of taking into account a wide range of features occurs naturally simply because it is the interconnectivity between and within genres that is central to their function. Genre is a process of organisation which enables us to attend to complex circuits of information unconsciously while consciously recognising an overall type. Genre performs this work for us. A writer with a strong grasp of this function and their skill in its handling allows them to inhibit or activate in earnest the reader/audience’s attention as suits their intended code. We can relax – to an extent – as both readers and writers. It should come as no surprise that in his work *Playing and Reality*,

Donald Winnicott tells us that creative play “arises naturally out of the relaxed state” (146). But also, we need to remember that building generic competence is a life-long endeavour as a result of its essential trait of plasticity. “Acquisition of generic competence appears to be a complicated and lengthy process, as with language acquirement, it is never complete”, Fowler suggests, adding that “we cannot assume, either, that acquisition is steadily progressive” (44).

Our engagement with Genre as readers activates our creative participatory tendencies, while at the same time requiring a willing practice of self-reference and self-identification. Arthur Koestler discusses “the magic of identification” (308) in his book *The Act of Creation*. He tells us that “participatory emotions attach themselves to the narrative told on the stage or in print, like faithful dogs, and follow it whatever the surprise, twists, and incongruities the narrator has in store for them” (305). If we get the genre “wrong”, we will react with the “wrong” emotion. Generic errors do not necessarily mean that we will not enjoy the piece of literature but it can be said that we have not inferred accurately the meaning of the piece. His understanding of the differing levels of conceptualisation enabled Shakespeare’s work to have such broad generic appeal. If the reader or spectator is generically competent they can comprehend the thrilling things that Shakespeare does with Genre; he sets up generic expectations only to overturn them; He highlights our stock or generic reactions by having us “get them wrong”, which only heightens the generic effects; He draws attention to that which we take for granted: our attention! And also what often we follow *blindly* or unconsciously: social doxa. Koestler continues that “emotion is not created, but merely stimulated by the actors [or characters]; it must be ‘worked up’ by the spectator [or reader]” (307). These qualities of the process are what is meant by the term *creative participatory tendencies* and they infer the social, interactive nature of generic engagement. We must gauge the genre of the character and the situation and recreate the experience within ourselves in order to empathically receive and identify with that genre and to “understand” the play. It may be that we are more inclined to certain “types” of character, and this is because identification and participation require that we look back at *our own genres*. Identification of and with the self and of and with genres is made possible through recursive categorisation and thus association.

In 1985, Rosmarin asked the following question: “how, in the wake of deconstruction, can we make critical explanations that are at once reasoned, convincing, and self-aware?” And, her answer? “Genre.” I argue that too little attention has been paid to the dynamics of organisation and communication inherent in literary genres and that recognising this function will offer us new methodologies for creative practice as well as new insights for psychological and neuroscientific research. Genre is so often talked about using grouchy terms such as “rules”, “constricting”, “limiting,” and so on. Paradoxically, it is the abstract genres that we invent to limit and focus our attention that enable us to achieve creative freedom. From constraint, emerges freedom. Genre facilitates this phenomenon of freedom within constraint, of difference within sameness, the filtering and focusing of attention, enhancement and inhibition; the SoCo conceptualisation of Genre accounts for this quality of experience in literature and life. The relationship between freedom and constraint is interdependent, much like the relationship between the social and the self. In turn, the principal genres, *comedy* and *tragedy*, convey respectively the *general* and the *specific*. Typically, *comedy* is about the *social* and

tragedy is about the *self*. This spectrum generates a multitude of generic expectations, for instance, the expectation of higher status individuals in tragedy because they have the luxury to be self-consumed, one might say. Shakespeare points out quite clearly that we all have our own battles of the self and the social, it is always the interaction of the two. According to Fowler, “only variations of modifications of convention have literary significance” (18), and he concludes that “Shakespeare’s communication lies precisely in such departures” (262). Fortunately, we are experienced, often highly generically competent, and inherently *social* performers who can and do interact unconsciously and constantly with generic signals. What an incredible achievement. When Shakespeare employs code-switching and subversion of tradition he not only grasps our very human condition but he invites us to sense the generic work at play and formulate and experience our different responses, to adjust rapidly and unconsciously between codes as we do constantly in our social lives. Breaking rules also creates risk, sometimes great risk. We must be willing to incur risks, and we do all the time, in our interpretations.

I use the term *Genre* in two ways, predominantly: as a process, and a thing. I have tried to maintain consistency of using upper case for the action noun and lower case for the common countable noun form. Of course, it is extremely interesting that we use *Genre* in these two usually exclusive forms. The verb form is more difficult to apprehend and is dealt with contextually throughout using various terms including the admittedly awkward “genre-ing”, doing, looping, acting, categorising, creating, responding, interpreting, and performing. I compare *Genre* with the following processes and so refer to the same meanings by their usage: categorisation, mapping, interacting, organisation, inference, and so on. I refer to genres variously as categories, dispositions, perspectives, maps, systems, styles, kinds, types, styles, schemata, loops, patterns, *et cetera*.

At this early stage in the thesis, I will offer only preliminary definitions for the genres *Comedy* and *Tragedy* because detailed work concerning their definition is to follow in the body of the thesis. But, as the reader will learn, genres are naturally slippery and difficult to define, anyway, and a great wealth of information is required in order to fully comprehend to comic and tragic perspectives. Fortunately, most of the time we get on just fine without comprehension. Of course, it is the aim of the thesis to achieve the conveyance of comprehension, and so we will investigate comedy and tragedy much more rigorously through the body of the work. To begin with, the following introductions will enable procession:

In comedies we experience expansiveness in many forms. We see a regular “doubling” of characters, an inflated plot – as in, a rather thin plot expanded to its fullest capacity to “fill the time”; extensive social engagement – relationships, be they love or familial or courtly or professional or friendships, and so on; and oftentimes we get multiple settings. Comic characters themselves often expand beyond their class, their gender, beyond what is expected of them; in essence, comedies are about expanding social identity, notions of custom, and the imagination. We find in comedies cultural, financial, and geographical expansion. Comedies deal with importation, manipulation, and incorporation (all expansive functions). In his book *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Genres* (2000), Lawrence Danson claims that comedy “is dedicated to the avoidance of death” (113) and he posits that instead they drive toward “the ‘stuff’ that leads to marriage, procreation, and family alliances to maintain

and extend the Elizabethan household” (57). Smith agrees, that comedies “build up relationships and move toward a busy stage at the end with renewed bonds”. Comedies are in essence expansive.

Tragedies, on the other hand, are about shutting down; breaking apart. Smith remarks that “tragedies split people off from each other, they break up relationships”. We see the destruction of all kinds of relationships in Shakespeare’s tragedy – as many kinds as are created in his comedy. We see characters more as isolated individuals rather than belonging to groups; characters themselves are hemmed in by their genres and customs; tragedies are narrower in their conventions about plot, character, and potential; and of course, we see much death in tragedy. Identity is contracted; bound in generic contract and also incapable of gaining understanding in the social world of the play. The idea comes across that if we abide by the social contracts without recognizing that they should be updated, we can never hope to make progress. But at the same time, in contracting – turning inwards – we also get a magnified examination of the personal, the self-perspective up against the accepted social consciousness. Of course, we need social engagement and interaction to progress, but without the personal perspective we cannot see the error of our ways and thus learn. Danson observes that “if death were all that tragedy required, then tragedy would be, to use Hamlet’s word, as ‘common’ as dirt”, “yet tragedy” he continues “although it presents the single absolutely universal fact of life, is, compared to comedy, the rarer form” and that “by the same token” it is “more prestigious” (113) because tragedy fulfils what Danson calls “the expressive task” (133). What tragedy portrays is the unique individual conflicting with the *status quo*, and by generic demands, being overcome – but never before, handily, telling their story (at least in part, anyway. Of course, the fact that Hamlet gets “cut-off” from telling his perspective of the point explains in part our turbulent interpretive engagement with the play). The story is that we need these creative individuals in order to progress. We need Othellos and Desdemonas who breach ideas about interracial social conduct, we need Hamlets who question toxic binary roles and expectations, we need King Lear to “see better”. The contraction of tragedy focuses on rigid structure which stifles the creative individual, where the expansion of comedy focuses on the progression enabled or encouraged by addressing and questioning rigid structures.

I use the terms *comic* and *tragic* as adjective forms stemming from the genres Comedy and Tragedy. Some readers might question the use of comic instead of *comedic*. The rationale for the term comic is multi-fold: (1) In literary and Genre theory “comic” is common practice; (2) There is the option, too, to call the tragic the *tragedic*, separating from the personal and the dramatic definitions of tragedy. But, both terms *tragedic* and *comedic* are clunky and semantically distracting when the work itself is difficult enough as it stands; (3) As far as accepted definitions of the two terms comedic and comic, comic signals a much broader concept, particularly as interpreted throughout the following material.

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Understanding what is meant by the concept of *social consciousness* or SoCo, as inferred by many theorists and extended by my thesis, is key to understanding all of the ideas to follow. SoCo is shorthand for the term *social consciousness*. I use the abbreviation to refer to separate but related concepts as follows: (1) Social Consciousness (SoCo) Theory as it is presented in the current thesis and (2) in noun/process form social consciousness, which refers to a socially constructed conceptual framework constructed and shared by the interactive members of a culture. From social interaction emerges an “extra”, *social* structure; *its social consciousness; its social memory; its culture*. I refer to the emergent product of social interaction as either SoCo or social consciousness. I refer to SoCo Theory either in full or as SoCo. The usage is apparent within each context. For instance, when I talk about an individual’s engagement with their SoCo, I mean their engagement with the social consciousness of their society. When I say, for example, that SoCo has profound implications for psychological practice, I mean Social Consciousness Theory.

Social consciousness is defined here as the emergent product of social interaction, performance, and relationships. In fact, it is *ever-emerging*; always a work in progress and wont to change constantly, even if only in subtle ways. It is a process of social memory and awareness and communication. It is an endlessly intricate and complex abstract conceptual framework which we use to communicate with one another. SoCo is the shared repertoire of types of response with which we all engage and which we utilise to construct our interpretation of the world. Later I will suggest that individual consciousness emerges in the same way. A society or a culture has a particular SoCo which may be more or less different from another society or culture’s SoCo. But, evidentially, there *is* a kind of universal SoCo closely bound with the universality of emotions. Sure, one culture may interpret revenge differently than the next but, they still engage with the genre of revenge. Negative emotions in one society may be triggered by a different set of stimuli than another, but the negative emotions *are the same*. All living organisms have at least two genres; survival and death, constituting positive and negative stimuli (even if they have no means to make this information conscious or to assign value). From there on out there are all sorts of combinations making up different SoCos for different groups and societies and cultures.

The effects of social conditions on individual psychology are rarely disputed. But, in SoCo the psychological process is conceptualised as part of the effect of the generic process and the construction of a social consciousness; individual psychology emerges as a product of *engaging* with the SoCo. Certainly, Shakespeare seemed to think so. Social Psychologist Richard Smith explains that “Shakespeare was wonderful at illustrating exactly what social psychology is, the study of how the everyday behavior of the individual is affected by the presence of others” (2008). Social interaction facilitates self-development. And when *sociation* is not possible, our mental health suffers. I define *sociation* as any mode of interacting socially, be it live interaction with other individuals or interaction with the genres of the social consciousness. My new conceptualisation of Genre carries with it the history of story and story’s integral function in conceptualisation. But, Genre *precedes* story. “Although psychotherapy deals in stories, it turns out that they

emerged from brain evolution to serve the purposes of increasing complexity, coordination, and connectivity between us” Cozolino explains, and he says that “this is one of the many connections between interpersonal relationships and brain functioning that make psychotherapy a neuroscientific intervention” (2010, 174). The connection is Genre. What we find is an ever-increasingly complex social-communication process; the social consciousness. “The combined participation of caretakers and children in narrating shared experiences organises memories, embeds them within a social context, and assists in linking feelings, actions, and others to the self” (2010, 207), Cozolino continues. This statement can be extended to confirm that *sociation creates the self (in relation to others)*. So, psychology is social, and psychological development requires social engagement.

There have been some recent studies focused on “inner chatter”. For example, Professor Ethan Kross, a psychologist and neuroscientist at the University of Michigan has been interviewed recently about various elements of his research on the concept. It is important to note Kross’ interdisciplinary approach. However, the pivotal observation to be gleaned from Kross’ work in order to support the current framework is that the inner voice has *social* origins; the inner voice emerges from the social narration of our developmental experience. Emma Nobel and Gail Boserio spoke to Kross, among others, for *ABC Radio* and produced an article titled “How to Look Past the Chatter and Manage Your Inner Voice” (2021). Kross explains that “the internal voice is a product of human evolution, one that first emerges for young children as they begin to navigate and make sense of their environment”. In other words, the internal voice emerges from social interaction.

In the same article, Clinical psychologist Dr Vicky Tan explains that our internal voice emerged as part of a group survival process early in evolution. “That’s because if we were in a group back then, our chances of survival without that group would not be very high” she clarifies, suggesting that “this reliance on others” means not only that we that we ask ourselves constantly if we “fit in” or “belong” – in other words, whether or not we are “liked by other members of the group” – but also this social dependency explains our tendency to think in negatively biased ways because, according to Tan, “there is a huge benefit from thinking that something’s going to get us.” Because we are wired as Tan suggests, “more ... for survival than for happiness” (2021), and because we naturally form social groups, our psychological experience will be shaped by our social experience and what it is we have become shaped to fear in the face of social survival or “fitting in”.

David Oakley and Peter Halligan wrote an article called “Chasing the Rainbow: The Non-Conscious Nature of Being” for *New Scientist* in 2017 in which they propose that our evolutionary advantage is our ability to communicate, and that individual consciousness developed in order to facilitate communication, as opposed to developing purely for the experience of consciousness itself. They argue that consciousness “serves the powerful evolutionary function of enabling individuals to communicate (externally broadcast) the contents of internal broadcasting”. They add that such communication “allows recipients to generate potentially adaptive strategies, such as predicting the behaviour of others and underlies the development of social and cultural structures that promote species survival”. “Consequently,” they infer, “it is the capacity to communicate to others” our experience which “confers an evolutionary advantage”. The generic process requires and creates a social

consciousness. Alone we have no real need for communication, consciousness, or memory. We do not need to convey meaning. Alone we do not need Genre. Consciousness is a social process and Genre has a social function. Edelman agrees that “conscious experience enhances communication with other individuals of its species” (37-38).

We utilise Genre constantly when we speak to each other; Lepore and Stone acknowledge that we must “resolve ambiguities and recognize references” (12) with rapid speed when processing even basic conversation. In other words, we rely on not only imagination but also convention; balancing social and individual pressures. In order to achieve such seamless-seeming and rapid construction we require templates which can be used generally to facilitate connectivity and which constitute socially agreed upon generalisations. We would not be able to communicate if the references and rules were not socially understood and accepted. The references we make must be understood by others, otherwise communication would fail. We experience this at a conscious level when we feel we cannot get through to or agree with someone because their views are completely “at odds” with our own. Of course, our references will also depend upon our cultural and personal experience but it seems that our social reality plays the biggest and most definitive role in shaping our consciousness. It is our penchant for communication and thus understanding and learning which enables consciousness to develop.

According to Rochat, “what distinguishes human representational ability most undeniably is the *intention* to communicate with others about anything, from the mundane to the most abstract and intangible” (19). Now, I tussled with the word “intention” early in my research. I recall coming up with the idea that *Genre communicates the author’s intention*. When we go to see a play, we can expect to experience what is intended by the genre of the work. But, when we map this idea onto consciousness, something odd happens: *Genre communicates the individual’s intention*. We can expect to experience what is intended by the genre of the *expression*.

Humphrey refers to the philosophical term “intentionality” in order to demonstrate how we form mental representations, explaining that “when, for example, you represent object X in the world as object Y in your mind – the representing is an ‘intentional state’ which he defines as a state in which the representation “is *about* something, it points to ... Y (‘intendere’ is Latin for ‘to take aim at’). Which leads to the following conundrum: if intention is about “aboutness” and Genre is about “aboutness”, too, what is consciousness all about? I want to suggest that it is just a process of “aboutness” which has developed to a stratospheric complexity. Humphrey expands upon intentional representation by defining “the thing the representing is about” as “the intentional object” but what follows is that we are representing about representing. It is exactly what we are doing. It became useful for us to perform “as-if” in this way, or to *be conscious*, because it allowed us to do all sorts of effective learning and planning and understanding and better communicating. The original intentional object was always the *other* (and thus social), I posit, which by being co-created, enabled the mirroring required for the co-creation of subjectivity and thus consciousness proper.

Think about it. “As-if” or “it’s like” must always be a variant of “something else”. But “as-if” and “it’s like” also mean “is”, remember. Following this train of thought, if we switch “something else” for “*someone else*” – i.e., the *other*, the social, the general – we deduce that to be conscious *is like what it’s like for someone else to be conscious (generally speaking)*. Or at least it is like *past* experience, which is learned socially. The view that consciousness is created through sociality, interaction, relationships is not an obscure one in the current age but may explain the uncanny and indescribable nature of much conscious experience. Also, by bringing the focus back to relationships and interaction, this view supports the idea of Genre as a necessary product and subsequent requirement of such engagement and communication. If we accept that consciousness is social in origin and then combine this idea with the concept of “as-if” (definition to follow), surely we are closer to being able to explain subjective experience. Generic knowledge makes up the social consciousness. The rest is “as-if”. It is not an unusual concept to “get behind”. We do this kind of conceptualisation all the time. Humphrey notes that “it is often that case that X and Y do not come to the same thing at all: you perceive a physical object to be something more or other than what [a] physicist would say it is” and lists the following examples: “a piece of paper as a dollar bill, a pattern in the clouds as the face of a cat, a pile of old clothes in the bedroom as the ghost of your dead grandfather” (46). We can come up with many similar examples. What we can say to be true about all of these impressions is that they are “made-up”, “imagined”, or “conceptual”. Indeed, consciousness is made of the very same stuff.

Consciousness, then, is “about” relationships. Consciousness “confers selective advantage”, Humphrey explains, so “in one way or another, it must be helping the organism to survive. This can happen only if somehow it is changing the way the organism *relates to the outside world*” (18). Damasio clarifies the message with the following interpretation: “The way into a possible answer... came only after I began seeing the problem of consciousness in terms of two key players, the *organism* and the *object*, and in terms of the *relationships* those players hold in the course of their natural interactions” (2000, 19-20). According to the current work, consciousness emerges from the *relationship*; it is social in origin and construction. Genre enables us to create objects or “things” – more accurately, “things” with *meaning* – with meanings that are shared and remembered by entire societies and cultures. I propose that when we developed the capacity to turn back upon our own organism and create a “*thing with meaning*” – a *self* – we were able to mirror the social consciousness process and develop individual conscious minds. According to SoCo, the self is a genre which emerges from the interaction of the individual organism with the genres of the social consciousness. Both the social consciousness and the self are genres of genres, systems of systems.

Damasio suggests that a “relational” perspective “makes the biological realisation of consciousness a treatable problem”. He outlines the following account of such a realisation:

The process of knowledge construction requires a brain, and it requires the signalling properties with which brains can assemble neural patterns and form images. The neural patterns and images necessary for consciousness to occur are those which constitute proxies for the organism, for the object, and for the relationship between the two. Placed in this framework, understanding

the biology of consciousness becomes a matter of discovering how the brain can map *both* the two players *and* the relationships they hold. (2000, 20)

To my mind, Damasio's proposition is rich with opportunities for synthesis with my new theory of Genre. I will attempt to outline this more clearly later, but for now please accept the following spontaneous engagement with Damasio's account, noting that I will use the word "group" instead of genre where I feel the conceptualisation may get too complicated: The brain developed as a group of physical processes. The group got bigger and bigger and more complex over time. If the process of knowledge construction requires this big complex group of processes, and it requires signalling properties with which the group can assemble neural patterns and form images, then the process of knowledge construction requires some way in which the group can communicate and understand the signalling. The "signalling properties" are generic cues. The group constitutes but also requires Genre in order to imbue the signals with meaning. What it creates is a social consciousness. Damasio says we use "proxies", in other words we "as-if". Of course, we cannot "as-if" without Genre. We map the relationships – the genres – not necessarily the players. After a while we do not need to map the players. We map based on stories about the relationships between the players. Genres shape our stories. We acted before we were conscious ... in fact, we acted "as-if" we were conscious. Acting as if allowed us to create the *is*. And acting, of course, demands an audience. We acted because we were social.

Philippson offers an *emergent* definition of the self (2009). However, to deem the self *emergent* infers that it is also *relational* because the emergence occurs as a result of concerted performance or interaction and the *relationships between things*. Philippson recognises the social-individual loop. We are moulded by the environment that we then proceed to mould in turn, and so on and so forth, forever. This loop is a constant process of interaction, change, and emergence. Philippson states that the self "cannot be understood other than through the field" – in other words, for the self to emerge it must differentiate from the social consciousness; the other. It is a matter of perspective, of course. Philippson sees "each moment" of self-experience as an experiment that engages the self within the current social consciousness, which is constantly updated. We can make predictions about the results of such experiments but we can never be certain about the results. Thus, if we are flexible with our stories and predictions, if we experiment creatively, we can adapt successfully to the ever-changing world around us. Rigid or defensive engagement (or more usually, mere observation) means that we have to constantly "rig the experiment", as Philippson puts it, in order to limit our engagement in ways which confirm our narrow expectations and reflections. We can translate Philippson's points about the self to make a point about Genre: when we stick rigidly to out-dated generic conventions, we limit the engagement demanded of the reader. It is about social interaction, again, about facilitating conveyance and interpretation.

Another staunch supporter of the self as a social product or rather, more accurately, as emerging from the process of social consciousness is Rochat, whose book *Others in Mind: Social Origins of Self-Consciousness* (2009) observes the necessity of social interaction for the development of consciousness and also self. This interaction is based upon symbolic communication and shared understanding. Social consciousness precedes self consciousness but then the two construct and

reconstruct simultaneously and constantly. “The origins of self-knowledge are social” Rochat states, “because without others there would be no such things as a ‘self’, hence no object for self-reflection” (35). In other words, we need others to differentiate our “self” from. If there were no others who needed to be defined, then there would be no need to define a self. We need, in Rochat’s words, to define where “one individual end[s] and another begin[s]” (195). The construction of self requires distinguishing boundaries. Why? Because our core drive is survival. And knowing our environment is advantageous to survival. Even more advantageous to survival is a real “self” with feelings and values and ideas, a self which *ought* to be protected. If we had no self conviction we would not have much care for our survival, and one need not stretch the imagination too far in order to consider the tragic consequences of such a disposition (careless driving/substance abuse/suicide). It “makes sense” that many mental health conditions centre around “personality disorders” or “low self-esteem” or “lack of sense of self” or “confused identity” and highlights just how distressing these illnesses have the potential to be.

In her thoughtful paper “All the World’s a Stage: The Imaginative Texture of Social Spaces” (2004), Anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup posits that “‘the social’ itself is a performed space, where notions of place, performance time, and coactors play a crucial role in the shaping of individual actions” (223). Hastrup marks our “imaginative investment” in the social and notes that the theatre is just one of many “spaces of action” with which we engage. What the specific space of the theatre offers uniquely is a “world of condensed social action” – a loop with the potential to embody other existing loops. But any loop must be social, in theory. Loops are created and employed on a “sense and respond” basis.

Damasio recognises the functional development of sense and respond (S/R) mechanisms from basic homeostatic regulation to a kind of “sociostasis”. Homeostatic regulatory processes acquire, explains Damasio, “an extension into the sociocultural space”. In other words, the processes which served our evolutionary ancestors are replicated in the social world. That is, the S/R mechanism by which cells and organisms navigate the social world is used in increasingly more complex, explicit, and elaborative ways and applied in multifarious situations. After reaching a certain level of complexity, Damasio observes that regulatory human brains “engender the instruments of culture and open the way into new means of homeostasis at the level of societies and culture. In an extraordinary leap, homeostasis acquires an extension into the sociocultural space. Justice systems, economic and political organisations, the arts, medicine, and technology are examples of the new devices of regulation” (2010, 26).

But, again, the only way that we can make such leaps is by being social in the first place. A social life gives organisms opportunities to adapt to changing environments by trial and error and to imitate the useful behaviours of others. Useful behaviours to mimic might include the following: danger responses; ways to source energy (food); ways to reproduce (or ways to make reproduction more likely). Moreover, sociality introduces conflict. Conflict should be understood as any form of change which affects the organism. The behaviours previously listed would not be necessary if we did not face changes in our environment (depletion of energy levels; threat to homeostatic regulation; and so on). Damasio agrees that “consciousness consists of constructing knowledge about two facts: that the organism is involved in

relating to some object, and that the object in the relation causes a change in the organism” (2000, 20). We develop useful behaviours in order to respond to a changing environment, adapting as and when we face change. Later, Damasio says that “spontaneously and nonconsciously, the brain stem answers questions that no one poses” (2010, 187) But, I suggest that the questions are provided by our social environment, after which we learn, rehearse, and elaborate the questions as we move through life; *they become our own*. If the social environment is perceived to be a dangerous place with predators everywhere (which it is), the question becomes: “Is the organism safe?” Of course, this question later evolves to “*am I safe?*” The cause of conscious behaviour is social in origin. Individual survival and group survival are so irrefutably enmeshed that the consciousness that we develop must be considered a *social consciousness*, made up of shared understanding and influence. But, we go far past what is required to simply “survive” in the social world. *We flourish*. By the time modern humans reach adulthood, they somehow “contain in their brains” a vast collection of knowledge about how to interact with the world and with other people.

Damasio defines consciousness as “the relationships between organism and object” (2000, 20) – an object being anything from a person to a watermelon to Capitalism. Also, I think that Damasio would agree that the concept of a “relationship” and that of the S/R mechanism are related. A relationship is sort of like an S/R loop. We can think of organism and object as two characters. What follows logically is that we think of a story to which these two characters belong, or the story about their relationship (in which they are characters). The S/R mechanism becomes much more complex when we add stories and definitions to explain it and elaborate – which, naturally, we do. Damasio believes that “the investigation of sociocultural homeostasis can be informed by psychology and neuroscience” – and I believe that the reverse is also true. Whether we call them genres, circuits, loops, S/R, connections, relationships, or anything else – it is clear that something special emerges from *interaction*. It is the connections, or loops, which emerge from interactions which imbue objects and events with meaning or construct symbols to use in future interaction. The social consciousness is an everchanging *genre of genres*.

Of course, this conceptualisation of social consciousness owes a great debt to pioneers such as Frederic Bartlett and Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky observed that it is the relations between parent and child which produce the development of “inner speech” or in other words thought. He also believed that the relations between individuals and groups produce a shared knowledge – a consciousness – within cultures which is more than the sum of its parts. From the moment that we are born we begin this learning process. We learn the traditions and “rules”, so to speak, of our culture. We internalise lessons from our parents and later from teachers; we learn how to do things and what things are. *We learn and engage with the genres of life so that our own unique story can emerge*. Our speech, our reasoning powers, our value judgments are social in origin. The mastery of social skill and thus the equipment with which we can engage in the world is gained by engaging in social activity and thus sensing-and-responding, trial-and-erroring, performing, making mistakes, modifying, regulating, and so on. This kind of behaviour is of immense importance to us as we make our way through life and the more experience of social action that we accrue the better equipped we are to deal with what life throws at us. We learn from experience.

It is not just a one-way street, however. While we grow and develop and learn, we also change the environment around us. Traditions, stories, and rules will be shared over generations in the ways described above but the transition or translation is not infallible. We are born editors and interpreters. We add, we take away, we tweak or change slightly. We adapt to suit our personal goals and desires and fears. We add our own unique perspective to the tradition and so the tradition *changes*. This change further will be felt by others in the environment, and it will change them. And so on, and so forth; looping away. This is the loop of creative development. The more that we understand the biological underpinnings of such a social process, the more connections that we will be able to draw between the different levels of interaction and development – conscious and unconscious. It can be inferred that developing humans need lots of regular options – lots of consistent social relations. The choices that we make shape the choices that we make – ad infinitum – and choices are based on options (which are either secure, insecure, or disorganised). Children need to be exposed to a variety of sincerely communicated narratives – positive (constructive) and negative (inhibitive), such as the following: “well done”, “that’s great”; but also “don’t do that” “no” “that’s wrong”. Such narratives must be plentiful and robust and well-evidenced in their daily lives. This “stuff” is what makes humans into individuals (and occasionally creative geniuses).

I have not done extensive research into genes but I think that there are a lot of similarities between genres and genes. Louis Cozolino says that “our brains are built in the enigmatic interface between experience and genetics, where nature and nurture become one... At first, genes serve as a template to organize the brain and trigger critical and sensitive periods; later, they orchestrate the ongoing transcription of experience into genetic material. Through the biochemical alchemy of template and transcription genetics, experience becomes flesh, attachment takes material form, and culture is passed through a group and carried forward through time” (2010, xvi). It follows logically that Genre is the sociocultural extension of gene transmission. Genres are templates which allow us to sense variation/mutation. The main difference between genres and genes is that genes face death (with some known exceptions), whereas genres do not. Genres, emergent from the *sociostasis* do not face death, in the same way at least. A genre can always re-emerge. This is the true social memory that Bartlett calls for at work – emergent generic transcription. More recent work suggesting the link between genes and the environment with respect to epigenetics enables further comparison with Genre, how like Genre, and consciousness, genes too are subject to environmental shaping, and can encode and transmit information between generations (see Weinhold, 2006; Bédécarrats et al, 2018; Hörnberg et al, 2020; Laubach, 2021).

Bartlett requires that “strictly speaking a theory of social memory ought to be able to demonstrate that a group, considered as a unit, itself actually does remember, and not merely that it provides either the stimulus or the conditions under which individuals belonging to the group recall the past” (294). I posit that if we consider the emergent quality of the mind, while accepting that dualism is incorrect, we must allow for the fact that qualities which seem unrelated to physical processes are in fact produced by physical processes. We still deem these processes as “real” although we cannot fully connect the dots up with materialism. So, genres “exist” in this same way.

When on occasion I use the term “*social memory*” in the thesis, I mean near enough the same phenomenon as social consciousness. There is a distinction, of course, but because consciousness and memory are so inextricably linked and because they are both facilitated by Genre, I am pointing in roughly the same broad direction. The social consciousness depends on social memory to be transmitted and maintained, just as the individual consciousness comes to depend on individual memory. I try to use the term sparingly. In some cases, such as when discussing the topic of memory directly, it has been unavoidable. Care has been taken to include material which best supports the conveyance and comprehension of SoCo theory, and my research into memory proved an extremely constructive period for the development of the SoCo conceptualisation.

THE “AS-IF”

Damasio’s Somatic Marker Hypothesis (Damasio, Everitt, & Bishop, 1996; Damasio 1996, 2000) (SMH) connected physiological and conscious processes in a way which illuminated the centrality of emotions in human decision-making processes. We respond to external stimuli through concerted performance from the entire body – including the brain – and the way in which we perform will depend entirely on the context of the interaction. According to SMH, structures in the brain provide the foundations for learning associations between certain classes of complex situation, on the one hand, and the type of bioregulatory states – physiological, emotional, psychological – usually associated with that class of situation in past individual experience. These “dispositional” linkages between the facts that constitute a given situation, and the emotion previously paired with it in an individual’s contingent experience do not hold exact representations of the facts or of the emotional state explicitly, but hold rather the *potential* to reactivate an emotion by acting on the appropriate brain structures. The hypothesis suggests that as we acquire experience about certain configurations of actors and actions which require specific types of response or sets of responses, we process this response information in “sensory imagetic and motor terms” and record it in “dispositional and categorised form” or a “previously learned factual–emotional set”. In other words, according to SoCo, we record it as a *genre*.

SMH explains that we achieve the reactivation of genres or “dispositional linkages” via two routes:

- (1) “A ‘body loop’, in which the soma actually changes in response to the activation and the ensuing changes are relayed to somatosensory cortices;
- (2) “An ‘as-if body loop’, in which the body is bypassed and re-activation signals are conveyed to the somatosensory structures which then adopt the appropriate pattern.

(Bechara, Damasio, Damasio, 2000).

Of course, our central focus is the “as-if body loop”, at present. What we can glean from the SMH regarding a conceptualisation or definition of “as-if” includes two basic tenets, or the following synthesised tenet: the “as-if” is both deeply *physical* but also deeply *social*. The “as-if” is social because it is engaged with and provoked by interactions in the social environment. Additionally, we can deduce several important facts about the process of “as-if” applied to the ways that we navigate the broader social environment beyond the body:

1. The “as-if” is about *sensing* and *responding to change*.
2. When we “as-if”, we access patterns, or *maps* in order to *reconstruct learned responses*.
3. Our “as-if” responses are based upon our unique experience in our social environment.
4. We use the “as-if” far more often than we use the “real” body loop.
5. The “as-if” can be conscious or unconscious, implicit or explicit.
6. The “as-if” is “co-displayed” with useful and relevant “information”.
7. The “as-if” functions as a reasoning constraint, defining relevant memories, options, and predictions.
8. The “as-if” enables us to make value judgments based upon previous experience.
9. The “as-if” guides action with the same effect as the original body-loop mechanism.

Based on these inferred qualities, SoCo’s definition of “as-if” conveys the more general phenomenon of utilising one “thing” in place or under the terms of another “thing” – this phenomenon provides the basis for many of the traits that we deem most impressively and uniquely human such as imagining and creating and utilising metaphors. Furthermore, as Damasio observes, although the “as-if” is often unconscious, it does not just happen to us; feelings do not *just happen* to us. *We do them. We do “as-if”-ing.* Feelings are a wonderful example to use in order to comprehend the active nature of “as-if”-ing while at the same time capturing the sense we get that it “just happens” as opposed to us performing it. Feelings feel “as-if” they just happen to us when actually our bodies are performing actions from which emotional feelings emerge. What this tells us is that “pretending as-if” plays a crucial role in our conceptualization of the world. It is “as-if” feelings “just happen”. And though the “as-if” is certainly useful, it does have an apparently paradoxical side effect. Because “it feels as-if” feelings happen *to us*, adopting the opposite stance and accepting that our bodies actually do things to make them happen becomes quite difficult. We literally do not understand things that way, because the “as-if” makes it seem some other way. And it follows logically that there must be some advantage in “getting it wrong”, so to speak, or remaining unconscious of the “as-if” performance. Whenever we are pretending “as-if”, or imagining, or conceptualising, or feeling, we are performing. And what emerges from performance? The conceptualization embodied within the specific performed instance of whatever kind of as if is being used.

One of the most striking features of the “as-if” is, as identified by Damasio and extended by SoCo, that “as-if” loops bias and guide action in the same way as body loops or actual lived and physiological experience as it occurs. This feature illuminates the profound potential of “pretending as-if” for shaping our perspective and behaviour and thus the profound potential of engaging with practices which

make explicit use of the “as-if”, which could be defined as a group generally by the term *play*.

Perhaps the practice which engages most recognisably with “as-if”-ing is – other than play proper – the interaction of the interpretative individual and the creative product. When we go to see a play we enter a contract which states, among other things, that we agree to what is often called “a willing suspension of disbelief”. We agree that we will believe in the fiction of the play “world”; in essence, we agree to avert our attention from the fact that we are watching a stage with paid actors and props and the like. When we are watching the play, we act “as-if” *the world being presented is real and “as-if” the fictional characters played by actors are real people*. Moreover, when we watch a play, we bring the characters to life in the same way that we bring everyone else in the real world to life – we feel “as-if” we were them or at least we try to. We anthropomorphise the characters, but our understanding of and engagement with real people also requires that we anthropomorphise them. To understand how other people feel around us – technically, to make them conscious, and to understand them as such – we “put ourselves in their shoes”, so to speak; we try to feel and think “as-if” we were them. We empathise with them. The evolutionary benefit of the “as-if” is that it facilitates the construction of events and experiences that are not happening, that are imagined, or predicted based on past experience. This kind of practice has multiple obvious benefits for survival, because we can rehearse and choose the most effective options for actual performance. Put simply, the more that we “as-if”, the more that we “get” out of life. In fact, SoCo argues that we do not “get” at all, much in the same way that emotions don’t “happen to us”. When we “as-if”, we are *creating*. We *do* emotions.

Empathising, or as-if-ing in general, is, I believe, the key mechanism of consciousness. Our ability to share our feelings and understand the feelings of others is crucial to our social lives. And our lives simply *are* social. When we empathise, in fact, the same regions involved in processing our own direct pain experiences are activated. When we “as-if”, we tend to do the same things that we would if we were in the real situation. By “do”, I do not mean that consciously we choose to act in a certain way but instead our bodies respond physiologically. Our bodies respond in the same ways that they would if they were in the imagined situation. For example, there are countless studies which show that when we imagine doing something, the same areas which would develop if we *were* doing the activity develop just the same (see Zavala and Kuhn, 2017; Wallmark et al, 2018; Reddan et al, 2018; Meyer et al 2019). This means that if an individual imagined playing the guitar for half an hour each day, for instance, the parts of the brain involved with learning that skill would develop “as-if” the individual was actually playing the guitar. Our empathic skill is clearly key to our representative loops. These insights work to explain how characters created by skilled writers such as Shakespeare can so affect us. Shakespeare understood clearly the power of “as-if” experience and its potential to shape our understanding of the world.

In 2006, years after Damasio conceptualised the “as-if” and as a response to the building research on mirror neurons, Damasio and his long-time collaborator and wife Hanna Damasio released a paper called “Minding the Body” in which they acknowledged mirror neurons as “in effect, the ultimate ‘as-if body’ device” and that

the mirror neuron system achieves conceptually what we hypothesised as the 'as-if body loop' system: the simulation, in the brain's body maps, of a body state that is not actually taking place in the organism. The fact that the body state the mirror neurons are simulating is not the subject's does not minimise the power of this functional resemblance. On the contrary, it stands to reason that if a complex brain can simulate someone else's body state it can simulate one of its own body states.

(19)

The Damasio suggest that mapping *becomes easier with experience* – that once we have mapped an experience it becomes easier to map the same experience the next time we encounter it – and that this feature of mapping can help to explain how the “as-if” system was first applied to the brain's own organism, simulating its body state, and subsequently it was able to apply the system to others by simulating *their* body state. Now, while I agree that mapping is use-dependent and -relative; as we gain generic competence, we can map with ease, I think that the “as-if” was first developed socially. We did “as-if” with others (and in this case “others” could refer to anything from an SCO to a human) before we “as-if-ed” a self into being. This process began before brains. Incredibly simple organisms respond “as-if” when they detect danger – despite the fact that danger may be misinterpreted, and organisms without brains can still interact with “others” which demands the “as-if”. When we create the self, we are imitating the social “as-if” process.

MAPPING AND MAPS

The SoCo definition of a genre aligns with what Damasio calls a *map*. It follows logically that he uses the term *mapping* to denote the processes of constructing and utilising maps. When we speak about *Genre*, we use the same term for both the process and also the “thing”. In *The Feeling of what Happens* (2000), Damasio offers the following explanation of maps:

The brain is a creative system. Rather than mirroring the environment around it, as an engineered information-processing device would, each brain constructs maps of that environment using its own parameters and internal design, and thus creates a world unique to the class of brains comparably designed

(321-322)

In his later work, Damasio mounts a more specific definition:

Maps are constructed when we interact with objects, such as a person, a machine, a place, from the outside of the brain toward its interior. I cannot emphasise the word *interaction* enough. It reminds us that making maps, which is essential for improving actions..., often occurs

in a setting of action to begin with. Action and maps, movements and mind, are part of an unending cycle... The human brain maps whatever object sits outside it, whatever action occurs outside it, and all the relationships that objects and actions assume in time and space, relative to each other and to the mother ship known as the organism... The human brain is a born cartographer, and the cartography began with the mapping of the body inside which the brain sits.

(2010, 64)

Based on these descriptions, we can mount the following comparative observations about genres and maps:

- Genre is both a process and also a “thing” in the same way that Damasio differentiates between *mapping* and *maps*. Maps and genres are emergent instantiations of the mapping/generic process. According to Damasio, we are born with this *cartographic* or *generic* capacity and certain evolutionarily “hard-wired” maps. It is not the specific maps which differentiate humans but the capacity to construct and utilise maps and, even further, “make them conscious”. It is not the specific genres which matter it’s *our capacity to do genre*; to *conceptualise*, essentially, to *sense and respond*.
- *Mapping or generic constructed construction? is activated by social Interaction*. Thus, maps and genres are experience dependent and relative to social context. Genres and maps are *co-constructed*, i.e., *social*. We map the relationships between things – generally between “our self”, the organism, and everything else. Genres convey the generic rules learned about the particular type of interaction and the relationships which emerge from the interaction. We use genres and maps to communicate, navigate, read, interpret, plot, predict, and respond in the social world. Of course, before consciousness there was still mapping. Maps and genres begin with mapping body signals and body states. Body maps and later neural maps learn patterns of response to stimuli and the relationships between the organism and the environment. Thus, maps and genres communicate functional response patterns based on interaction with the social environment and the characteristics and general occurrences which we have experienced in the past. Conscious or conceptual genres/maps can be much more fluid than the physiological maps which preceded them and made the later feat possible. As in, we can understand DNA and genes as the precursors of maps/genres. However, it is reasonable to believe that conceptual or conscious genres are infinitely plastic due to epigenetics and our complex and ever-changing social consciousness.
- Maps and Genres tells us about two things: *form* and *function*. Maps are functional, like genres; they must be *used*. The ways in which we use the maps of the SoCo are unique to our personal experience and subsequent and constantly modifying perspective. The important questions become such as “*How* is Genre being used?”, “What *kind* of map is being used?”, or “In what *way* is the mapping capacity or the specific map functioning?”. These questions are questions about the genre of the experience being mapped. Maps and Genres are not faithful, “carbon-copy” representations of experience. “To be sure... there is a legitimate notion of pattern, and of

correspondence between what is mapped and the map”, Damasio explains, “but the correspondence is not point-to-point, and thus the map need not be faithful” (2000, 322). Instead, because they pertain to form and function, both maps and genres incline much more often to be useful – as is relevant to the individual’s experience – as opposed to faithful, accurate, reliable, or “true”.

- The processes of mapping and Genre are multidirectional, i.e., both *top-down* and also *bottom-up*.
- According to Damasio, *feelings* emerge from the mapping process. SoCo’s conceptualisation of emotions as genres/maps will be discussed shortly and supports Damasio’s assertion.
- Our generic capacity, our ability to map, enabled humans to develop complex responses to the social environment and create the richly textured social consciousness and conscious lives that we have become so accustomed to that we take them for granted. But, as Damasio recognises, it is only when the possibility of maps arose that “organisms were able to go beyond formulaic responses and respond instead on the basis of the richer information now available in the maps” (2010, 134-135). *Genres enable us to move beyond formulaic response and instead formulate rich and creative responses.* Damasio notes in fact that some of our maps, “which probably result from the brain’s making maps of itself making maps” (70-71), or what you could call *meta*-maps, are actually extremely abstract. It is difficult not to invoke the theatrical device of a “play-within-a-play”.

THE STRANGE LOOP AND THE SELF IS A STRANGE LOOP

Douglas Hofstadter formulated the concept of “the strange loop” in 1979 by drawing on Gödel’s theory of incompleteness (Hofstadter, 1999), which offers the hypothesis that there are inherent limitations to any formal system (Gödel and Braithwaite, 1992). Hofstadter states that all systems require a self-referential loop in order to flip the order of cause and effect. To use our earlier example, to feel as though things happen *to* us, we must turn back on our own processes, essentially our monitoring systems must *look back at themselves*, and the emergent perception of cause and effect switch places. The original *cause* – *doing* the emotion – becomes the *effect*, and the original *effect* – feeling the feeling, becomes the *cause*. This strange loop mechanism, in Hofstadter’s own words, “is not just peculiar; it is astonishing” (2007, 170). The loop is *strange* because it constructs symbols or patterns – here defined as genres – and then flips causality operating based on that symbolic – or generic – structure.

The strange loop is the metaphorical *ouroboros* – the snake which eats its own tail. I define the strange loop as fundamentally and primarily social in origin. The strange loop is about *monitoring*, *regulation*, and *adaptation*. Perhaps the first two words I have just used have more obviously social connotations, but the latter, adaptation, is the most crucial skill for surviving in the social world. Loops allow us to monitor continuously the success or failures of our systems by checking them out against our ongoing and constantly changing experience in the world. If our climate

were to suddenly change drastically (as looks increasingly likely) we would be unable to survive. Our temperature systems are deep rooted and such systems cannot change quickly. They change slowly over evolution.

Hofstadter observes that, “in short, a strange loop is a paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop” and he points out that it is less like a *physical* circuit but an *abstract* loop. I take that to mean that a loop emerges from the multilevel concerted physiological performance and interaction. The loop is “closed” by the flipping of cause and effect. In reality the loop is open-ended somehow. *The loops learn*. The initial direction of the loop process is “upwards” and the ensuing feeling is of a “downwards causality” where in “reality” there is none. Loops overlap and I like to think that waves of feeling emerge from the looping phenomenon.

I have felt the presence of the strange loop ever since I started the research that has culminated in this thesis. Ever since I read F. C. Bartlett’s remarkable work *Remembering* (1932) – written one year after Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems, in which he says that “an organism has somehow to acquire the capacity to turn round” (206). *The organism must learn how to look back upon its own representations and also to construct them afresh*. Bartlett believes that this “turning” ability is a crucial step in evolutionary development and that the process explains the when and the why of consciousness. Memory (which involves turning or looping) provokes consciousness. I see no problem with such a statement at this stage in the proceedings.

Lev Vygotsky doesn’t talk specifically about the “as-if” or the strange loop but I think that his work bears striking links to those concepts. His idea of “inner speech” (1930) whereby the commands of the parents are internalised by the learning child entails a discernible loop-style process, and the same is also true for his related theories about the developments, interactions, and transitions between concepts and words. His inner speech concept does suggest that we think “as-if” we were our parents when we develop private thought. Vygotsky details a form of macro looping.

It seems, thus, that loops work in extremely similar ways as do genres in literature; they enable us to *reflect, learn, monitor, regulate, and adapt*.

In *I am a Strange Loop* (2007), Hofstadter extends his theory of the strange loop to propose that the self is a strange loop. “An ‘I’ is a strange loop where the brain’s symbolic and physical levels feed back into each other and flip causality upside down so that symbols seem to have gained the paradoxical ability to push particles around, rather than the reverse” (back cover). The strange loop cannot be found in a specific area of the brain. Much to the contrary, Hofstadter explains that

the strange loop making up an ‘I’ is no more a pinpointable, extractable physical object than an audio feedback loop is a tangible object possessing a mass and a diameter... An ‘I’ loop, like an audio feedback loop, is an abstraction – but an abstraction that seems immensely real, almost physically palpable, to [conscious] beings like us.

(180)

Accordingly, SoCo defines genres as strange loops and defines the self as a genre; a system of systems which flips cause and effect. It feels “as-if” Genre is decorative, an after-thought, shaped by individual creativity (which it has come to be – that was our defining event as conscious humans), when in reality Genre shapes individual creativity. We strange-looped the strange loop mechanism when we created consciousness. Actions motivate feelings and feelings motivate actions in a strange loop. The self is a strange loop. *Genre* is a strange loop.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment Theory (AT) is the most pertinent of the psychological theories which have informed the construction of The SoCo Framework and serves much utility as a way of communicating my new extended concept of *Genre*. Essentially, I interpret *AT* as an approach to identifying the different genres of early experience – the different types of response – common in human development and behaviour. I want to put forward SoCo theory as an extension and absorption of *AT*. There are various terms used to describe *ways of attaching* (most plainly, *secure* or *insecure*), including the following: Attachment Patterns; Attachment Schemas; Attachment Styles. SoCo argues for the term *Genre*.

First outlined by Psychoanalyst John Bowlby, *AT* is a major psychological theory which has evolutionary implications about social interaction. The main tenet of the theory interprets social interaction and its emergent relationships as formative in creative development especially with regard to emotional processing and the social self. Positive attachment behaviour – which reflects a safe and interactive environment with secure social relationships – enables the creation and maintenance of a “whole” and nuanced self as well as “healthy” interpersonal relationships. Negative attachment behaviour – which reflects an unsafe or neglectful environment with insecure social relationships – limits creative development and shapes future social engagement but with negative impact on the creation and maintenance of self and others, leading to a fragmented or troubled sense of self and turbulent or “toxic” interpersonal relationships. When a child is successful in achieving attachment, Bowlby suggests that the child “feels secure”. In the absence of successful attachment, including the “threat of loss” and “actual loss”, the child will feel anxiety, sorrow, and in more complex situations great anger (29). The child will develop an “insecure” attachment style. Notice here that not only actual events but “threat” of events shapes the attachment style, which supports the connection of *AT* with the “as-if”.

AT supports the idea that sociality serves an evolutionary function which implies also that it supports survival. Furthermore, it encourages us to ask questions about the characteristics of such behaviour, or “action”. Bowlby theory places a functional emphasis on our investigations of experience. He characterises the two main features of attachment behaviour as the following: “The first is maintaining proximity to another animal, and restoring it when it has been impaired; the second is the specificity of the other animal” (181). So, put more simply, the two goals of

attachment behaviour are *proximity* and *specificity*. The first goal of proximity can also be construed as a goal to “group together”, to achieve proximity is to associate; to understand. Of course, the second goal of specification is one which requires functional categorisation, too. The caregiver must be categorised as such, as protector, and the function that they serve is to support survival. There is strength, we know, in numbers. The initial relationship bears such valence simply because they enable the creation of our very first conscious category. All other categories are based off this first one of “caregiver/protector” – the life *source* basically. This category is based on interaction with mother in many cases but in many other cases can be based on interaction with father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, foster-parent, or any person with which we engage primarily, who can be depended upon or at least becomes predictable because of close proximity and also frequent instantiations. “Young creatures tend to follow any moving object that they see, be it a mother bird, a man, a rubber balloon, or a cardboard box” Bowlby notes, “once having followed a particular object, moreover, they come to prefer that object to others and after a time will follow no other” (211).

With the goals of specificity and proximity in mind, we can deduce that attachment is about *response prediction* and *map-making*. When we are attempting to define the attachment style of an individual, we ask the questions “how much?” and “what kind?” The attachment period shapes the formation of conventional response patterns. Attachment involves social interplay – learning, imitating, and elaborating. A feedback loop of relation. The expectations shaped by our attachment experience inform the trajectory of our life-narrative. Rather than “finding” meaning, meaning emerges from our interacting with and attaching to others. We are naturally drawn to others – to grouping or forming groups; we are naturally social. Experience informs our approach to social response. Because of this fact and in agreement with Bowlby, it is easy to understand that nature and nurture are not two sides of a coin but instead are involved in a constant dynamic exchange from which emerges the conscious structure. Bowlby himself clarifies that “in the development of attachment behaviour, as in the development of every biological character, nature and nurture play continually interacting parts” (296).

Our very important first category (“caregiver”) and our very important first attempts at categorising or distinguishing are the grounds on which we start to build our self. We start to create our own conscious experience built up with the incoming information that we are accruing rapidly. We start to become a person. And, fittingly, with more experience comes more consciousness – need we hark back to Damasio’s “knowing is consciousness”. With more experience we understand more and more and our conscious experience expands. We don’t just get our information from real-life action but of course we can imagine and play and listen to stories, too.

Genre is an organisational concept *for* organisational concepts. Bowlby explains that “by proposing that child’s attachment behaviour is controlled by a behavioural system conceived as an organisation existing within the child, attention shifts from the behaviour itself to the organisation that controls it” (373). Translated through the generic lens, Bowlby’s point would read as follows: by proposing that the performance of the organism is controlled by *Genre*, conceived as an organisational system within the organism, co-constructed through the relationships and interactions of the organism with its social relatives, attention shifts from the

performance itself to the genre which controls it. Thus, when we attempt to understand a person's psychology, or, indeed, one of Shakespeare's dramas, we must focus our attention on the generic engagement at play. A genre is a conventional response to a certain kind and intensity of stimuli.

CONTROL

SoCo theory extends the various forms of traditional Control Theory (see Carver and Scheier, 1982; Weiner, 1988, 2013). The idea is that the *goal* is control but we achieve control *via communication* so there must be a way to incorporate expression, interpretation, and control as well as creativity. My new Genre analogy fulfils the criteria. The basic unit of control is, according to Carver and Scheier, “the negative feedback loop – termed negative because its function is to negate, or reduce, sensed deviations from a comparison value” (111). SoCo argues that we do not simply negate and reduce but we also expand and elaborate. The two patterns of behaviour are termed in the current thesis as *tragic* and *comic*.

Where traditional Control Theory suggests that the control arrangement constitutes a *closed* loop of control, I argue that in when it comes to conscious control, because the loop is strange, it seems closed but actually it is accumulative and open-ended. The new Genre concept aligns with Wiener's notion of “organization as the message”. Comedy and tragedy align with Wiener's concepts of two patterns of communicative behaviour “learning” and “rigidity”. But, SoCo departs from control theory in several notable ways. Most prominently, discards the computer ideology inherent within control theory and cybernetics. SoCo is quite pertinently not “anti-disciplinary” as has been said about Cybernetics (Pickering, 2010). I argue that control theory can be understood more readily through the lens of my new Genre analogy and furthermore the Genre concept accounts for the various stages of the regulation process and also the implications about sensing, a “point of reference”, “reference value”, weighing up disparate expectations, and reducing discrepancy.

Genre as a plastic and unconscious control process allows us to resolve conflicts and modify and update our generic repertoires. Genre enables us to control or *articulate* response. By strange looping the process, we tend to approach, interpret, and use Genre only in the “tragic” or “negative” sense. SoCo suggests that when we respond comically, creativity (and consciousness) is born. Conscious control is merely “as-if” – but there is nothing mere about the “as-if”.

Now that the key concepts have been introduced, the reader is primed to comprehend The SoCo Framework. But beforehand, it must be repeated that this

conceptualisation is an open-ended, unfinalised, hypothetical, and curious exploration, as opposed to an encyclopaedia of accepted factual information. There are discernible features of the processes which are to be discussed and they constitute important elements of the SoCo framework and provide striking analogies with the new Genre concept. The basic ideas of SoCo deserve further scrutiny and while I am not scientifically trained I hope that my theorising might be of some value in terms of conceptualisation, syntheses, and theoretical stimulus.

Damasio elucidates in various works that maps exist in the unconscious brain. We do not need to attach feelings to maps but in order to render those maps *conscious* we must do so. In order for consciousness to emerge, that is, we need to *assign emotional value to maps*. Thus, our associative and categorisation skills must exist *pre-consciousness*. We could not make images about which to have feelings without this inherent categorisation ability. Our categorisation creates our conscious reality. In this respect, categorisation predates the self, also, and, in fact, the self is regarded here as an instance of Genre – a category. In his work on the emergence of the self and the construction of the conscious brain, Damasio asks: “How does the brain *do mind*?” (2010, 5) He answers by emphasising the significance of how the brain must be *structured* and how it must *function* with regard to the emergence of consciousness. This thesis proposes generic type processes as the functional and structural prerequisite for *control* and thus consciousness and *all* emergent creativity.

Damasio calls for a “radical change in the way the history of conscious minds is viewed and told” (15-16) and the addition of the Genre concept to work such as his is extremely rewarding with regard to synthesis. It is helpful, of course, that Damasio apprehends the profound connection posed by Jaques’ words “All the world’s a stage” and I propose that in order to understand “how the brain produces that something extra, the protagonist we carry and call self, or me, or I” (17) we must think about Genre. The word protagonist here opens up windows to thinking about how we might do so. If we think of ourselves as the protagonist of our own life then what is the *genre* of the action taking place – that you yourself are performing? Damasio notes that a framework for consciousness “must interconnect behavior, mind, and brain events” (19) and SoCo hopes to achieve this goal. What is initially rote, generic memory of useful responses becomes *associated with feelings*. Then, when subjectivity is achieved, once we have acquired enough experience to create our *self-genre*, we are capable of living highly creative social lives. Obviously, the process is accumulative, not sudden; bits and pieces of the most useful or the most used responses come together in a unique combination to form the “individual” self and offer us a perspective around which we can (and need to) orbit our conscious experience. We are arbiters of experience; conveyors.

The framework must achieve another of Damasio’s goals, as well: “the framework must address the issue of how system macroevents are built from microevents” (20). Damasio is correct in positing that there is a “scaling up” of consciousness in the same respect as with physiological processes. Consciousness is a dynamic process for detecting change. In a similar way, the richness of the familiar characters that we recognize in plays is built up from a rich generic tradition of changes to and developments of that character type. Consciousness – and everything else – exists within a detectable range.

Finally, Damasio acknowledges that “many of us in neuroscience are guided by one goal and one hope: to provide, eventually, a comprehensive explanation for how the sort of neural pattern that we can currently describe with the tools of neurobiology, from molecules to systems, ever becomes the multidimensional, space-and-time-integrated image we are experiencing this very moment” (2000). SoCo attempts to explain the basic principle in multi-level experiential integration: sorting out the information of experience into genres, *doing Genre*.

Cozolino points out that “we stand to learn a great deal from zooming in and out, from neurons to neighbourhoods, ...In this way, we may gain a deeper understanding of the interwoven tapestry of the biological, psychological, and social processes that constitute human life” (2014, xiv). Such boundary crossing material is intimidating to approach but after serious consideration of the concept of Genre, wonderful indications and implications have emerged. The capacity of literature is constructed by social interaction. Literary genre comes from our innate ability to distinguish or categorise. But I also believe that generic type processes were at play when singular cells developed the simple ability to sense and respond. The ability is innate, the information is epigenetic.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

SoCo – Social consciousness / Social Consciousness Theory

AoE – Apropos of Everything

S/R – Sense-and-response/respond

SCO – Single cell organism

AYLI – *As You Like It*

3. THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS FRAMEWORK

Having pinned down SoCo's central concepts, I can now provide an overview of its theoretical framework. The fundamental task of The SoCo Framework was to mount a comprehensive and functional theory of Genre. Certainly, I feel that I have achieved this task. However, the scope of the framework is significantly broader than originally imagined. By utilising concepts from literature and integrating them with research from science and social science and also lived experience, and by synthesising all of this information, I have been able to mount a new foundational metaphor and theoretical framework for Genre but through so doing I have constructed a parallel theory of *creativity* and, thus *consciousness*.

The framework is aimed at researchers and practitioners in various fields as well as any individuals who are curious about life and self-development. For the field of psychology, I believe that the framework provides new or extended conceptualisation to be utilised in therapeutic practice and to complement existing major theories. For the field of biology, the framework offers a new way of conceptualising evolution which answers the central questions it raises with regard to the hard problem and the development of human creativity. For all individuals, the framework reframes experience in such a way that facilitates meaningful action, choice, and change.

The framework brings together several existing theories and concepts and ties them together with the connective tissue of the new Genre concept. The major theoretical influences which have informed the construction of the framework have been mentioned already but can be listed here as follows: Antonio Damasio's Somatic Marker Hypotheses, his conceptualisation of "mapping", "as-if", feelings, emotions, self, and consciousness (see all entries); Douglas Hofstadter's concepts of the strange loop and the self as a strange loop (1979, 2007); John Bowlby's formulation of *Attachment Theory* (1997) as well as more recent work on attachment; F. C. Bartlett's theory of memory or *remembering* (1932) as well as more recent research on memory; Sociological research on the concepts of social constructionism, social hierarchy, social memory and intersectionality from researchers including Vivien Burr (2003), Paul Connerton (1989), and Ijeoma Oluo (2019); A variety of recent research outputs regarding functional categorisation and specialisation; A variety of research from various fields on the concept of self and consciousness; Plato's theory of forms, knowledge, and perception, Aristotle's theory of universals, essence, matter, form, logic, error, rhetoric, and poetics, and Greek Stoicism. (Russell, 1988). Extensive research in literary and Genre theory, from Aristotle's conceptions of Genre to modern day debates; and Shakespeare's catalogue of plays.

The framework will emerge incrementally over the course of the thesis by way of the broad scope of the indicative material engaged, the disparate multidisciplinary theories which have been woven together by the new conceptualisation, and the implications which follow logically from all of this preparatory work. In many ways, the framework will be constructed in much the same manner as the construction which we do with Genre. It will be argued that all construction requires Genre. Therefore, SoCo as a theory is reflective of the very processes which it attempts to

conceptualise and make accessible. I will provide an orientation of the basic tenets and structure of the framework in the current chapter.

The central tenets of SoCo are as follows:

- ◇ *Genre facilitates social interaction*
- ◇ *Consciousness and creativity are social processes*
- ◇ *The self is a genre*
- ◇ *Self-genres operate from a general perspective; comic or tragic*
- ◇ *The experimental interaction of a unique self-genre with the genres of the social consciousness primes the emergence of creativity, and thus, consciousness*
- ◇ *The evolutionary imperative is control, achieved by communication*

SoCo's principal tenet conveys a new understanding of Genre as a social tool and prerequisite for creativity. Certain Genre theorists have been crucial to the development of SoCo, as mentioned earlier. All of these theorists recognise Genre's *social* function and they recognise Genre as a *process* as well as a "thing". The SoCo framework incorporates and extends such theories by reconceptualising Genre through the lens of modern neuroscientific and psychological research in particular and by performing the reverse, too, by viewing the scientific research through a "generic lens" which has the potential to inform future research in these fields based on generic and literary theory, as well as utilising the scientific evidence to inform creative practice. Essentially, SoCo proposes that Genre as a process is analogous to and descendant of evolutionarily basic sense-and-respond mechanisms and to do so has required broad interdisciplinary synthesis, the scope of which has not been attempted previously. The implications of utilising the analogy are multidisciplinary and of direct value to real, thinking, and feeling people as well as for research. My new Genre concept is positioned at the core of The SoCo Framework.

Bartlett ended his seminal work *Remembering* (1932) with a proposition: he invited fellow thinkers to develop a theory of *social* memory. Connerton and Edward Casey both made respective attempts to investigate such a theory but their theories seem to revolve around *physical* memory, or *individual* memory in a collective *setting*, rather than a strictly social memory. I suggest that social memory emerges from engagement with Genre. Because genres emerge as types of response and are thus inherently social or associative, Genre as a prerequisite for memory is productive of new memories, which prompts consciousness and new understanding constantly. The genres which we use to communicate and achieve social control and our *engagement* with them work collectively as a social memory, facilitating a *social consciousness*; a *way* for us to maintain collective *understanding* and remember as a group. The social consciousness in turn enables us to communicate complex concepts, which could constitute our human evolutionary advantage. It may be instead that *learning* or *imitating*, activities facilitated by Genre also, could "define" us as humans. In either case, *Genre has a profound social function*.

The second tenet of SoCo, then, is that creativity – including consciousness and memory – originated as a social process, before we achieved the capacity to "turn back upon" our own organisms. If, as Oakley and Halligan suggest,

consciousness serves the function of aiding social communication, then it makes perfect sense to think of Genre. However, SoCo suggests that communication is not the ultimate goal. *Control* is the ultimate goal; first, *social control* and, subsequently, *individual control*. Genre facilitates the achievement of this goal by remembering and controlling different types of response.

Different social roles and their obligations call for different *types of response*. Most people understand implicitly what is required of them in terms of behaviour depending on the associated circumstances. It is generally agreed upon that we are likely to act differently around our boss than, say, our spouse or friends. We might act particularly sweetly to someone when we want to ask them a favour. It might occur to us that our friend is “acting out of character”. In fact, there are lots of phrases like this: a couple arguing in a restaurant could be said to be “causing a scene”; a small child throwing a tantrum could be said to be “acting up”, or “acting out”; we call people “drama queens”, “show-offs”, and “class acts”. And of course, there are times when we perform explicitly. The truth is that while your examples might be different, we all do this kind of “stuff” all the time – we pretend to like things, pretend to be interested, and so on. We are engaging in similar stuff when we tell jokes, play games, flirt, do impressions, and similar. While Jaques overgeneralizes the complex experiences that life has to offer, when it comes to his stance on performing, he is right; we are *always* performing.

In our evolutionary past, the difference between a good and a bad performance could mean, literally, life or death. If we could not perform well in our role as *hunter*, for instance, we would be eaten. But even less explicit dangers could be deadly. Social roles determined safety within the group and acting differently could have led to isolation and, again, death. It could be surmised that by the time we get to Elizabethan England, not much has changed. A poor performance on the stage would perhaps result only in having rotten fruit hurled at you but a poor social performance judged by the strict social codes of the time could mean a publicly performed and painful death. Still today, when we do not meet the expectations of others, it can and does, more often than we would like to admit, end somewhat tragically. Genre, in fact, enables us to put this kind of uncomfortable information “out of our minds”.

When we think of plays we tend to think of genres. We usually think of two in particular: Tragedy and Comedy. It is helpful that this is our usual, basic understanding of Genre, and we can work from there. So, what is a genre, according to SoCo, then? A genre is a category, in a sense, but it is also much more fluid a concept than the rigid seeming “category” allows for. Genre as process can be defined in a macro sense – the one that we will stick with for this introduction – as *mapping*. An individual genre is a specific map, accordingly; but the map is not like one that we would hold out in front of us – one which doesn’t change. Genres are constantly changing, and accumulative: they keep record of change in social memory, or the SoCo. However, we do *read* genres like we read maps. So, as long as we can incorporate these ideas into our understanding of the word “category”, then it can serve as an adequate synonym and seems to play this role in existing scientific research. However, the concept of “Genre” evokes much more for us. It may be that most people don’t really know what Genre “means” but they usually “get the idea” or the “gist” anyway. Appropriately, this is the generic function in play –

Genre does the work for us, in a sense. Even if the fine details are not known, Genre usually evokes the following associations: plays, fiction, stage, music, performance, and perhaps a lot of people would think specifically about Shakespeare. In any case, these associations would provoke further associations, such as: story, script, character, action, roles, setting, and so on. From here, it is possible for infinite association to ensue. Whereas, what do we get when we think of category? Not much.

I expand the traditionally limited definition of the term *category* and accordingly term *categorisation* which I will use it synonymously with Genre throughout this thesis in order to ease the conceptual transition required to accept the new Genre concept. As the work progresses, its usage will become less necessary. A genre or a category denotes a “conventional” response. Genres are useful to know; they are functional – genres have a specific purpose and are accompanied by specific rhetoric; they are easy to recognise or to evoke; they enable inference; they can be re-purposed with potentially limitless scope; they remember conventional responses to social engagements; they are responsive and must sense change. Genres provide “expectations” – for writer, reader, and social being. Familiarity with expectations and the predictive success which follows is key for any successful writer, or reader, or human, or cell. Genres establish an agreed upon relationship between the individual and the field, and they accomplish a great deal of interpretative, memory, attention, and other such work for us, and they facilitate all kinds of social interaction and communication. Accruing a rich generic repertoire expands our consciousness. Genres provide the “general idea” of some “thing” – and the general idea can be anything from a shoe, to a complex social world such as our own or those created in plays.

In her book *The Power of Genre* (1985), Adena Rosmarin observes that Genre is “a finite schema capable of potentially infinite suggestion...By making its beholder or reader aware of the ‘gaps’ that he must fill or bridge in order to make sense” (44). Her comment here about our engagement with “gaps” is voiced by another academic, Shakespearean, Emma Smith. Smith says that “Shakespeare’s silences, inconsistencies and, above all, the sheer and permissive gappiness of his drama” is crucial to his success and that it is “because we have to fill in the gaps that Shakespeare is so vital” (2019, 2-3). Smith discusses Genre extensively in her book – it would not be possible to discuss Shakespeare without reference to Genre – but she seems to give its credit to Shakespeare. While I agree with Smith that the audience is needed to “fill the gaps” so to speak, we are only able to do this work because of Shakespeare’s understanding and use of generic conventions and cues. Genre tells us *which* gaps *need* to be filled. Genre directs action. Genre enables the creation of difference within sameness, freedom within constraint.

We can place any object within a generic framework in order to infer information about it. For example, in Shakespeare a mere handkerchief can become tragic because of its function within the generic action. In life, we can see that different “things” can take on symbolic meaning or new function, too. Often, we are filled with glee, in fact, when we find ways of “repurposing” or “recycling” some “thing” for a new use. Objects often change in value to us in different settings, times, stages; and this change can also depend on the characters involved. We might keep a movie stub from our first date with our spouse but throw out many other identical

movie stubs from less personally significant occasions. We may have loved and carried everywhere our manky old teddy as a child but we don't have much use for it now (it is important to acknowledge that the teddy may still hold significant *emotional* value, though). What we can gather from these examples is that while things stay the same, they also change. It is not necessary for anything "actual" or physical to have changed. Instead, the *generic framework has changed*.

Selection (Natural or otherwise) requires categorisation. This means that choice, or information processing of any kind, requires intrinsic knowledge of domains. When we use Genre, or "categorise", we bind together certain information but we also distinguish it from other information. In this sense, Genre can be understood as a process of centralisation and unification but also a process of specification and discrimination. Genre provides this "double-effect" or plastic potential. Further, it provides conventional organisational patterns which direct expectation and arrangement, allowing successful communication and shared comprehension. In other words, genres facilitate the co-construction of the social consciousness.

We learn to *do* Genre from conception as we engage with the external and social world and quickly develop a sense of which categories require most attention: caregiver, food, sleep. Clearly, our initial survival needs rely on an initial category inescapably based on our central social connection experiences. We begin as babies by assigning purely sensory genres which will then become part of our memories and we will elaborate them incrementally and unconsciously, eventually creating a vast web of connections based on our unique individual experience. We evaluate and connect, connect and evaluate. Our connections are of personal significance to us. Our genres *are us*. Our social consciousness and within this our individual consciousness – our *selves*. Genre is how we construct our world, our lives, with meaning.

During our school years, we all experience our first formalised socialisation. We are offered different genres of social life: to play in a sports team; to know what it means to engage with different types of people; to understand different codes of behaviour in different settings; and so on. We are largely taught through narratives, stories, and they inform us of different genres: the biblical; the cautionary tale; the fable; tales of friendship; of troubles and success; tales that educate us. We thus develop a social consciousness through our memories of our group interactions with other individuals. But with this field of play we must also engage as individuals, each with our own unique memories and experiences. Once these two worlds – the social memory and the individual memory as such – collide, a new memory is created which will then be carried forward as part of the whole. Experience interacts with experience in order that new experience can emerge and develop. We see that the adaptivity of Genre stands as a natural and social phenomenon, as well as being deeply affected by, and therefore concerned with, the individual. As this social consciousness made up of genres undergoes interpretation and adaptation by the individual, so it develops and grows, and so the individual's self-genre is co-constructed accordingly.

As is clear by the abundance of conceptual grounds touched upon in the previous paragraph, such a complex set of statements demands further interrogation

into related processes such as consciousness, communication, memory, attention, inference, and so on. All of these faculties require categorisation or organisation – Genre – in and of some form. We have to organise and focus our attention in order to attend to *anything*. We depend on categories in order to remember and infer and thus achieve consciousness. In our daily lives we tell jokes, read headlines, speak to our friends, and engage in countless social engagements which require our ability to categorise vast amounts of information and access these categories seamlessly.

These processes further involve the following: imagination; emotion; value; meaning. Genres enable us to create images which we imbue with emotion, value, and meaning based on their features. And, in order to develop they need and also enable adaptivity, plasticity, creativity, blending, experimentation – in essence: play and thus learning. Genres require the interaction and interconnective relationships of human beings at a macro-level and single cells at a micro-level. Both a social and an individual element is needed in order for a genre to develop and in order to create complex concepts of which to be conscious, to communicate, to attend to, and to infer. Genres are like useful formulas which we use to make possible unconscious and rapid retrieval.

As we move through life, we accumulate a vast network (or framework) of intricate and complex generic circuitry based on our unique combination of individual and shared experience. Genre works to create a mapping system which allows us to monitor and regulate our experience. Maps can be activated and recalled instantly in the imagination, which enables us to predict, plan, and invent different courses of action in response to real or imaginary objects or events.

I want to suggest here two interconnected examples of physiological processes that I believe correspond with this idea of a mapping system. The first process is *Arborisation*. Arborisation is the process of *branching* of the dendrites of neurons, tree-like structures which then create new synaptic connections. Of course, synapses enable neurons to communicate with each other. Different types of these branching connections are dependent on experience and the functions of the neurons which they link. Arborisation, or branching, equates to the mapping process. The second process is *Instantiation*. Instantiation is when a map is activated for a specific application and invariably each specific instance is a unique, edited, and emergent version of the blueprint. Instances are momentary specific routes, drawn from a more general map. Thus, we can see great similarities with our use of the term instantiation outside of neuroscience which implies giving a specific example of an abstract concept. Abstract concepts exist on the general level, and the process of instantiation emerges from an abstraction interacting with concrete context. Genre is the organising force which must take place before information can be mapped or stored (arborisation) and without which we could not retrieve such information (instantiation). It is my view that bilateral arborisation is to answer for our evolutionarily selected predisposition towards combining the metaphorical, the emotional, and the physical with the concrete and rational. We reuse the physical style of processing and make it conscious, our responses a reflection of the SoCo, our social relationships and status, and our generic competence: *our genre*, otherwise known as *the self*, emergent and thus more than the sum of its parts in combinatorial action.

If Genre is responsible for such complex and fundamental processes, its function must be of pivotal importance to us, not just as individuals, but as societies, too. As briefly touched upon already, Genre's function as a creative organisation process is to *direct action*. We use Genre to direct our actions. We engage with different settings and characters and roles and scenes which are then mapped as genres in our brains. These genres allow us to form expectations and then predictions to provoke or produce action (performance). Genre creates the links (and thus conflicts) needed in order to produce or provoke experience-specific action. Just as Genre directs the action of a play or performance, so it works on a microlevel to direct the action of our daily social performances, communications, and inferences.

Genres enable us to create narratives to live and to feel we *understand* our lives by. Memory allows us to create a coherent and fluid narrative of our experience because of Genre's organising and the resulting mapping processes. We regulate life and social action, make sense of it, by creating narratives. Our brains are implicit storytellers. We invent and use stories in order to attain goals, to maintain order, and to track change. Narratives offer opportunity for improvement and thus success. Once we are able to construct narratives, we can then form expectations and predictions for the future. Prediction is one of our key evolutionary feats. We extend our genres, our narratives to further use in order to plan action. What I am asking here in this thesis is for you to extend your perspective on what is commonly meant by the term Genre, and to blend concepts from disparate circuits of information. We spend most of our time practising this kind of extension, prediction, expectation, and anticipation. These skills are all possible because of Genre's organisational control function. The capacity to decide offers us broader meaning; Genre allows us to decide by enabling us to interpret different options. It allows us to distinguish between different objects and events making decision possible and often necessary. We make decisions based on generic predictions and expectations.

In the same way as memory, Genre shapes and is shaped by our experience. Both the construction and also the development of Genre are experience-dependent. Genres create understanding and meaning based on shared experience and expectations, but they also shape this social consciousness. The great variety of both the experience that we harvest and also all of the different social and individual goals and values that must be accounted for facilitates and necessitates a seemingly infinite web of genres. In the SoCo conceptualisation, genre functions as a constantly operating and constantly changing feature of mental and conscious structures. Similar to memory, Genre is accumulative and dynamic. A genre changes with each new work or experience, enveloping each instance and thus enriching and expanding the collective memory. When we begin to focus on and actively utilise Genre, to think rhetorically in a purposeful way, we extend our understanding.

I want to suggest that Genre plays an implicit but crucially important role in the way that we conceptualise, communicate, understand, create meaning, and ultimately, *control*. Chiefly, SoCo offers a comprehensive and scientifically influenced definition of Genre to illuminate the scope of its profound complexity and importance in creative literature *and in a creative life*. It is proposed that humans have repurposed in the conscious-world the naturally occurring Genre-like physiological processes soon to be addressed – humans have made conscious a *style* of

unconscious, physiological process, borrowed an evolutionary ancient way of communicating for successful social life. The large-scale formal model that we use to communicate with and understand each other is used in a smaller and more explicit and noticeable application in literature. We will never be able to discuss literary genre usefully without recognising that it functions as a specific manifestation of an existing biological model. Of course, this observation also works in reverse to declare literature a wonderful position from which to investigate the way that Genre works in our daily lives.

At a specific or meta level, Genre helps us to understand a text; at a grand, evolutionary level, Genre makes it possible for us to understand the world. I propose that the fusion of these two practices will lead us to a new enlightenment in understanding our world and our unparalleled potential for creativity. It is useful to an extent to think of Genre occurring as an element of mental processing whenever we engage in an activity which could be described as “reading”; ultimately, such reading events occur in every mental act required to make sense of reality. The key to language’s power to express or communicate the complex outcomes of our feelings and thoughts lies in *conceptual blending* (see Fauconnier and Turner) – that is, in generic experimentation such as metaphor and interdisciplinarity. Language allows a very large number of meaningful situations to be expressed in a limited number of combinatorial forms. Literature offers a safe place to practice generic development, similar to the imagination. A safe place in which we can learn about and we can understand experience without actually having to go through it ourselves in the social present. Painful experience on the pages of a book offers us understanding without personal or “real” pain. Our imagination develops our genres without risk, and literature offers the same service.

Now, I would like to introduce the following three terms used by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi to describe the three main elements of creativity: “Domain”; “Field”; “Individual.” I believe that based upon Csikszentmihalyi’s outline, these terms are interchangeable with the following terms used in SoCo Theory: “Genre”; “Social Consciousness”; “Individual Experience” Creativity, or creative development, can only be achieved through the combination of these three elements.

Csikszentmihalyi writes that “the existence of domains is perhaps the best evidence of human creativity,” and he adds that “much of what makes life interesting and meaningful belongs to special domains: music, cooking, poetry, gardening...[and so on] are symbolic systems with their own special rules, and they exist outside any individual life. A person who learns to operate by the rules of one of these domains has a chance to expand enormously the range of his or her creativity” (37). What he suggests is that genres exist as entities themselves, and as such they exist in the social consciousness which they also create. We understand the world through these generic lenses: committing to the rules of specific genres provides us with the opportunity for creativity. In order to enhance, extend, or subvert, it is necessary first to learn convention. Without some sense of unity, there would be no possibility of creating anything meaningfully new (there would be no meaning). Genre proves vital for creative development. In fact, creative development *is* generic development.

Accordingly, SoCo works on the assumption that the social and the individual are inextricably linked. Social genres shape individuals, and in turn, individual creativity shapes social process. The process of creative development can thus be condensed into the following formula:

$$\text{Individual Experience (Individual) + Genre (Domain) + Social Consciousness (Field) = New Experience (Creativity)}$$

The formula can be simplified further as follows:

$$\text{Experience (E) + Experience (E) = New Experience (Ne)}$$

To elaborate this formula, when a unique, combinatorial, individual genre or experiential perspective combines with the “common”, “remembered”, or social combinatorial genre or model of experience, what is produced is not simply the sum of the two parts; but instead, an entirely new combinatorial model of experience is created. And thus, what emerges from the interaction is *more than the sum of its parts*. To conjure Nabokov, what emerges is like the sea: more than the breaking of its waves. Generic evolution depends on the consistent cooperation and competition between socially accepted genres and the individual experience. Israel Rosenfield offers a valuable summary here: “Whenever we suddenly achieve an understanding – as for example, in reading a murder mystery, when a vital clue that we have overlooked takes on a new and compelling importance . . . what we suddenly ‘see’ or ‘understand’ is a new thing, neither . . . as it was a few moments earlier, nor the change in either, but a fusion of the two” (34). Thus, the combination of social and individual persists at the very core of who we are, of how we understand and create new understanding. Genre entails the inner process of negotiation between social and individual, both of great importance, and allows for human creativity. And the result of combining these two sets of experience produces new experience. It may seem peculiar that the three distinct terms of the first formula are reduced to two terms in the latter. The formula is constructed thus because individual experience is social experience, only from the unique perspective of the individual organism. The “New Experience” created does not in any physiological way exist but it emerges in the social consciousness as if it had been there all along. The formula may sound overly-simplistic, silly, or downright nonsensical but it is only through such meta-thinking and meta-speak that we can really start to understand concepts like Genre (as defined by SoCo), “as-if”, and the strange loop.

This formula accounts for not only the important function of Genre but also for the important function of the individual. The field reminds us of the social contract of Genre. Communication is key and individual development must be accepted into the SoCo in order for that development to constitute creativity. If we are to agree with Psychologists David Oakley and Peter Halligan that the main purpose of consciousness is so that we are able to communicate, understanding our human distinction of creativity is crucial to understanding our consciousness. Generic creativity is essentially the defining feature of human existence. Creativity occurs through generic experiment, which then results in more generic development. Creativity occurs when we create something that appears meaningfully (or generically) new. Contrary to the common denigration of Genre as mechanistic and

limiting, it is quite abundantly clear that it makes possible the opposite kind of life for us.

If Genre facilitates creative development, then the self is the ultimate genre and creative domain. Burr says that “the social constructivist view of personality is that it is a concept that we use in our everyday lives in order to try to make sense of the things that other people and we do” (35). Neuroscientist Susan Greenfield defines the biological basis of the mind as “the personalisation of the brain through unique dynamic configurations of neuronal connections, driven by unique experiences” (2016, 57). The self functions as an intricate and complex conceptual framework which emerges from our experience. Similar to any other category or concept which we create about the world, our self-genre distinguishes us from others, but also connects us to others. *Our* genre can only exist in relation to others. Our conceptualisation exists not singularly or intrinsically within ourselves but it also requires and is affected and developed by our shared social consciousness. The diverse range of research – sociological, psychological, philosophical, theological, and critical – on the concept of the self indicates its centrality in modern debates about identity, but the concept remains elusive. The problem, or at least part of the problem, lies in the struggle between theory and evidence to develop a satisfactory explanation of how self emerges from and situates itself in reality. Arguably, a comprehensive theory of Genre, one which challenges our thinking about Genre itself and literature, will draw us closer to a plausible and compelling explanation of how the self “selfs”, as it were, and also lead us to a better understanding of the processes of creativity and consciousness.

I believe that a *domain* can be defined more usefully as a *Genre* and the collective domains to be our *social consciousness* or *field*. It is our engagement with the social consciousness that which cues creativity. Creativity produces meaning and development. All Genre is “bent” in this respect - all instances of Genre that are unique or creative, all “major” works, “bend” and therefore develop the generic tradition. This bending and thus creative development happens in exactly the same way with our social genres. Without the creative individual and their unique experience, our genres would not grow or change. My research is leading me to believe that in order to produce truly “creative” work, we must inject as much of our self-genre and subjectivity into our writing as is possible.

Genre facilitates the elusive sense that we have of shared understanding. Genre enables us to organise both memory and awareness. Genre facilitates our task of “joining up the dots” from which emerges the rich conscious life that we enjoy (as well as “suffer”) day to day. Genre allows our understanding of the world to evolve perpetually in order to keep up with its changes. All of our most striking features as human beings – imagination, inference, learning, creativity, and so on – are made possible by Genre. SoCo, a new theoretical framework for Genre as presented here, is a heuristic proxy for our powers of conceptualisation and engagement with the world. Social consciousness and subsequently individual consciousness are strange loops which emerge at the point of social interaction and then communicate in a multidirectional manner, starting from cell to cell, and reaching their highest heights in conceptualisation and conversation and creativity. We adapt to the social environment through synthesis and synchronisation in order to communicate; we are conscious. The fact that the SoCo lens helps us to approach

and understand the entire spectrum, from single cell to civilisation and individual psychology is one of the most exciting implications of the theory.

The process is cued by social interaction which creates a boundary or Genre; the “point” of the interaction, which allows us to create an account or sequence or story about the interaction, so that it can be remembered and used again in similar interactions (association, inference, distinguishing, predicting,). But we do not remember the whole story, we just remember the *gist*. We remember types of response. We don’t need to remember the exact story, we just remember the *genre* (setting, time, characters, type; generic information, the context of interaction, the *gist* of the relationship). Another result emerges from social interaction; feelings are triggered. We tend to associate certain feelings with certain experiences, and when the story becomes complex and emotional enough, we are able to produce an emergent narrative: conscious experience.

“Getting the point”, then, has been crucial throughout evolution. When, say, two cells interact, they must be able to sense at and about the point of interaction how to respond. We rely much the same on the correct conveying or interpreting of a point. It may not mean survival or death anymore, but it is still socially embarrassing to “miss the point” or “not get the joke”. In fact, this kind of error could still lead to tragedy today if an individual “takes something the wrong way”. The process entails interaction and thus communication and interpretation and control. Genre makes these tasks possible and certainly makes them easier. The driving force of evolution, of consciousness and creativity, is inherently social and interaction requires Genre. When we say “getting the point” we mean “getting the metaphor” or the “as-if”. Comparison work of this kind is not possible without shared generic categories.

Genre controls action or behaviour. A useful example of how this control emerges can be found by thinking about how we use Genre in *rhetoric*. Rhetoric is concerned with *persuading* the audience. In essence, the skilled rhetorician controls the behaviour – and thus the thought – of the individual members of the audience. They achieve both social and individual control. Comic control can be construed as *conscious* control and tragic control can be construed as *unconscious* control. What I mean by conscious and unconscious control is whether or not we are *aware* of our generic choices and behaviours. In Shakespeare’s comedies, we see characters employ skilful generic control in order to achieve various purposes. In the tragedies, we see the fall of individuals who *fail* to recognise the unconscious genres which influence their choices and behaviour. In comedies, characters undergo a transformation from innocence to experience or, in other words, they *become conscious*. Tragic individuals are blinded by Genre. In order to be skilled rhetoricians – to be skilled persuaders who influence the behaviour of others – we must develop a keen generic competence and we must be willing to take the risk of experimentation.

With the help of Genre, both consciousness and also creativity, then, help us to achieve *communication* or *expression* and thus *control*. During such work, we engage in various *reading* activities such as interpretation, translation, elaboration, simplification, restructuring, and, eventually, we hope to achieve conveyance and comprehension of the *gist* of our communication: our message. The highly *nuanced* way that we do such work is reflected in earlier evolutionary feats such as functional

categorisation, plasticity, and epigenetics. The level of coherence that we achieve plus the gist or goal of our message or expression amounts to asking the questions “how much?” and “what kind?” This information forms the base of our conceptualisations. Our body asks similar questions about any and all information it interacts with. The process is accumulative. We do not find the answers to “how much?” and “what kind?” all in one go. Genre acquisition does not “just happen”, it is not “built in” – not all of it, anyway. Our generic repertoires develop accumulatively and interactively and gradually and they change all the time. It is “as-if” we are in *conversation* with the external world and with our “self” and we use Genre to communicate and remember different types of response for future use. For instance, we can observe the process when cells “talk” to each other. When your stomach rumbles it is “telling” you, or you are telling your “self”, that you are hungry – that you require nutrients immediately to function properly. These expressions depend on a Genre type mechanism which enables us to interpret the type of response cued by the Genre of the message. The response and the meaning of the type of message converge with repeated instances. We reconstruct and elaborate the response type in situ on an ad hoc basis.

When we figured out how to turn back the process of Genre upon our own organism, the self-genre emerged. It’s likely as well that this was a gradual, accumulative process, flipping cause and effect and organising in a loop which constitutes logic. SoCo prioritises not only the social but the individual. The death of the author would mean the death of the creative process – creativity and all of its wonderful products, including consciousness. Because of the self-genre, humans were able to construct a continuous dialogue between the self and the organism which mirrored the continuous regulation of homeostasis. In essence, a metaverse was created, consisting of the dialogue between the self and the organism *and*, concurrently, the organism and the external world. A live narrative is constructed based what is actually currently happening and also your *internal* perspective of what’s happening – and the Genre of the experience. The self is a multi-layered and plastic genre of genres consisting of both “is” and “as-if” information. The whole synchronised performance results in a conscious experience which is more than the sum of its performing parts. It is the synchronised performance plus the *Genre* of the performance. It is those parts *in action*, in a *story* elaborated in situ, and then it is the *feel* or *gist* of that story, too. *The genre*. Creativity and consciousness are the processes of constructing a unique arrangement of generic material as a response to social interaction. We learn to *act* “as-if” we have an unchanging, “real”, conscious mind, like there is something new – something extra – something created – when there isn’t. Consciousness is just the effect of the concerted synchronised performances and their genres – our interpretation of them is our conscious experience – just like when we go to see a Shakespeare play. The answer is within ourselves! Not the stars! There’s nothing magic it’s just what we *do*. He doesn’t give us the answers. We create our own by engaging with the generic material provided in his plays. We create more than the sum of its parts. We co-construct a conscious experience. It is “as-if” we are conscious – as if we have conscious choice... but then we facilitate the creation of conscious choice through creating the self-genre. The arranger and the arranged emerges from the arrangement. That’s why we’re conscious. That’s why we’re creative. We live “as-if” we are living!

As presented in the remainder of the work, disparate generic trajectories and theories of scientific research indicate almost unanimously the functional validity of the ideas introduced above which make up the foundations of the SoCo framework. To begin with the thesis presents concepts and research from the hard sciences and the ways in which these ideas can be synthesised with the new Genre analogy. Specific topics include the following: cell interaction, functional categorisation, sense and respond mechanisms, memory, attention, inference, imagining, and consciousness. The following chapter deals with psychological theory in order to show both how SoCo interacts with existing concepts and practice, such as Attachment Theory, Narrative Psychology, Neuropsychology, and Drama Therapy, and as well how SoCo can offer insight to the development of such theories. Most prominently, the chapter introduces the concept of *perspective* as synonymous with Genre and identity, and discusses a general approach to categorising and changing perspective from *tragic* to *comic*.

Before concluding, Part III of the thesis will elucidate the profound implications of the new SoCo framework and its reconceptualisation of Genre. These implications can be stated briefly as follows:

- ◇ Genre can be conceptualised as prerequisite for creative emergence and thus must be prioritised in creative practice and dialogues.
- ◇ The self can be conceptualised as a genre which emerges from social interaction and once conceptualised thus can be utilised as a tool for self-development.
- ◇ When social groups are conceptualised as genres, the potential for constructive, meaningful, and active change becomes much more accessible and actionable. The Genre concept offers a neutral dialogue for social debate and a conceptual framework for social change.

It has not been intended in this overview to offer exhaustive examples of SoCo but instead to outline very generally some important concepts and elements from the SoCo theory. Because the framework is inherently bound to a multitude of conceptually dense topics and processes, I have had to aim for breadth as opposed to depth. Each single topic – including memory, attention, consciousness, play, creativity, social stratification – deserves (and has already been awarded) not just its own single book but many books. It has seemed an almost impossible task to communicate this huge idea and all of its related concepts and its benefits. But I hope at least to have communicated the *gist*. Now that we have all of the basics, we can move forward to look to the “hard” sciences for some indicative material.

PART II

/ INDICATIONS

I offer now some indicative research from various fields, principally investigating biological and psychological processes and theories, in support of SoCo. In a traditional PhD thesis, this chapter would be called the “Literature Review”. What is offered here is more of a synthesis than a review. I will argue in the following considerations of various comparative mechanisms that Genre is an extension of basic sense-and-respond (S/R) mechanisms, pre-existing for millions of years in “simple” organisms. By “simple”, I refer to organisms made of a single cell – otherwise known throughout at single-cell-organism or SCO. Of course, the capacities of these organisms are still highly complex. My aim is to mount a trajectory from SCO to Genre proper; literary genre. In between these two parameters there are a number of developments which appear to be analogous with Genre. Due to the scope of the current thesis, I will present the comparisons which seem the most significant, convincing, and revelatory. I do so with permission, so to speak, from Damasio, who begins *Feeling and Knowing* (2021), by admitting that “the road to discovery is twisted, to say the least” and that his solution to presenting such a road is “to write only about the ideas I most care for and leave behind the connective tissue and the scaffolding meant to frame them. In brief, do what good poets and sculptors do so well: chip away at the nonessential and then chip some more” (3-4). It is no easy feat to discard large quantities of research and reading and writing which seems valuable, especially when attempting to present a new theory which must be defensible. But, as a matter of necessity, I have engaged in what could be named *Brutalist* editing and I have compiled the following taught bundle of indicative material:

4. SENSE AND RESPOND

To form a concept; to conceive, is to “*take together*” (from the Latin *concupere*). So, to form a concept is to bring together two “things” or perceptions or ideas. To *interpret* two “things” together. When we think of the word conceive in terms of reproduction, we imagine two people coming together, an egg and a sperm coming together, to create something new – something new made from some “things” old or pre-existing. Two categories (at least) are required in order to conceptualise, then. Conceptualised as such, *Genre enables us to form concepts*. But, in order to find the origins of Genre we must trace the idea back millions of years before concepts (as we know them) became possible. As Damasio notes,

By all means, we should indeed admire and even exalt the unique achievements of the human conscious mind and all the amazing novelty it created, over and above the solutions nature had already shepherded along. But we need to balance the account of how humans got to the present and recognise the fact that the fundamental devices we have used to succeed in our niche consist of transformations and upgrades of devices previously used by other living forms throughout a long history of individual and social successes.

(2021, 192)

In his previous work, *The Strange Order of Things* (2017), Damasio draws a picture of the humble beginnings of what I perceive as a *social consciousness*, starting as a basic *sense-and-respond* capacity. This capacity, I believe, is the very root of our capacity to interact and engage with literature; *the generic mechanism*. In the beginning, Damasio explains, “simple unicellular organisms relied on chemical molecules to sense and respond, in other words, to detect certain conditions in their environments, including the presence of others, and to guide the actions that were needed to organise and maintain their lives in a social environment” (19). Several of the points made here by Damasio are relevant to our current analogy: initially, cells operated on a basic *sense and respond* basis; this sense-and-respond mechanism developed for *engagement* in the *social environment*; and, finally, this mechanism directed *action, organisation, and maintenance*. According to SoCo, this mechanism in its most creative evolution underlies literary genre.

Damasio helps us to make the leap from single cell to conscious mind by using the example of bacteria, explaining that “in the complex, albeit un-minded, social dynamic” that they create, they can “cooperate with other bacteria ... And in their un-minded existence, it turns out they even assume what can only be called a sort of “moral attitude”. Of course, Damasio means that it is “as-if” they have values or choice. “The closest members of their social group”, he says, are “their family so to speak” and they “are mutually identifiable by the surface molecules they produce or chemicals they secrete, which are in turn related to their individual genomes”. What is of note here is that the cells are identifiable by *form* and *creative output*. Damasio goes on to surmise that sociality means success and that the “variety of possible bacterial ‘conduct’ is remarkable” (20). So, although bacteria rely on just a basic sense-and-response mechanism, their so-called “behaviour” can take the form of any number of instances and represent the kind of complex social interaction displayed by conscious humans. Shakespeare was principally interested in the ways in which we respond to the external and social world. Surely, to investigate our methods of social interaction is the foundational goal of science, too. Furthermore, it is our primary goal as humans to understand and respond to what we call our “reality” – our social world.

So, while we may think of social interaction as a purely human activity (maybe we would include certain animals), evidently, it is not the case. In fact, scientists have gone on to prove even more complex abilities for little SCOs than basic S/R. Apparently, not only do they learn from experience but also it has now been demonstrated that SCOs do something which resembles what we might call “changing their minds” in our anthropocentric way. A pond-dwelling protozoa called

Stentor roeseli was the star of a 2019 study which confirmed that it was capable of making complex behaviour modifications in order to survive. In order to make such modifications, these SCOs must have a variety of possible responses and then “make up their minds” about which one to use, or in which order to use them. Of course, the *Stentor roeseli* does not have a “mind” (brain).

The relatively simple responses of such SCOs are centred around the survival of the species, and, thus, the organism. Incoming information is interpreted and translated into types of response. Such responses generally involve a system of movement provoked by perceived threat, and can include: bending out harm’s way; recoiling or contracting – think of a snail recoiling into its shell; emitting a substance to “confuse”, “distract”, or harm a predator; propelling forward/away from the direction of the threat; and so on. An SCO may use one or all of these responses but will generally exert the least action in a purely mechanistic way. Sense and response, then, is a social mechanism. It is only when we get to the human level that people start asserting features such as *intention*, *choice*, and *opinion*. What lie beneath social “decisions” are learned physiological processes. Everything necessary for an organism to look “as-if” it was making a decision is already “built into” the SCO. And, as demonstrated above, it is difficult to discuss even basic responses without using ambiguous vocabulary such as “perceived”. This interpretation is owed in part to our tendency to anthropomorphise or to view through our human lens. However, such interpretations make us question what “counts” as perception proper. Are we just elaborating on basic S/R mechanisms, patterns of response of which even SCOs are capable performers who look “as-if” they are perceiving or choosing or “changing their minds”?

S/R implicates *social interaction* unambiguously. I propose through SoCo that the human conscious mind and its precedents are created through interaction between the organism and the social world, followed by interaction between the organism and the co-constructed self. The first process which falls under my definition of “social interaction” is chemical interaction. Later, interactions between SCOs. Of course, sociality increases in complexity from then onwards. SCOs face conflict, they respond, they create relationships, they bind or differentiate. In all of these situations, groups – or genres – are formed. These groups, commonly known as organs, increase in complexity until we get nervous systems, brains, faces, conscious minds, and, incredibly, further extensions into psychological and social realms, until we reach the high creativity of human cultures. Genre as a process mirrors the functional categorisation which emerges as a natural product of social interaction. Genres as “things” are categories and, simultaneously, they constitute boundaries or parameters, created by interaction. One result emerges invariably from social interaction: the creation of at least one boundary, if not several (and staggeringly complex architectures in human social life). What do boundaries do for us? Many interesting and unusual types of boundaries play pivotal roles in the human body. Some are better known than others such as the so-called “blood-brain barrier”, and some such as the synapses (the name for the “gaps” between neurons) are beginning to tell us a lot more about the ways in which our brains work (or do not). Boundaries develop and change as we grow in the womb and through life. These boundaries (which in the cultural realm we call genres) are shaped by experience, and in turn they shape experience. Boundaries code change in physical and later mental response to the environment. Thus, we can trace the trajectory from

cells to concepts. Genres facilitate communication, life regulation, and flourishing, from SCOs to creative geniuses.

Furthermore, once we accept Damasio's definition of maps as emergent products of the mapping of the relationship between organism and object (be that the created "self", the body outside the brain, another person, a pen, or some other "thing"), along with any changes in those relationships, we can conceptualise mapping as an exclusively *social* activity, too. As soon as we enter into an engagement with an object, we are *sociating*. Once we can posit a "relationship" between two separate entities, be this our "self" and our body, our "self" and another "self", or our "self" and a material or natural object out in the external environment, we are engaging in a social practice. It follows that maps are based on social experience, and images are, then, social products. "Freud suggested" says Arnold H Modell, "that the unconscious mind/brain is "perceived" as an internal environment, which can become a substitute for the external environment, a second universe" (2003, 21). So, a social relationship does not require an environment external to the physical body. Images emerge from sociality – relationships, conflicts, connections, change. For an image to be created, there needs to be some kind of change or assimilation. What this means is that even though as Modell points out "meaning may be constructed entirely from within" (21), the meaning created is still social in origin. Hence, I was confronted by the need to conceptualise a *social consciousness* or SoCo early on in my investigation of Genre.

Key to my proposition of constructing a chain from S/R to Genre is the formula introduced earlier in the SoCo framework:

"How much?" + "What kind?" = Meaning

"Meaning" is a few steps after S/R but operates on the same basic principles. "Meaning" is a later, anthropomorphised, or a consciously translated version of "sense". "Sense" emerges from the same two-part investigation of "how much?" and "what kind?". SCOs do not ask these questions, they are not conscious of them, and they do not make meaning in the same way that humans with conscious minds do. In his most recent work, Damasio calls this ability to sense "*non-explicit competence*" which functions to serve the goal of maintaining life, curating life, and "managing it in accordance with the rules and regulations of *homeostasis*". He describes homeostasis as "a collection of how-to rules, relentlessly executed according to an unusual manual of directions without any words or illustrations" which ensure "that the parameters on which life [depend] – for example, the presence of nutrients, certain levels of temperature or pH – [are] maintained within optimal ranges" (14). Once consciousness is achieved, brilliantly, we develop the capacity to manipulate the process, or at least, to create conscious mental images of it. Genre precedes the images, precedes words. "Optimal range" is yet another suitable synonym for a genre.

Damasio explains that "life's most direct path to achieving its own maintenance is by following the dictates of homeostasis, the intricate set of regulatory procedures that made life possible when it first bloomed in early single-cell organisms" (17). A comparative statement can be made about Genre as follows: *Literature's* most direct path to achieving its own maintenance is by following the

dictates of *Genre*, the intricate set of regulatory procedures that make literature possible in the first place. But, like humans in their achievement of conscious minds, we must add our *self* to it, in order to achieve *conscious* works; plays of thought, as Dr Carson Bergstrom – my old academic supervisor – used to call Shakespeare’s plays. I hope to have realised his vision beyond his own inspirations for it. In humans as in other organisms, homeostasis both asks and also answers the questions of “how much?” and “what kind?”, like *Genre*. Essentially, *Genres* as process is an analogical extension of yet another process found in the naturally occurring world; homeostasis. Such a position is supported by Cozolino’s use of “sociostasis”.

But what can we learn from comparing processes like homeostasis with *Genre*? By doing so we can achieve the following conceptual associations: (1) Drawing a connection between regulatory processes and functional categorisation in the brain and the conscious mind; (2) Clarifying the breadth, complexity, and function of the new *Genre* concept; (3) Illuminating the social or concerted nature of the generic process – the regulatory effects emerge as more than the sum of the concerted performance of different parts. I want to go even further to argue that this comparison helps us to “answer” questions about top-down and bottom-up control. The analogy suggests that the mind doesn’t govern the body; it just acts “as-if” it does. The body performs based on its generic repertoire. Because of the strange loop, it feels as though we are controlling our body with our mind but, in reality, we are just performing *generic* actions. However, because we achieved consciousness, we generated a certain level of choice in the actions we make. Thus, if an individual allows themselves to live under generic auto-pilot with no conscious input, they are reducing themselves to the level of a non-conscious organism. It is incredibly useful that we can rely on *Genre* to do so but to “make the most” of our human distinction, we should employ as much conscious choice as possible. To make choices – in order even to be aware of choices – requires generic competence.

5. FUNCTIONAL CATEGORISATION

Functional categorisation has been implicated increasingly in research uncovering the human brain's many processes (see Davidoff (2001), Seger and Miller (2010), Roy et al (2010), Mahon and Caramazza (2009), Soto et al, (2016), Zeithamova et al (2019), Krzywicka et al (2020), Volpert-Esmond and Batholow (2021), Reinert et al (2021). Thus, it is not the role of this thesis to argue for value of categorisation but instead to offer a comparative discussion about Genre as an extension of our capacity to categorise based on function. I argue that by comparing the process of functional categorisation or "specialisation" with the process of Genre, major insights emerge about how we *use* our capacity to categorise or specialise and, in particular, just how flexible and creative that process can be.

As interpreted by SoCo, *functional categorisation* can be defined or inferred at various levels, conscious and unconscious, human or otherwise, from the emergence of metazoan or multicellular organisms at latest, as an extension of the basic S/R mechanisms of SCOs. SoCo defines functional categorisation as the co-construction or combination of two interacting substances or organisms from which emerges a new *type* of "thing", a new grouping, which serves a *particular* function. Admittedly, this is an extremely broad definition. Any definition which attempts to describe a process which has evolved over billions of years, creating in its wake many analogous and increasingly elaborated processes, including gastrulation and organogenesis, and resonating through all creatures from SCO to creative genius.

Category as an additional synonym for a genre is not particularly appealing but it aids conceptualisation somewhat while we are still beginning to understand SoCo's interpretation of Genre. Categorisation seems to be how we are *designed*. A process of *sorting* which extends increasingly in specificity until we get to the seemingly ornamental genres used in literature. Categories do not decorate but instead they enable us to create. Scholars such as Carol Seger and Earl Miller (2010) have investigated the biological basis for category learning in the *brain*. However, SoCo proposes that our capacity to categorise long precedes the development of brains. The brain *is* a category, a system; *a system of systems*. I do not mean to suggest that the brain is completely functionally specialised but rather that it performs in functionally specialised ways. Functional specialisation of the brain has been demonstrated variously in research such as by Nancy Kanwisher (2010). I think that the brain *is* functionally specialised but that *we then use those functional*

categories for still different and multiple functions, and that we use the capacity to categorise in a in a unique way.

Categorising, grouping, or mapping as a process has been the key function throughout evolution. It seems that evolution has been a process of more and more specific and complex and intricate grouping or mapping or Genre-ing. We incorporate structures into structures and systems within systems, accumulating limitlessly as laid out by SoCo. Damasio elucidates the beginning of the journey as follows: “cells cooperate with other cells so as to create the organelles of more complex cells ... Nucleated cells, in turn, cooperate to constitute tissues, and later these tissues cooperate to form organs and systems” and from here it is surely only a rather small leap to thinking about social organisation and systems. “The principle”, Damasio suggests, “is always the same: organisms give up something in exchange for something that other organisms can offer them; in the long run, this will make their lives more efficient and survival more likely. What bacteria, or nucleated cells, or tissues, or organs give up, in general, is independence; what they get in return is access to the “commons,” the goods that come from a cooperative arrangement in terms of indispensable nutrients or favourable general conditions, such as access to oxygen or advantages of climate”. It is easy to draw analogies between this kind of grouping and the ways in which we use such a mechanism in preconsciousness as well as conscious life. We can remember, for example, that when we attend to an object, we sacrifice other objects for attention. Genre always implies one “thing” instead of some other thing. Genre offers us a kind of cooperative arrangement. Without “the emergence of ‘general’ systems”, Damasio notes, “the complex structures and functions of multicellular organisms would not be viable” (55).

Our most impressive “general system”, genre, or functional category is the nervous system. According to Damasio, the nervous system enables us to make knowledge *explicit* “by way of constructing the spatial patterns that... constitute images”. He adds that they

also help commit to memory the knowledge represented in images and open the way for the sort of image manipulation that enables reflection, planning, reasoning, and, ultimately, the generation of symbols and the creation of novel responses, artefacts, and ideas. The marriage of bodies and brains even manages to reveal some of the secret knowledge of biology, in other words, the rhymes and reasons of intelligent life.

(22)

Finally, while they are a late evolutionary development, they function “to serve life, to make life possible when the complexity of organisms required high levels of functional coordination” (23). Damasio’s language here recognises the link between functional categorisation and the nervous system. Genre constitutes what Damasio calls *non-explicit intelligence* or *competence*, and its eventual successors; critical thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and creative experimentation are more complex versions of the basic generic mechanism. It is possible that we evolved to perform such complex kinds of categorisation because we had a steep learning curve. In other words, we had to come up with more and more innovative ways to respond because we failed so regularly, in great danger when compared to

physically superior predators such as lions and tigers and bears. We had to come up with ways to trick and deceive. To do one thing but mean another. To use Genre creatively. Genre “dramatically reduces the search” (Feinstein, 2017). It makes sense that some sort of guiding mechanism was chosen early in evolution as a useful tool for achieving creative results. Evolution has certainly required us to be creative – “evolution” itself a handy term for defining creativity. If the failure hypothesis is true then it would explain potentially why we are so insecure as a species and behave in destructive ways regularly both socially and also personally. Damasio points out that “the machinations of non-explicit intelligence are transparent to the observer or – and this is most important – to the intelligent organisms themselves” (37). Indeed, he is talking about bacteria but he could just as well be discussing humans. Genre operates unconsciously, facilitating a sense of security – i.e., regulation or control, genre acquisition and thus generic functioning. Where there is a disturbance in this sense, there will be a corresponding disturbance in the conscious experience of control.

Increasing complexity of interaction denotes a trajectory of general – specific grouping. The human organism is a highly complex system of systems. The cephalisation of the face is a tangible evidence of such specific grouping. Conceptualisation is the logical extension of such a grouping mechanism. Genre enables vast amounts of knowledge by way of shortcuts – gists or cues – which we used to make concepts (reusing the physiological grouping model) because that is how our bodies work – combining, interacting, relationships, functions, shortcuts. Functional physiological groups led the way for concepts. The mechanism? Genre. Damasio suggests that “this integrated mutuality is most often overlooked in discussions of behaviour and cognition” (64). It is our mutuality, before our individuality, which enabled the progression to subjective consciousness. Damasio agrees that “the extraordinary emergence of the nervous system opened the way for neurally mediated homeostasis” and that “later, after the development of conscious minds capable of feeling and creative intelligence, the way was open for the creation, in the social and cultural space, of complex responses whose existence began as homeostatically inspired but later transcended homeostatic needs and gained considerable autonomy” (65). It is this process of grouping, categorising, Genre-ing which enabled the development of the *self-genre* and conscious experience.

Most importantly, the information which we infer categorically directs our response – we categorise so that we can respond in the most appropriate or useful way. A “useful” response promotes survival (be it the survival of a single cell, a man, or a literary tradition). We need categories so that we can achieve different kinds of response. The two initial types, kinds, or genres of response, are “expansion” and “contraction”. Damasio explains that the secret to the operations of basic organisms is a process called *peristalsis*. He defines the process with the following description: “activating sequential muscular contractions along the digestive tube and producing peristaltic waves”. Peristalsis results, Damasio tells us, in the ability to achieve two kinds of responses, they can “distend and open up” or they can “contract and shut themselves off” (60). Peristalsis is the performance of patterns of contraction and relaxation in order to achieve a result such as admission or expulsion – admitting nutrients or waste-management. The patterns are analogous for “in” and “out”, which explains our oft-used “container” metaphor. They resemble two responses: expansion and contraction.

Furthermore, the two kinds of response, “expansion” and “contraction”, can be mapped successfully and convincingly to concepts ranging through psychology and sociology all the way to the literary genres, comedy and tragedy. The dichotomy resonates at many levels: the process of digestion works because we put things inside our bodies and then pass them out; our pupils dilate and constrict in response to varying levels of light; when we feel insecure, we hunch into ourselves and tense up, when we feel secure, we relax and expand – we “loosen up”. What comes to mind also is the stereotypical gender binary of male/female; women are meant to be reserved, virginal, *contracted*. Men are meant to be public, powerful, and big – *expansive*. One kind evokes elasticity, the other kind stasis. Plasticity versus rigidity. Productive versus reductive. Solubility versus insolubility. In reality, we are all a much-elaborated, interactive, and near-enough integrated combination of different instantiations of these two functional responses: expanding and contracting, avoiding or approaching, and we need to categorise the different “things” which “cause” these responses. Of course, it is the organism itself which “causes” or “does” or “performs” the response. The extra meaning which emerges about the preceding event is what kicks off all of the elaborated narratives which come to constitute our conscious minds and experiences. Responses, as well as the feelings which trigger them, don’t happen to us, we *do* them in response to stimuli which we have learned belongs to a certain genre.

Accordingly, the successful functioning of a creative work requires that we integrate the kinds – be the product a play, a book, a piece of art, a song, a conscious mind, an organism, a cell, or a chemical. Interaction and integration are required at all levels. An SCO requires both contract and expand responses. An organism requires both admission and expulsion processes. Consciousness emerges from the interactive integration of all sorts of physiological performance. We get the gist. Shakespeare got the gist, too, it seems. The two kinds are not neatly divided but instead overlap and interact and generate potentially limitless additional kinds.

Principally, in order to appreciate fully Shakespeare’s remarkable achievement as an artist, it is necessary to recognise that he does not allow us to make conventional responses to generic structures and cues. He makes difficult work of resolving how to *feel* about everything which goes on – about whether structured responses can or should go unquestioned. What makes us individual is our capacity to choose beyond the commonly accepted response – to play against generic type. Shakespeare presents to us individuals acting against the SoCo with greater or lesser successes (comic or tragic attempts). Hamlet delays his revenge, for instance, several of the comic women disguise themselves as male, and Desdemona marries an older black man. We can choose to follow or break convention once we are generically competent. Tragedy and comedy represent the ebbing and flowing that is life, and Shakespeare recognised the pronounced ambiguity between the two responses. As Danson notes, Shakespeare’s plays “acknowledge that comedy is not the hermetically sealed opposite of tragedy” (69).

Shakespeare’s characters must respond to and interact with the social environments of their plays. SCOs must perform similar work, Damasio explains: “Sensing environmental conditions, holding know-how in dispositions, and acting on the basis of those dispositions were already present in single-cell creatures before

they were part of any multicellular organisms, let alone multicellular organisms *with brains*" (2000, 139). This description of early sociality defines the generic process in full as understood in the current work. Genres are *kinds* of response and by being performed they are at once created and also changed.

The reader might wonder what makes humans special, if our categorisation skill is not ours alone but instead is evolutionary ancient? It is the *way* that we *do* categorisation and the proliferation of categories that we create. We use categories in order to create conceptual metaphors. We use one function to serve another purpose, like in metaphor. We use what developed as a social consciousness – a communication method to achieve regulation or *control* – and we looped back upon our own organisms, creating selves and conscious minds. So, we use genres not only for their categorised function but for other, extra functions, too. Multipurposing is our key skill, then; reinvention; reconceptualisation; refunctioning; refining; metaphorical conceptualisation. In many ways, much of our reality constitutes “as-if”-ing. A takeaway is that we should not allow ourselves to become inflexible. By doing so we are limiting the very quality which defines us.

Enough support has been presented already to posit that both self and consciousness emerge from social interaction and thus they are experience dependent. But, it cannot be explained yet how we all use our own different (even if only subtly different) *unique experience* to reach a *shared comprehension*. How is this possible? Well, if genres are types or categories of sense-and-response triggered or signalled by lived and co-constructed social experience, then from generic dispositions will emerge instances which are more than the sum of their parts in that they evidence both the generic response and also the response functioning in ad-hoc action from *the unique perspective* of the individual. We are able to reach a shared understanding, a social consciousness, as well as having a subjective perspective on that social consciousness, by using genres or categories. It appears as though we imitate the physiological functional categorisation process and make it conscious. Remember that Damasio admits to using interchangeably the three terms *maps*, *dispositions*, and *images*. Categories and genres are added to this list in the current thesis. Categorisation is acknowledged almost unfailingly in scientific accounts of consciousness, social interaction, and evolution. However, it is never given the credit which I believe that it is due. Conceptual categorisation is the extension of biological functional categorisation. By paying attention to the act of categorisation in the social world, I have opened new insights into both science and literature, and the relationship between them. In fact, my lens allows me to situate them in a continuum rather than as binary opposites.

We are warned regularly against “categorical thinking” but the fact is that we – humans – simply cannot avoid using categories. Categorisation is a crucial and immensely useful skill, one around which we base our entire learning process, and one which serves us well, largely. I will discuss in a later chapter the various “glitches” in this mechanism - or, in other words, the evolutionary behaviours and mechanisms which no longer “fit” with modern society. In spite of these glitches, we could not have become the complex and creative beings that we are today without “categorical thinking”.

Recent studies, including computer scientist Timothy Greer's development of an Artificial Intelligence tool which enables predictions about genres to be made by analysis of the ways in which different elements of a song *interact* with each other, have distinguished the process of categorising genres as "a very human experience" (2019).

In their study *Sorting Things Out* (2000), Professors of Communication Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star tell us that "our lives are hinged round with systems of classification" (1) and that our overwhelming tendency to classify (and thus to categorise) is what makes us uniquely human.

But, categorisation is more than mere classificatory. It may seem superfluous to retitling "categorisation" as "Genre" but what I argue in this thesis is that to do so – and, of course, this is not a simple retitling, but a re-conceptualisation – opens up new possibilities for research about the brain and mind, new ways of achieving self-development, and new tools with which to engage actively and responsibly in the social world. Translating category to genre broadens the scope of what is thought of as a rigid and arbitrary concept.

It might help to consider, beyond literature, another area of culture which we associate readily with Genre: *music*. In a 2016 *New York Times* article called "The Psychology of Genre: Why We Don't Like What We Struggle to Categorise" (imagine my glee), Vanderbilt discusses our relationship with categories when it comes to music, and it turns out to be a complex one. "We listeners are endless and instinctual categorisers" he says, "allotting everything its spot like bins in a record store. The human brain is a pattern-matching machine. Categories help us manage the torrent of information we receive and sort the world into easier-to-read patterns." But, why stop with music? Genre offers much broader scope than simply arranging memories about literature and music. Vanderbilt recognizes that categorical perception "is not an innocent process", that "what we think we're looking at can alter what we actually see", and that "very often, these distinctions are for social purposes", noticing that although people may label music, "music labels people" in return. So, in other words, genres shape our perspective, and they do so as a response to past social experience and for future social purpose. But, we shape genres, too. The new conceptualization of Genre as such a plastic process easily transcends its utility beyond cultural production and consumption.

Generic categories enable us to reach a shared understanding of experience: a social consciousness. We use genres on a rapid, ad-hoc basis – creating new ones as and when we see fit. And, amazingly, we do this work unconsciously. Many people unconsciously rely on old, stubborn, and illogical genres which no longer make sense in modern life and Vanderbilt explains that "the great peril of this reliance on categorising is that we could miss something that lies outside our perception...[something] hard to place, hard to explain." But, hopefully, this thesis offers a framework for working creatively with Genre. We are not computers, often we are extremely ambiguous in our conceptualisation and have excellent ambiguity "sense", too – perhaps this is what we call "common sense". I call it *generic competence*. No conceptualization can occur without categorisation. Concepts are creative theories, combinations, or metaphors about reality as facilitated and organized by generic categories and informed by and co-constructed through social

experience. Engaging with Genre constitutes the creative process through which we can play with old and new categories and concepts. Our generic repertoires and ranges will vary depending on individual experience and thus the individual representation of Genre is *always* unique. Remember – *experience plus experience equals new experience*. From this argument, it follows that SoCo is the *stage* where reality is communicated, represented, explored, debated, lived, and remembered. After all, do we not see Shakespeare doing such playing with categories and concepts when he constructs a play? Do we not see his characters doing just such work, too?

Our ability to categorise is innate, and predates consciousness, and our initial categories have achieved practically the same status over evolution. Our initial *conscious* categories are our *emotions*. According to SoCo, emotions are the categories or genres from which *feelings* emerge. The function of emotional genres is to *control behaviour*. Emotions communicate the kind of response conventional to general groups of stimuli. We appear to “do” emotions in the following three-step fashion:

EMOTIONS ← → FEELINGS ← → “EMOTIONS”

- **Emotions:** Different types of physical response/process/concerted performance (type: kind, genre)
- **Feelings:** Awareness of the physical sensations of emotional physiological performance as happening within the organism
- **“Emotions”:** Concepts that we create to correspond with our somewhat limited awareness of the preceding physical sensation of emotion. “*Conceptual genres*”.

Thus, unconscious physical categories become consciously translated sensory and later linguistic categories which we use to try to make sense of what is happening inside of us. In fact, because categories of emotional response involve the concerted performance of various different roles played by different parts of the body, emotions can be considered *concepts* already at this stage, in a sense; the bringing or doing-together of different kinds of responses. When emotions are *felt*, once we become aware of physiological emotional responses, we achieve consciousness, after which we are able to conceptualise “emotions” proper; the conceptual categorisation of feelings which emerge from physiological emotional responses. Thankfully, we all seem to work in roughly the same way with respect to this emotion-interpretation process, and we do it rapidly and unconsciously – so much so that it feels “as-if” emotions “just happen to us”.

But, there is a caveat. The strange order/loop makes it seem like feelings are first. But, in fact, emotions – categories – are first. A feeling, in other words, is the invariably partial or unified awareness of a concerted performance of discrete physiological responses or actions or sets of actions which alert us to the information recorded within the specific physical category – the relevant emotion – which it responds to. For example, when the category of “fear” is activated the concerted physical response may include tachycardia (or, increased heart-rate), horripilation (that is, when your hairs “stand up”), and hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating), among other responses. We may not notice these physical responses, or at least not all of

them. What we experience instead is a unified “feeling” which is created by this physical performance of the emotion and emerges as more than the sum of its generic parts.

For a long time in modern Neuroscience, emotions were largely ignored, seeming unapproachable or unimportant. Several prominent scientists have begun in recent decades, however, to tackle the complex and confusing things that we call emotions and their corresponding feelings and behaviours in neuroscientific terms. These scientists include Damasio, Joseph Ledoux, and Lisa Feldman Barrett. My question is *what if emotions work in the same ways as genres?*

The problem that we encounter in defining these separate processes is produced by the fact that, as Ledoux explains, “we are never consciously aware of the processing itself but only of the outcome” (29). In other words, we are preoccupied with the conscious content or outcome of the processes, rather than the processes themselves. It is the pursuit of thinkers such as Ledoux to understand the initial, underlying mechanisms of emotions and feelings from an evolutionary and biological perspective. It is the pursuit of this thesis to assert that such mechanisms work in ways similar to the conscious generic work that we do when we create and interpret art. Rich comparative insights can be drawn up with regard to creative practice in respect of this quality of emotions. Rather than focusing our attention purely on the creative product, the instantiation, we need to pay conscious attention to the creative process both of creator and also interpreter.

We should be glad that our emotions are automatic, unconscious processes, because they protect our safety, though we may sometimes wish that we had more control over them. But, just because we do not have complete conscious control over emotions does not mean simply that emotions are things that “happen to” us. It feels this way because of the strange looping that we do to create emotions in the first place. Ledoux suggests that emotions are “things that happen to us rather than things we will to occur” (19). But, the two statements are not co-dependent – or even really relevant to each other. Our bodies “do” emotions; we *perform* them. Emotions do not exist externally from our bodies or “happen to” us. This conceptualisation has little to do with our conscious awareness of the underlying physical processes of emotions. The conscious feelings and behavioural consequences of emotions are caused by the underlying physical processes, but the effective processes themselves are not dependent on our understanding or *knowing* them. Put simply, just because we cannot consciously control our emotional responses does not mean that our bodies are not “doing” them. Emotions are different kinds of physical response to change in the environment. Our bodies perform emotions based on evolutionarily and developmentally coded environmental triggers.

We actually seem to know a lot about emotional triggers, even if we do not know why or how we know about them or why or how we do emotional responses. Ledoux acknowledges our very human tendency to “set up situations to modulate our emotions all the time” (19). For example, we listen to sad songs in order to feel or (strangely) to accentuate sadness; we watch funny movies because they know that they will make us laugh, make us happy; we go to see a play labelled “tragedy” or “comedy” with a good idea of the emotional responses each will invoke. Shakespeare (and, imaginably, all creators) understand that certain situations will

evoke corresponding emotional responses and they use these expectations and conventions in order to create an emotionally effective product. A genre, then, tells us which emotions we will experience – comedy will make us laugh and feel pleasure, tragedy will make us cry and feel sadness. Of course, the conventions of both emotions and also Genre are never quite as simple these premises imply, but we can deduce that genres and emotions correspond to certain expectations based upon previous experience. Shakespeare is a writer who more often than not subverts our expectations. We find that tragic scenes are heightened when Shakespeare chooses to make us laugh just beforehand. He forces us out of our emotional comfort zones. But, to do so requires that he understand the common or expected emotional responses, and it is clear that we can predict emotional responses to quite a reliable extent.

The production and consumption of art and, more specifically, literature is known generally to be “unashamedly” linked with emotion. The study of the mechanisms by which we engage emotionally with art has come to the fore more recently. What were before considered as basic, automatic responses are now being considered much more complex. Perceiving emotional cues in art and literature is what the success of such creations hinges upon. The physiological processes of such interaction have come under scrutiny but because emotional responses are always at least somewhat subjective this task is not an easy one. But, what if we consider that the organizing principle of such creations might provide us also with more insight into the emotional interaction that they produce and are constructed upon? Genre – the organising principle of art, literature, music, and cultural production and consumption – should be able in theory to tell us about the underlying physiological mechanisms of our emotional responses to creative products. The production of emotional experience seems to be the touchstone of “good” art and how it affects us as readers, listeners, viewers, and so forth, and it therefore makes sense that emotions are the hinge upon which art “works”. But, we know that art only “works” when we have some understanding about how to interpret it – Genre provides the basic understanding of what to expect, and, in essence, how to feel about what is produced. It makes sense, then, too, to consider the links between this basic principle of art – Genre – and the basic principles of emotion.

Ledoux explains early on in his work that “in search of the system that gives rise to our emotions... We’ll see that there is no single emotion system” (21). Such a state of play should make enough sense; the different feelings which accompany our different emotions feel different and separate enough, and it can be comfortably assumed that this is because each emotion is not “done” in the same way, or by the same methods or the same group of processes. “Instead,” Ledoux responds, “there are lots of emotion systems, each of which evolved for a different functional purpose and each of which gives rise to different kinds of emotions” (21). This conclusion, again, makes sense. We respond with fear to certain situations, such as being near to the edge of a cliff or high building, being confronted by an unfamiliar creature who might be dangerous, and so on, because in the past these situations have turned out for the worst and we have adapted these responses to be automatic over the course of evolution because they have been useful to us in surviving. The same goes for positive emotions, we have adapted them in response to situations that are positive for us in terms of survival and reproduction: we like food, sex is pleasurable, and so

on. We need different types of responses and the emotional feelings which they induce in order to face different types of challenges and goals.

In much the same way, we use different genres in order to create and respond to different creative endeavours, and, correspondingly, different genres work in different ways for different functional purposes. We cannot say that comedy is a genre in exactly the same way as tragedy is a genre. But, Genre is the basic principle. Even the Genre novice can recognize that there are multitudes of different genres and that generic labelling denotes different types of information. Perhaps, there is a proliferation of genres, in fact, all working in different ways and meaning different things. Shakespeare pokes fun at this issue through the character Polonius in *Hamlet*, who describes the arriving actors as “the best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral” (2.2.379-81). Polonius’ comment makes clear the difficulty of classifying separate genres (even if he is a fool) and the seeming absurdity that can ensue when trying to define works generically. It also highlights the nuance and ambiguity of Genre, and we can glean this quality from our emotional labels too. We do not just talk about happiness and sadness, fear or love, we talk also about more specified feelings, such as: anxiety, unease, discomfort, dislike, hatred, apprehension, and glee, joy, amusement, contentment, fondness, fancy, delight. And, though these words may all belong to certain fundamental emotional categories – positive or negative – the nuance which they denote is often extremely important. We might feel apprehensive about the meeting on Monday morning or the date on Saturday night but it is unlikely that we would claim to be *terrified* about these situations. We might “like” our new coffee mug but it could be seen as exaggerative to claim that it fills us with sheer and unadulterated joy. These differences end up meaning an awful lot in terms of how we communicate and interpret ideas. So, emotions and genres both have a lot to do with meaning, then.

Damasio uses his term “mapping” to describe how emotions create feelings. Correspondingly, genres can be seen as maps or guides for creating cultural products. So, feelings are the emergent properties of our emotional maps, our genres of emotion. It is important to remember that we do not use a map in the same way each time we use it for directions. In the same way, we use our emotional responses differently, and we also create very different kinds of works by using the same generic conventions. *Othello* and *King Lear* are both tragedies, for example, but we would be remiss to suggest that Shakespeare is doing exactly the same things in both plays. In fact, it is their very differences which make us aware of their similarities. Damasio agrees, that it is *change* in emotional range that causes feelings.

Damasio offers the following outline for the biological core of emotional phenomena:

1. Emotions are complicated collections of chemical and neural responses, forming a pattern; all emotions have some kind of regulatory role to play, leading in one way or another to the creation of circumstances advantageous to the organism exhibiting the phenomenon; emotions are about the life of an organism, its body to be precise, and their role is to assist the organism in maintaining life.
2. Notwithstanding the reality that learning and culture alter the expression of

emotions and give emotions new meanings, emotions are biologically determined processes, depending on innately set brain devices, laid down by a long evolutionary history.

3. The devices which produce emotions occupy a fairly restricted ensemble of subcortical regions, beginning at the level of the brain stem and moving up to the higher brain; the devices are part of a set of structures that both regulate and represent body states.

4. All the devices can be engaged automatically, without conscious deliberation; the considerable amount of individual variation and the fact that culture plays a role in shaping some inducers does not deny the fundamental stereotypicity, automaticity, and regulatory purpose of the emotions.

5. All emotions use the body as their theater (internal milieu, visceral, vestibular and musculoskeletal systems), but emotions also affect the mode of operation of numerous brain circuits: the variety of the emotional responses is responsible for profound changes in both the body landscape and the brain landscape. The collection of these changes constitutes the substrate for the neural patterns which eventually become feelings of emotions.

(1997, 51)

Aside from offering us an extremely useful and concise outline of a scientific perspective of emotions and feelings, it is evident based even upon the language which Damasio uses that SoCo can be built from these propositions. First, the definition of “complicated collections of ... responses” can be applied easily as a definition of what genres “are”. Secondly, Damasio uses terms such as “role”, “play”, “device”, “ensemble”, “engage”, and “theatre”, which quite obviously correspond to the vocabulary which we use to talk about works of art, literature, and drama. Finally, and perhaps the most important point that we can glean from the preceding information, Damasio makes clear that emotions are affected by and in turn affect culture and the social environment. Emotions are at once personal and also social. It may seem that emotions are principally personal and that once we have established our subjective emotions we can then use them to interact with the social world. But, our emotions are primarily social. Why else would we have developed emotions, if not to engage and survive in the social milieu? We wouldn't really need to register change via our emotional system if we could go about unaffected by our environment.

Our capacity to communicate complex emotional responses is one of our finest skills. The similarities that we can “count on” enable us to make predictions about the emotions of others. Of course, much to the frustration of science, we cannot actually experience the emotions felt by others but we can and do make very efficient and quite often reliable predictions about them and through the “as-if” we physically *feel* our interpretation of their experience, or, in other words, we can *empathise*. “For certain classes of clearly dangerous or clearly valuable stimuli in the internal or external environment, evolution has assembled a matching answer in the form of emotion”, Damasio tells us, and “this is why, in spite of the infinite variations to be found across cultures, among individuals, and over the course of a life span, we can predict with some success that certain stimuli will produce certain emotions. (This is why you can say to a colleague, “Go tell her that; she will be so happy to hear it.”)” (54). It doesn't exactly *feel* as though we are predicting what our colleague's emotions will be, it feels as though we just *know*, but we can never really

know what someone else is feeling until we see the result – so, we are predicting. And according to Damasio, “the feeling of knowing” defines conscious experience. We do this type of prediction work all the time, and not just about emotions. It is worth noting, too, that Damasio’s terms “dangerous” and “valuable” correspond usefully to “tragedy” and “comedy”. We make similar predictions based upon these generic stimuli. We can predict with certainty that tragedy (at least supposedly) produces negative emotions, and congruently that comedy produces positive emotions.

More recent work on emotions comes from Lisa Feldman Barrett. Her main contribution to the field has been to question the more rigid views about emotions. Paul Ekman, for example, rose to prominence with works such as *Emotions Revealed* (2004), in which he tells us how we can “read” emotions with almost absolute certainty. Of course, this is a limited perspective but not without its merits. Barrett argues staunchly against “universal categories” of emotions. It is my view that we need to adopt a more synthetic approach. There *are* categories of emotion (emotions *are* categories) but again we find that a rigid definition of categories and the very functional mechanism of categorisation limits us to rigid conclusions. Categories change over time but also remember their creative trajectories, and the ways in which unique individuals interpret and use them in any given context will always vary. Any theory of emotions and thus categories must take into account the blending work which we do with them, and the ambiguity and nuance of individual application. Also, Barrett herself recognizes that emotions exist inside a realm of social agreement. Damasio calls this social contract a “kind of wordless knowledge”. I call it Genre. We all share certain templates or maps for emotional response, but our use of these maps, how they function in our lives, depends significantly on experience. We share innate emotional categories. It is our unique experience of engaging with them and what we *do* with them that is interesting and unusual.

Seeing emotions as genres, categories, or concepts (combinations of categories), opens up the opportunity to take control and/or change the way that we perceive them. As discussed earlier, we do not have direct control over our physical emotional responses but we can take control of how we perceive these responses. Emotion is a spectrum, and Genre is, too. Tragedy and Comedy are the overarching dramatic kinds, but the generic spectrum contains limitless instances of unique combinations which exist somewhere “in-between”. If Genre creates or cues a mindset – a certain worldview – Shakespeare wanted to show the nuance of response to such a framing. If emotions are functional performances then in order to understand them we must first understand their function. Genre is all about function. To understand a play we must understand its genre. Of course, we can feel *without* understanding our underlying emotions, much in the same way that we can enjoy a play without understanding all of its generic traditions. A good text should work on many levels. But, the fact that we can feel *unknowingly* does not mean that we are not emotionally engaged (or that we should go around ignorantly acting upon feelings). And the fact that we do not *understand* Genre does not mean that it is not *doing* a lot of the work of communicating a play’s meaning *for* us. Genre/emotion is the key – the function. When we understand the generic work at play, we can understand what the writer is trying to communicate. Similarly, when we understand the emotions which are married with our feelings, we understand what our bodies

are trying to communicate. The unifying principle of both genres and emotions is that they are *kinds* of functional response.

Obviously, as we got used to these emotions and the feelings which emerged from them, we started to use them in different ways, and also to create new ones. I don't think that I am alone in realising feelings to have complex and often incomprehensible representations of all different shades and flavours. Essentially, they are all one of two flavours: safe, and not safe. When Damasio says that "the body is a foundation of the conscious mind" (20) he means that we are built to regulate physically the safety of our organism and this generates a process of categorisation so that we can *monitor* safety and adapt creative responses. We must distinguish, even at completely implicit levels, what feels safe and what feels unsafe. Physical feelings are at the root of conscious categorisation. But categorisation must precede feeling. Categorisation is the first step from single cell to consciousness.

Social relationships and interactions with the environment make up the very foundations of our concept of safety and this means that much of the information that we receive and thus build categories from is epigenetic. In a tribal setting, an individual's social relationships meant literally the difference between life or death. In this situation, establishing secure, meaningful and amicable bonds with our family and peer group would feel very good to us because it would be of great importance to our survival as an organism. In the same conceptualisation, social rejection or the damaging of bonds would feel extremely bad indeed. Of course, breaking important bonds still feels extremely bad, and making new friends or consolidating old ties still feels great. Socialising with friends and family (usually) feels good precisely because doing so makes us feel liked, wanted, and *safe*.

According to Louis Cozolino, "many of our most important socioemotional learning experiences are organised and controlled by reflexes, behaviours, and emotions outside of our awareness" (9). What follows is that we create new webs of experiential categories based upon prior evolutionary, individual, and social experience through which we mediate reality. Cozolino states that the two processes involved in translating experience are "the contemporary shaping of our neural architecture within the context of relationships" and "the expression of our evolutionary past via the organisation, development, and functioning of the nervous system – a process resulting in billions of neurons organising into neural networks, each with its own timetable and requirements for growth". Genre works at both a micro (the functioning of the nervous system and thus neural networks) and a macro (the functioning of the social system and thus social networks) level.

Our social brains grow alongside the growth of our connections, our interactions and relationships, and Cozolino says that "the quality and nature of our relationships become encoded within the neural infrastructures of our brains" (12-13). So, if we have impoverished social networks, we may have impoverished categorisation skills. We go from communicating our physical feelings with sensory categories – gestures, facial expressions, and so on, to predominantly visual engagement and then after achieving the required complexity, we reach the linguistic level. The brain pathways that control speech evolve by duplication of the brain pathways that control gesturing, for example. Gesturing is a particularly salient example of the power of genres - categories. We gesture a meaning, a gist. Our

skills of categorisation are why charades works. We don't need words, we can still infer the genre of some "thing". Most interestingly, we use emotional concepts for varied purposes, too. Negative and positive emotions can be cued for the opposing functions. That is what humans do. We can use negative emotions to persuade someone either for or against. In the same way, we can use comedy to persuade for or against. It depends upon the perspective and the specific situation. Shakespeare has his own individual characters deal with Genre at this very level, weighing up their own options, arguing the case for different choices. "To be or not to be?" Hamlet asks. It depends on how one interprets the genre.

Though Genre is currently understood as a term that refers mainly to literature, by instead understanding Genre to be an extension of our inherent physiological processes of categorisation we can backdate considerably Genre's distinctive functional importance in evolution and its analogical potential for understanding basic S/R mechanisms.

6. REMEMBERING TYPES OF RESPONSE

Categorisation is so linked with memory that it is hard to separate the concepts. But, it is clear that we need a category, a type of response, to memorise before we can remember it. Either way, memory is key to the process of Genre and vice versa, and it has become a conceptual task of great difficulty to understand whether or not the process of Genre is actually the *same* process we describe when we talk about memory, or if literary genre imitates how memory works. Genre is certainly how we achieve *social* memory and thus social consciousness. Surely, by analysing how Genre works to facilitate social memory and consciousness, we can reach a promising understanding of how individual, subjective, personal, or "self" memory and consciousness "work", too.

Using Bartlett's classic 1932 study, *Remembering*, as my primary influence, I investigated several links between the processes of Genre and memory. Subsequently, synthesising these ideas with theoretical input from Damasio and others provided a more cutting-edge understanding of the biological underpinnings of memory and illuminated additional parallels. Understanding Genre as a prerequisite process for memory explains several of memory's key features such as schemata, memory's unification of perception, the constructed nature of memory and thus its unreliability but also usefulness, its plasticity, and, crucially, its participation in the construction and modification of social memory (or, ultimately, SoCo).

According to SoCo, memory or, more accurately, *remembering* comprises an instance of the utilisation of maps much as does interpreting present experience. We construct the image "as-if" we are perceiving. Damasio explains that

all of our memories, inherited from evolution and available at birth or acquired through learning thereafter – exist in our brains in dispositional form, waiting to become explicit images or actions. Our knowledge base is implicit, encrypted, and unconscious.

(2014, 144)

Damasio describes dispositions as “abstract records of potentialities” or “nimble formulas” as opposed to words. In other words, our memories emerge from a gist or code, a disposition, rather than a fully stored record. Furthermore, we use this generic formula *in construction*. We remember dispositions, types of response, genres, and we utilise them in the work of creating a memory which emerges in our conscious mind. Like maps and genres, dispositions guide creation, communication and interpretation based on past experience, usage, and style of response. Maps begin as dispositions, they are almost elaborations of dispositions.

In discussions about memory, generally, the term “map” is substituted for the word “schema”. Bartlett believed that we utilise memory by accessing schematic models, or “organised settings”. He defined a schema as “an active organization of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating...living, constantly developing, affected by every bit of incoming sensational experience of a given kind” (200/201). An important word used here is *kind*; we remember *kinds* of experiences. Furthermore, much of our schemata are adequate enough that we can simply maintain or repeat them. But, it is useful to note that adequate or satisfactory functioning does not equate to completeness. Schemas, memories, and genres are open-ended; they develop and change constantly, recursively, and accumulatively. In this thesis, “schema” offers yet another synonym for “genre”.

As an example of a schema, please consider the model *mother*. We assemble the mother schema based upon all of our previous interactions with not only our own mother but also other people’s mothers, fictional mothers, historical mothers, and so on. Using our experience, we associate certain or various emotions, such as happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, with the schema “mother”. We bind conceptual associations to the category of mother based on our experience and the meanings which have been communicated to us, too, such as “look after yourself”, “no”, “stop”, “I love you”, “I hate you”, “I’m so proud of you”, “you’re a waste of space”, and so on. Our mother schema is built, then, by epigenetic experience but is unique to us as an individual, built from our particular experience of mothers and all things “mother”. We base our schemas on social experience as perceived from the unique perspective of the self. Schemas, like genres, are constructed by both social and individual experience and, principally, their interaction. The generic schema evolves as new experience is acquired.

In an article titled “Neurobiology of Schemas and Schema-Mediated Memory” (2017), Asaf Gilboa and Hannah Marlatt describe schemata as “superordinate knowledge structures that reflect abstracted commonalities across multiple experiences, exerting powerful influences over how events are perceived, interpreted, and remembered” and also they highlight the need for “more precise definitions of memory schemas”. By conceptualising schemas as genres, we get closer to the kind of precision that Gilboa and Marlatt desire. We rely on schematic structures, or genres, in order to know the world around us – in essence, to construct our reality. Perception emerges from schemas, and subsequently schemas have a dramatic influence on the shape of our perspective. Thus, our individual interpretation and construction of schemas will produce a unique take on the social consciousness; retaining a sameness, but always distinctive. We can recognise this easily when we hold views which differ from those of our peers. It is common for

people to argue over the specific shade in terms of an object's colour. In fact, Gilboa and Marlatte observe the possibility that "children see only what they already know, projecting their thought schemas into things" (1). The observation can be extended to all humans, as opposed to just children. Schemata influence how experience is perceived, and thus how memory is employed.

Bartlett's views on *memory schema* though much older align nicely with Gilboa and Marlatte's more recent work, and his insight and the way in which he expresses this insight is perhaps more affecting and accessible. It is ironic that Bartlett is so associated with establishing the term "schema" when actually he did not and in fact states, "I strongly dislike the term 'schema'". However, he does admit that "it is very difficult to think of any better single descriptive word to cover the facts involved." He also states a preference for the term "organised setting" (200-201) which reminds us again of Genre's organising function. SoCo posits Genre as that "better single descriptive word" to convey the meaning of "schema" – or disposition, or map – and the processes of memory and recollection.

The process of memory offers us a cohesive experience of reality where we would otherwise have to try to make sense of an endless stream of unconnected phenomena. The information constructed by memory is organised into generic categories or schemas, which explains how the information is then recalled and interpreted in a unified manner. The unified gist or "memory" is then available to reconstruct as necessary or desired, consciously or unconsciously, until it is no longer relevant enough to be remembered. In this respect, forgetting is an integral part of memory. But also, genres can be extremely stubborn. Genres that we learn in early development are particularly deep-rooted. Genres and the unified experience that they enable through memory are also, however, available for modification over time. We elaborate on a gist every time that we "remember". *We can try out different kinds of elaboration.* Often, as Bartlett observed, we get a unified "feeling" about an object or experience, or when we remember or recall an object or experience (41). We get a similar "feel" for the genre of a text. This feeling is a result of the unified aspects of an experience and is created by all of the prior knowledge that we have accumulated of that *kind* of experience. We do not need to have experienced every instance of such a situation, encounter, or object in order to get this overall "feel".

To create unity, we use Genre when remembering to fill in the gaps of things that we don't remember or never knew. We can do this because of the dispositional structure which Genre offers. We are able to undertake prediction and guesswork based on the generic template that we have constructed based on previous experience and which we then access by recalling or remembering. Essentially, when we remember, we are reconstructing experience based upon generic maps. We can ask ourselves what might usually happen in a similar situation by referring back to our prior experience of such a situation. We can guess what response might be required, in fact, even if we do not have first-hand experience of the situation. We remember "as-if" experience, too. Any information that we have learned can be added to our generic categories and thus our unity of experience becomes more robust; we increase in generic competence and "get more" out of the world. At the same time, incongruencies can occur which we categorise under terms like "false memories" or "déjà vu" or "mix-ups" or "Freudian slips".

But, the most impressive feat of Genre in enabling memory is that we do not have to actively ask these questions because Genre's sorting process works unconsciously. This way, we can recall or reconstruct unified "memories" based upon learned organised settings and features with rapid speed. Bartlett describes that we naturally

fill up the gaps of...perception by the aid of what..[we have] experienced before in similar situations...or by describing what [we take] to be 'fit', or suitable, to such a situation. [We] may do this without being in the least aware that [we are] either supplementing or falsifying the data of perception. Yet, in almost all cases, [we are] certainly doing the first, and in many instances [we are] demonstrably doing the second.

(14)

Here, Bartlett suggests that we fabricate, elaborate, and confabulate information to fill the gaps in our perception without even recognising that we are doing so, and we do so from our unique perspective. Emma Smith awards the success of Shakespeare's plays to their inherent "gappiness". When we consider Smith's interpretation in comparison with the gaps that we fill or seem to come pre-filled when we remember, it becomes clear that Shakespeare's utilisation of generic cues which we must respond to and, in essence, *complete* is very similar to the daily gap-filling that we do in remembering. We perform this work naturally because genres help us to create a narrative that is cohesive and so they become our go-to for future conceptualisation. Genres are internalised over time, "remembered", and come to shape the ways in which we prioritise and thus remember. We use accessible information to maintain and "justify" our existing genres. Generally, we return to examine our unified experience only if something doesn't quite add up. As with inference, our first impression comes as a unity and Bartlett says that we get an "impression of completeness" (25) or "an immediate general impression of its significance, or composition" (28). It is only if further investigation is required that we examine each detail analytically – consciously – and generally the generic mechanism does the job adequately enough. This quality of memory aligns perfectly with Fowler's comment about our attention to "gross infringements" of Genre in literature.

Shakespeare relies on the audience's *expectations of what will happen next* on the stage as they watch a play. Expectations, or predictions, are based on previous experience. Dramatic expectations, then, are based on dramatic tradition or convention. Shakespeare understands that audience members will utilise their shared memory of dramatic experience in order to fill in gaps throughout his plays. He relies, too, on more general shared knowledge – such as word-meanings, well-known stories, character types, and contemporary superstitions – which make up the dramatic tradition. To watch a Shakespeare play requires that we do an awful lot of remembering in order to understand even the basic premises of characters, plots, and context. In much the same way, remembering requires us to engage with generic conventions, customs, traditions, rules, and expectations, all of which emerge from our social experience where we accrue them.

Recognising that memory is constructed from our generic repertoires helps to explain the fallibility of our memories. Our memories tend to be inherently personal, affected by feelings, biased by emotions, full of gaps, and informed by our unique point of view. Typically, we think of the imagination as the arena for this kind of unreliability (or perhaps it should be called creativity) but memory shares the same “burden”. Our genres, and thus our memories – and thus our perceptions – all are “unreliable”.

Bartlett says of remembering that “very little of. . . construction is literally observed and often. . . a lot of it is distorted or wrong so far as the actual facts are concerned” (206). Because we receive such cohesive narratives from our memories we readily believe them to be records of fact. The thing is, our memories couldn’t be “right” all the time. We must consider that memory does not reproduce exact copies of each remembered experience. Instead, during the memory process we are reconstructing. Each time we recall, we are constructing a new experience. Each “memory”, when it is remembered, will be new. Our changing experience makes it so. Just as every instance of Genre is unique, each of our memories is unique in its construction, too. To fill in gaps we can invent, predict, condense, extend, guess and so on, and we can mix genres at complex levels with ease. It is rare, in fact, that memory is “accurate” in representing “reality”. Indeed, Bartlett says that memory is “hardly ever really exact, even in the most rudimentary cases of rote recapitulation, and it is not all that important that it should be so” (213). And what he means is that it is not important for memory to be *accurate* when its function instead is to be *useful*. *Genre’s function is to facilitate function*.

As suggested by our tendency to “fill gaps”, the processes of both memory and also Genre are constructive processes. The unified experiences that we enjoy are construction. Bartlett agrees that “remembering appears to be far more decisively an affair of construction rather than one of mere reproduction” (205) and Genre facilitates such construction. Modell tells us that both Freud and also Edelman described memory as “recategorization” or “recontextualization” (36). Evidently, in order to re-categorise (or re-contextualise), we must first categorise. We construct genres – categories – by which to understand the world, and then we construct images from those genres. We construct and then we reconstruct. The nature of Genre means that we can reuse genres in new constructions and combinations all the time.

The point of all this talk about construction is to imply that memories do not “exist” or “happen” or are “stored” – though, the rhetoric of storing is a useful and somewhat unavoidable terminological option for discussing memory – we create memories, or we “do” remembering. Each time we “remember” we create the new “remembered” experience afresh. Each memory, then, changes with each instance of its use or access or signalling. Memories are modified with each use. Many studies have shown that the same parts of the brain are used when remembering or imagining activities as when “actually doing” activities; the “as if”. We are creating anew with each construction of remembering or imagining. Modell agrees that “memory does not capture a coded representation but is itself a construction. Unconscious memory exists only as a latent potential awaiting reconstruction” (38).

There have been several important works created in dedication to investigating a theory of *social* memory. This seeks to investigate a theory of social consciousness and so must cover much of the same terrain. There is no consciousness without memory, and any theory of social consciousness must attempt to explain some idea of what a social memory is or might look like or whether social memory exists or is possible.

Bartlett asserts that memory is accompanied by “a great growth of social life, and the development of means of communication” (206) but it seems to me that memory itself would not be necessary or possible outside of a social context. It is my proposition that all memory is social, responding as it does based on social interaction and experience. Bartlett was not convinced entirely that a social memory proper could be confirmed. He asks, “does the group remember?” and suggests that any theory of social memory must show that “the social group itself possesses a capacity to retain and recall its own past” (296).

I believe that Genre constitutes the kind of proof which Bartlett desired of a social memory, or of a social group “remembering”. Genre is a process which is determined by history and which progresses by recording change – in the same way as our individual memories. But, unlike our individual memories, Genre is a kind of memory which all members of a culture have access to; in other words: a social memory. Bartlett explains that “to get a clear case [of social memory] we must find a group acting upon a distant precedent, with at least considerable unanimity, when that precedent has not been formulated by any individual group member and put before the others” (297). This explanation corresponds with the theory of Genre which is being presented this thesis. As we have considered, there is no discernible originator of Genre as a concept or individual genres. Of course, there have been many different commentators and interpreters of Genre and various rules which they believe different genres and their practitioners should adhere to, but we cannot state any individual as at the helm of the formulation of Genre or genres. We know that in responding to Genre, people are acting upon distant precedents with considerable unanimity – these qualities are indispensable to any conceptualisation of Genre. Genre only “works” because it is historically agreed upon. What we find with Genre is that reactions to it are, as Bartlett defines individual memory, “repeatedly checked, as well as constantly facilitated, by... others” (206). Both memories and also genres emerge from social interaction.

It is not just brains that remember; *whole organisms* remember, body *including* brain. Or, at least, there is considerable research now as well as logical reasoning to support the idea that our body operates in ways which can be compared to our conceptualisation of *remembering*. More accurately, our conceptualisation of memory is an elaborated extension of the body-memory process. I have had no difficulty with accepting this proposition. I have been struck many times throughout my life by the sheer congruence of my health problems. It is incredible; every instance of my physical condition reflects my psychological state. It all seems to centre around a *hypervigilance*.

An early issue arose with my eyes; my vision was “better than 20/20” according to the optician, but my eyes strained because, he explained, “most people’s eyes relax and go out of focus when there is nothing specific to focus on

whereas yours are *constantly in focus*". The optician explained that my eyes overworked to maintain this sort of hyper-focus. Later, I began to grind my teeth and as I got older this evolved into clenching them, instead, always as if I was waiting for something bad to happen and constantly tense. This tension presented in other areas of my body, too. I would and still occasionally get stomach cramps from holding my stomach tensed for prolonged periods. I have for as long as I can remember regularly held my breath and struggle to breathe naturally or deeply. In my late teens, I actually broke my ribs by tensing up my body too much while coughing with a lung infection. The doctor explained that my tense muscles "smashed" into my ribs every time I coughed. Another example of hypersensitivity is my very sensitive skin – since I was a child the slightest scratch or slap or piece of dust leaves its mark on my skin in the form of welts, like red worms. And finally, and perhaps most significantly, we come to the key diagnoses made in my life. In my late teens I was diagnosed with *Fibromyalgia* (FM). The NHS characterises FM as follows: "a long-term condition that causes... increased sensitivity to pain, extreme tiredness, muscle stiffness, difficulty sleeping, problems with mental processes (known as "fibro-fog"), such as problems with memory and concentration... [and] irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), a digestive condition that causes stomach pain and bloating. I guess that I see FM as a hypersensitivity to perceived pain or overactive pain receptors, or perhaps the result of general widespread hypervigilance. The second diagnoses I received a couple of years later, I think that I was 21: Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). The generally agreed upon symptoms include exaggeration or dysregulation of emotions, emotional intensity, interpersonal difficulty, extreme fear of abandonment, impulsivity, and so on. It strikes me that all of these issues, problems, patterns, reactions, and diagnoses emerge from a general hypervigilance. These are my natural states: tense, hypervigilant, hyperfocused, hypersensitive, *prepared for danger*. It has taken a lot of conscious effort to try to recognise and work with and change these responses. However, I am completely convinced that each issue – physical or psychological – emerges as an instance of the *overall structure*. *The Generic Structure*. Dualism was renounced long ago, and so we must accept that the body remembers just as does the brain. Evidently, Damasio's *Somatic Marker Hypothesis* supports the idea of the idea that the body remembers, but there are many psychologists now making the mind-body connection, and many scientists are working to prove that cells remember, too.

In his new work *The Embodied Mind: Understanding the Mysteries of Cellular Memory, Consciousness, and Our Bodies* (2021), Thomas R. Verny explores the idea that somatic cells, not just neural cells, store memory, inform genetic coding, and adapt to environmental changes. He demonstrates that the notion of cellular memory transcends mere abstraction and instead constitutes scientific fact. Verny observes demonstrations of remembering even in SCOs. He argues that by accepting that processes believed traditionally to operate only within the brain actually permeate our entire physical being, that cells utilise the same mechanisms for memory as do brains, we come to understand that our minds are endlessly more flexible and plastic than we perceive.

Similarly, in their 2021 paper, Harsh Vashistha, Maryam Kohram, and Hanna Salman posit that cell division establishes a form of "cellular memory", where generations of cells will retain properties of their ancestors, enabling their *expression* to remain relatively stable over time. It sounds a lot like memory proper, and a lot like

Genre, too. The group suggest that “building on this research to achieve a better understanding of cellular memory may allow researchers to harness these insights to direct the evolution of different cellular properties over time”. They point out as well that *cellular memory is not infinite*, it fades over time. Their findings show that the dynamics of cellular inheritance are *property specific* and can exhibit *long-term memory* that works to *restrain variation* among cells. These observations apply uncannily to the process of Genre. Genres are property specific. This feature provides perhaps the most relatable aspect of Genre for most individuals. We recognise and identify and use genres through their properties. Comedies, for instance, may include properties such as the following; prominent female roles, low status characters, mistaken identity or disguise, blocking fathers, and so on. It is particularly telling then that Shakespeare tends to subvert our expectations with regards to generic properties. Secondly, memory schemata and genres and, according to Vashistha, Kohram, and Salman, groups of cell properties all work to “narrow the search”, so to speak, to “restrain variation”, or, in other words, to stabilise or regulate meaning or function. The main difference between what we might call conscious genres and such cellular genres is their longevity. As the researchers suggest, cellular memory fades over time. Social or conscious genres can be forgotten by individuals – and such forgetting is likely to be meaningful or defensive in different areas and insignificant in others – and similarly, particular individuals may lack generic competence or “knowledge” of certain genres. But, while people forget genres, or do not “know” genres, the genres continue to “exist” or are *remembered* by the social consciousness, as discussed above, and may for periods remain inactive but are forever available, accessible, and functional, should their service and trajectory be reignited, perhaps by a creative genius.

One of the main caveats of accepting that the body remembers is accepting that our psychological state is deeply interwoven with our physiological state. Bessel Van Der Kolk’s bestseller *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014) is devoted to this topic precisely, from the investigative perspective of a trauma expert. Van Der Kolk explains that traumatic experience leaves *traces* on our bodies, that “trauma produces actual physiological changes, including a recalibration of the brain’s alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant” (2-3). Because the brain is plastic and use-dependent, the body will develop in line with its learned response style, remembering in each interaction “the response most likely to occur” (56). Thus, traumatic experience will be interpreted by the developing brain and communicated to the developing and functioning body. The mind-body connection is increasingly apparent in medical research. For instance, Van Der Kolk remarks that “it is amazing how many psychological problems involve difficulties with sleep, appetite, touch, digestion, and arousal” (56). More recently, in a 2017 interview, Dr Gabor Maté discussed the same correlation between childhood trauma and physiological presentation. According to Maté, from conception onwards, the pregnant woman’s environment and experience is communicated to the foetus and shapes the development of the child’s brain and their predisposition to diseases and disorders. The conditions of that environment thus affect the organism – which Maté explains “is just straightforward biology... It’s not controversial”. Maté tells Reagan that in early experience, “*templates*” are constructed for future function or dysfunction. These templates emerge from the interactive relationships between organisms from conception onwards and the emotional products of these interactions which occur

always in a social and cultural context. SoCo suggests that these connections are to be expected because the entire organism revolves around *sensing* and *responding* and furthermore, *remembering types of response or genres*.

The body does not forget; our experience shapes actual physiological development and affects the way that we filter information; the way that we interpret experience. The body must interpret environmental stimuli constantly, and to do so it remembers responses based on past experience and interprets based on what it is used to. A good example is pain interpretation. If, for instance, our childhood experience offered little guidance or shaped a distorted perspective from which to construct responses to danger, distortions in pain interpretation may ensue in later life – such as the hypervigilance which I have identified in my own genre. I conceptualise the correlation as follows: without enough guidance and with confusing messages about safety, and so with unstable connections between the body and the brain, somatic markers are disturbed, and connections are underregulated, and thus all stimuli or inappropriate stimuli is interpreted as pain. What presents is a general oversensitivity to compensate for the lack of understanding or regulated sense of what is safe and what is dangerous; essentially, the body responds “as-if” *everything* that we encounter is dangerous. Interpretation is part of a larger, circular social communication process which is facilitated by memory. Our collective memory – SoCo – and our personal memories – our *experience* – both affect expression, communication, and interpretation. Unique personal memories emerge from our interaction with the social world.

While our brains are rapidly developing and growing as babies we learn our initial response patterns – the ones which prove most useful to us in our social environment. Those types of response – and what will emerge is an overarching type of response, the *self-genre* – will inform the behaviour of the individual for the rest of their lives, without creative intervention and great work. This set of responses constitutes the basis of their conscious memory. Everything else is elaboration, given that memory itself is an elaboration of actual physiological responses and past experience. If the child is lucky enough to have avoided any traumatic experience then this turn of events should not raise issue. However, as we will discover later on, trauma does offer us a unique perspective and furthermore it pretty much demands creativity, if we are strong enough to transform that perspective, of course. It's inferred often that those without traumatic experience have a more limited understanding of the world, are “naïve”, or do not possess so-called “life experience”. Of course, there is no need to generalise at the moment about secure or insecure experience but instead recognise that our *body remembers experience* and our *interpretational dispositions*; our body *does* Genre. As Damasio recognises, the most decisive element of a somatic state is its *type*.

Body memory can be defined as *remembering types of physiological action or physiological responsiveness*. Muscle memory is another useful example. Memory depends on the following: rehearsal, repetition, learning, experience imitation. Essentially, memory emerges from repeated – or emotionally salient – performance. Just like rote learning. The function of remembering is to remember and infer types of function. This kind of communication between body and nervous system requires Genre, just like any other kind of communication. Our Genre or our response style indicates our interpretation of experience and our generic competence, as well.

These signals or somatic markers direct action, direct the choice of response and thus the type of action performed. Thus, Damasio's somatic markers perform the same function as generic cues. In the case of traumatic experience, it is to be expected that the development will incorporate a distorted or hyperactive response to perceived threat. This is what utilising Genre to remember achieves – it enables us to focus our attention on the things that we remember to be important or significant or relevant or appropriate or useful for our survival. It is what Genre does for literature, too. As presents in body memory, the two major types of action may be “activation” or “effective action” and “immobilisation”. The two types correspond with the genres of comedy and tragedy.

Fortunately, by working creatively with traumatic memories, patients can be relieved of their epigenetic effects. A holistic or *generic* approach to the entire organism is required. The body and brain need to be investigated as one, and prevention must begin at conception. Maté suggests that we need to study the connections between emotional, physiological, adopting a unified approach to mind and body. “Most of society does not approach it in this way. The help offered is thus superficial” he comments. Instead of treating the symptoms which emerge, he believes that the focus should be on the underlying problem. “This has profound ramifications for talking therapies and their limits: the rational mind cannot do the repair work on its own, since that part of you is pretending it has already been repaired”. Similarly, Van Der Kolk acknowledges that no single treatment is likely to work alone, that most individuals require a combinatorial approach, and that no combination of treatment will be exactly the same for any single patient.

Maté points out that when we see changes in gene expression over generations, the findings do not constitute changes in DNA but rather changes in *how* that DNA is activated – or, presumably, inhibited. According to SoCo, individual conscious memory is co-constructed by the social environment but what emerges simultaneously is a social consciousness which remembers social change. Therefore, what is remembered and how it is remembered depends on epigenetics or social experience and in particular the *kind* of social experience, be it cellular, physiological, social, or individual memory. I think that the strange loop gets in the way of our comprehension of the way the brain works or, in Damasio's words, the order of things. Because the strange loop flips causality, the chain of events is inverted. However, through processes such as memory and consciousness we are able at least to turn back upon this chain and thus perceive it, albeit in a reversed, top-down order. Accordingly, physiological or cellular memory and subsequently social memory precede individual, subjective, conscious remembering. A holistic approach to healthcare and medical research will reveal more about memory in the years to come.

7. ATTENDING, INFERRING, & IMAGINING

Because remembering is dispositional and the emergent “memories” are composite, we generally require the assistance of further skills, namely, attention, inference, and imagination, but these skills are themselves facilitated by capacity to remember. It is important to discuss these skills because they support the endeavour of ever-improving and accumulative functional categorisation, and so they constitute what SoCo defines as *generic* skills.

ATTENTION

The genres which we construct and then reconstruct or remember make possible a vital skill: *attention*. Attention offers evolutionary benefit in terms of how we focus on different types or kinds of information – i.e., different genres – in order to interact effectively with the social world. In recent years there has been much exciting research into this special skill (including Henderson and Hayes, 2017; Nandy et al, 2019; Lorenz-Spreen et al 2019; Wise et al, 2019; Bagherzadeh et al, 2019). But, without the creation of genres which correspond to objects in the social world, there would be nothing to attend *to*. Furthermore, we cannot assign value or prioritise without genres which can be ordered hierarchically in terms of usefulness or interest (in terms of survival, and beyond). Once we have order, then we are able to choose or selectively attend to objects by matter of importance or priority. In other words, we are able to choose what we must *focus our attention* on. Damasio points out that our capacity to attend to maps is as important for achieving consciousness as the mapping process itself.

As we engage with the external and social world, we develop quickly a sense of which genres require most attention: caregiver, food, sleep, and so on. Clearly, our initial survival needs rely on an initial genre inescapably based on our central social connection experiences. Genres play an important role in deciding which

incoming information can be ignored, and for creating contiguity. If we do not categorise, we cannot regulate attention. All is simply unrelated chaos of phenomena, but the generic process gives us the opportunity to focus. A great deal of imaginative play involves *shifting* focus. Primarily, attention allows us to invest or allocate energy on a specific object, to shift strategies or approaches based on our general goals and past experience as and when necessary, and, essentially, to navigate life. Attention is crucial for the regulation of emotions, behaviour, and information from the social world.

To attend to an object, we must first attend to the *overall scene* in which the object exists. Before we can *focus* our attention, attention must be distributed *generally*. Once our attention has interpreted the *genre*, we can begin to pick out various specific details of that scene to focus on. This general-specific process can be demonstrated in examples from both daily life and also our experience of reading a text or viewing a performance. In the first instance, take for example the following situation: You are meeting your friend at a café for lunch. You arrive at the café and go inside. You must first attend to the café scene as a whole – taking in the hustle and bustle of customers, servers, tables, food, drinks, noises, lights, and so on. Once your attention has spanned the unified scene of the café, you can then focus in on the various positions in which you may find your friend – at the bar waiting, perhaps, or on one of various single-occupant tables. Your attention thus moves from general to specific, gaining more and more particularity until at last – aha! – you see your friend. The elements of the general scene to which you first attended move out of focus (irrelevant noises, people, tables, and so on), and your attention focuses specifically on your friend, the table at which they are sat, and the noises that come out of their mouth. The surrounding fuss may not be pushed from your attention completely – an annoying child crying loudly may distract you slightly, or waiters bumping past you may shift your attention from time to time – but largely, you attend specifically to the situation which is most relevant or valuable to you (chatting to your friend). In literature, the genre of a work allows us to attend generally to its overall scope. A novel, for example, allows us to attend to the general impression of the book in question – “fictional”, say. Similarly, when we go to see a play, the knowledge that the play’s genre is “tragedy” allows us to attend generally to the world which will be created before us. Once we have an overall sense of the work (its genre), we can then attend to its more specific details. In both of these cases, the initial, general attendance aids us in “getting our bearings” or gaining some unified or general impression of the scene (the café, the novel, the tragedy). Of course, this general distribution of attention does not confirm or guarantee any of the specifics which we might hone in on but allows the act of focusing to ensue. Knowing a work’s genre does not tell us everything about the events which will take place and to which we must attend throughout the specific play or book but it situates our attention within the general context of the work – in other words, Genre primes and cues our attention in order to do our focusing work.

Our attention is *limited but useful*. It seems that the brain works on a sort of “need-to-know” and “cheapest-is-best” basis. We do not have the capacity for limitless remembering or attending. Our images and inferences are rarely complete and are often based on piece-meal information. While we may believe ourselves to be “great multi-taskers” or others to have “the attention span of a goldfish”, the fact remains that powers of attention are always limited. We can attend only to certain

amounts of things and for certain amounts of time. What we do attend to, then, must be influenced by the general context of the given situation. What we choose to invest or allocate our attention to depends on Genre because attention is oriented around associating, distinguishing, and value judgment. So, when someone beeps their horn on the road, we associate this with some kind of problem when driving. We distinguish between things which require our immediate attention – revision for exam on Monday morning – and things which can (or should) be attended to later – having a catch-up beer with a pal. Of course, we spend our attention on things which we find interesting and ignore things which do not interest us. All of these attending situations require categorising things into different genres such as “important”, “not important”; “interesting”, “boring”; “danger”, “not-danger”. And once we can remember these categories we can attend to them.

What is interesting, though, is that we often overlook completely those categories “not important”, “boring”, and “not-danger”. We do not need to waste our limited attention on things that do not require it. In the same respect, we might pay attention to the veracity of the contents of a book claiming to be non-fiction, whereas we would overlook this element in a novel because it does not require our attention in this genre. When we focus our attention, we are constantly narrowing our field of intake from general to specific. Paradoxically, narrowing or focusing our attention does not limit us but instead allows us to take in detail more readily and to create new attentional experiences. Similarly, the genre of a work and the corresponding unspoken and unconscious “rules” that we follow to focus our attention based upon that genre do not limit us but instead allow us to attend more accurately to the material.

However, when we focus our attention on certain types of information, it is usually *at the expense* of other types. And, we exclude information from our attention in this way all the time. From second to second, we have millions of possible options competing for our prized attention. What results, of course, is a conflict between what we attend and what we ignore. Attending to an object does not require simply zooming in on a specific feature but instead it involves blocking out, in a sense, or not attending to a vast amount of competing information. Naturally, wherever there is conflict, there must be Genre. For conflict to take place there must exist two (or more) opposing forces and, as we know, to distinguish between forces we must categorise. When we enter into the generic contract – as author or as reader – we agree to attend to certain features and ignore others. When we enter into the attentional contract, we agree to attend to certain objects and ignore all other objects which are competing for our attention. This decision process is guided in our dealings with literature by Genre. We can assume quite reasonably that a Genre-type process must be at work whenever we attend or focus our attention, combatting innumerable competing stimuli as we go.

Genre makes the skilful attribution of attention possible. Genres signal and organise attention – they shape our attention but at the same time guide and signal it. A writer with a strong grasp of this function and his skill in its handling allows him to inhibit or activate in earnest the reader/audience’s attention as suits his intended code. Our generic competence (or the information which we know about a given genre) dictates the elements of the specific work that we will subsequently attend to. But, as is the case with all of the processes which have discussed so far, digression

or novelty is more likely to grab our attention. In the same way that we would pay little attention to seeing a person with their head attached but pay lots of attention to seeing a person sans head, our attention is piqued when writers veer from the norm. Our attention is seized when we laugh during a tragedy, much as it should be when somebody dies in a tragedy. The norm does not arouse attention. What arouses attention is the unfamiliar. Fowler recognises accordingly that “it may well be that the majority of generic features operate unconsciously, until, perhaps, some gross infringement of rule draws them to our attention”. We tend to miss the things that are “right before our eyes” or expected, and we stand to attention when something “sticks out”. However, the writer must establish or demonstrate norms or conventions in order for infringements to become apparent – to be called to attention. Fowler notes appropriately that in order “to understand the kinds, therefore, we have to take into account a very wide range of features” (60). The experimental text (or any work) must include the means for drawing attention to features both conventional and also novel. This process occurs precisely in order to expand social consciousness. Experimentation tends toward complexity, particularly of structure. Complexity generates interest and thus *attention*. Simple narratives may interest us initially, but we will no doubt lose interest when we have consumed numbers of texts with the same predictable structure. Complexity expands the possibilities of Genre, making identification of generic structures a more ambiguous task of course but also enabling texts to be more capable of making readers think.

What the writer achieves in crafting his text is the choice of material to be attended, of course. A writer primes us to be perceptually read to receive the important themes and ideas that they wish to communicate. By examining his plays, it is clear that one of Shakespeare’s main interests was guiding his audience’s attention to contemporary social doxa and by forcing them to attend to the various messages, he forced the audience also to call them into question. Take for instance, *King Lear*. The character of Edmund is one of Shakespeare’s most interesting and it is largely because he has internalised some very toxic doxa which was prolific in Shakespeare’s society: illegitimate equals corrupt. To be a bastard in the sixteenth century was thought of as tantamount to being an outcast from society. Edmund questions the view himself in a wonderful soliloquy, which ends with the formidable words

Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

(*Tragedy of, I.ii.22*)

What might we deduce from the events of *King Lear* and its tragic genre regarding Shakespeare’s views on this particular doxa? For a start, we can guess that the perpetuation of such views will not end well. But more importantly, Shakespeare wants us to attend to the fact that not only are these views unfounded and that moral and social status cannot and should not be associated but that any society who adheres to such views will spawn inevitably persons who internalise the very customs which personally afflict them. In essence, Edmund becomes a “bastard” (in the colloquial sense) of his own making by internalising the insidious doxa which surrounds him. Shakespeare shows how experience (Genre) shapes interpretation and identity. We may not relate to Edmund’s plight with great rigour because

negative doxa surrounding illegitimacy seems to have all but died out. It was a matter of extreme importance to Shakespeare's society where social standing and primogeniture laws meant a great difference in quality of life. In modern society, children are regularly conceived outside of marriage by choice and the modern family comes in all shapes and sizes without the same prejudices. Despite our views about such topics, it is evident that Shakespeare was interested in, cared greatly about, and, principally, wanted us *to pay attention to* social issues and their tragic potential, the way that Genre can filter perception according to experience. Although critics may disagree about the clarity of Shakespeare's own views regarding the subjects what must be agreed upon is that he wanted us to attend to the topics, think about them, and question them. The plays are notable not because they provide us with Shakespeare's personal response but because instead they "set up" or prompt the personal responses of the audience.

INFERENCE

The success of Shakespeare's work, or any artistic product, depends profoundly on our capacity to *infer*. Without Genre, without categories, there would be no inference nor the capacity to infer – or refer to, nothing to infer *about*. We would have no point of reference to make inferences about. To infer is one of our ways of responding to some *kind* of information. When we infer, we make judgements or predictions or assumptions or associations based upon past experience, and what *kind* of past experience is relevant or has been cued. Any time we unconsciously ask or answer questions such as "What *kind* of "thing" is this?", "What is *meant* by that?", or "What might happen if?" we are inferring and we are *doing* Genre – or, more accurately, Genre does this work for us. We make inferences in response to and based on generic cues. For example, a red light for most western civilians will cue the inference "stop". A green light, then, leads us to infer that we should (or *can*) "go". When a person asks us "do you want a cup of tea?" usually we infer that they mean to make us one should we respond with "yes".

However, we do not infer simply about words and meanings of words and linguistic knowledge. We infer much more than we are aware of. Every piece of information that we consider to be "factual" or to be an inherent quality or likelihood is inferred. *We cannot know for certain*. Inferring is just like making an informed guess which facilitates and speeds up communication and interpretation. We infer every time that we sit down on a chair, secure in the inferred knowledge that it will support our weight (that it is, in fact, a chair). When we go to a certain place in our house to find some book or other object, we infer that it remains in the place that we knew it to be before. We infer that, when meeting a friend for coffee, our friend will remember our name, remember our face, remember what we spoke about the last time that we met for coffee. We make inferences, basically, whenever we can "take for granted" or "guess" or "remember", whenever we speak, act, or think. To infer is to make predictions based on previous experience. And we organise previous

experience, and thus give it meaning, by doing Genre. Inference requires a sort of shared, unspoken knowledge which emerges from the totality of genres and their relationships, otherwise known as the SoCo. This knowledge is retained and regulated by categories, or genres. We update these categories on an ad-hoc basis so that they can provide us with the means of inferring as and when necessary (a lot).

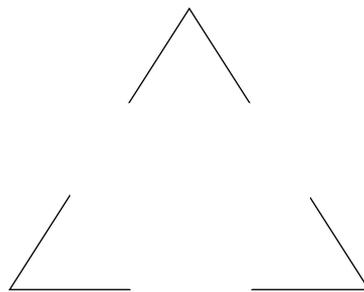
Most of this inferential work is performed unconsciously. In fact, Eric R. Kandel confirms that “most aspects of our cognitive processes are based on unconscious inferences” (375). Of course, as I have just demonstrated, we *can* infer “on purpose”, or in other words, consciously. We do so for various purposes. For example, we might choose to infer that someone is in a bad mood based on not much evidence at all. It might be our best-educated-guess to infer such a quality about someone’s tone or actions. We might remember that the last time our colleague said that she was leaving early for the day, it turned out that she had a headache. So, when said colleague leaves early on any subsequent occasion we might infer that she is suffering, like before, from a headache. The success rate of such an inference clearly depends upon confirmation of the guessed information. Should the colleague return to work the next morning with a story about an ill-prepared, early school-closure, and subsequently abandoned child, we would be forced to “return to the drawing board” so to speak, albeit unconsciously, and update the generic information regarding our colleague for the reference of any future guesses concerning her whereabouts and work-day routines. And thus, a highly-contextual practice, inference both utilises and develops Genre.

The process of inferring categories in our conscious life can otherwise be named “logic”. Shakespeare may have been utilising the genres of comedy and tragedy to present healthy logic versus maladaptive logic. But, all logic requires one thing: tradition. In his book *Inference and Imagination* (1994), John M. Dolan articulates the point as follows: “Logic is a performing art. Like any other performing art its mastery requires incessant practice” (vii). Aside from its obvious relevance to the theory at hand in terms of the language used regarding performance, Dolan makes clear that one does not simply happen upon a world-view or a vast repertoire of inferred information or capacity, one must learn it and repeat – and repeat, and repeat. We take our powers of inference for granted because they have become habitual practice. “To learn logic”, Dolan continues, “one must work at logic; and to work at logic one must be prepared to feel stupid and to make mistakes... An essential part of this undertaking is making mistakes and blunders that are inevitable” (vii-viii). Needless to say, as adults we hope to have passed these stages when it comes to basic inference. But, it may not be too difficult to remember a time when we didn’t “get” a joke or a reference or, more embarrassingly, inferred to such a loss that we became the *butt* of a joke.

In the previous section I suggested that we infer the meaning of emotions. So, when a person smiles, for example, we can infer that they are happy. This is because smiling belongs to the genre of “happy” along with other qualities, actions, words, and so forth which we have learned “mean” happiness. We can only ever *infer* information about someone else’s emotions, as opposed to *knowing* this information, because, of course, a person’s emotions and the feelings that they cause are subjective. We cannot know what is happening inside someone else’s

body. But, it is very handy indeed that we are able to make guesses which are more or less reliable in our own culture. Correspondingly, when we perform certain emotions, we can assume with some degree of certainty that another human in our vicinity will be able to decipher their meaning.

Inference is such an incredible skill because we usually only require very little or at least partial information in order to make an inference. We require often only part of the story in order to make sense of it – in other words, to perform the necessary inferences. An inference is a predicted conclusion to an unfinished story. Humans are natural puzzle-solvers, pattern-finders, story-finishers. So, if I were to say “Knock knock”, the reader might be tempted at the very least to respond with “who’s there?” Many scientific studies show that we complete missing elements of a shape if it is partially presented, as proved by the following example:



Generally, neurotypical individuals will “see” a triangle, completing the shape “in their mind”, as opposed to three “V” shapes or six random lines. We *infer* a pattern. And so, we infer what we are most familiar with, *the most likely or useful or familiar response*, based on what we remember and what we have remembered to attend to and thus infer in our previous experiences. We are used to triangles, we are not so used to three “V” shapes or random lines; we do not have concepts or definitions for the latter two or, in other words, they do no *mean* anything to us. We see a triangle because we are used to seeing a triangle; the concept exists within the SoCo. We fill in the blanks; *we infer*. There are many other similar “optical illusions” as they are named, but really this has little to do with vision. We are inferring meaning, or shape, where there is not meaning, or shape. We are inferring concepts by utilising Genre. We can do this kind of inference with variable success depending upon the information available and also our previous experience. Surely, if someone had never seen a triangle before, they would not infer or fill in the blanks of the previous diagram. There is always, thus, a relative and circumstantial nature to inference. We can make an educated guess, but an inference can only be that – a guess. More interestingly, what Dolan’s example illustrates is the usefulness of knowing the *genre* of that which we are required to infer about. When we know or can guess the genre at hand, we are able to make more informed inferences.

However, some information may be too scarce or incomplete that we are unable to infer anything from it – we are unable to complete the pattern or conclude the story or “get” the joke. Different situations depend on different levels of relevance, significance, relativity, nuance, competence and so on. One of the reasons that my new conceptualisation of Genre lends itself particularly to a discussion of inference, is its accountability for such nuance and variety of

competence. Shakespeare wrote many tragedies, for instance, but any critic would be hard-pushed to say that they are “all the same”. Genre allows us to infer *general* qualities. To confirm any kind of specification requires individual agency and the use of such agency to investigate how and why a certain instance of Genre *differs* from what we have learned to be the “norm”. Genre only works because we can observe difference between its individual instances.

Of course, the oft-fragmented foundations upon which inferences are based can lead to problems. Sometimes we get the ending wrong. We can infer the “wrong” meaning about something and doing so has the potential to land us in hot water, so to speak. (Just now, you have inferred that by “hot water” what I really mean is “trouble” and by “trouble” I really mean that by inferring inaccurately we can run into uncomfortable or confrontational social interactions, and so on and so forth, ad nauseum). Because we are not able (and it is likely that we will never be able) to read another person’s mind, we are always at risk of inaccurately inferring what someone means when they tell us something, how someone feels based on external (or even linguistic) cues, or what they might do in the future based upon what they have done in the past. As outlined above, we are only able to make educated guesses based upon previous experience – based upon generic expectations. Ultimately, should we find a way to ensure accurate inferences, still we would be *inferring*, and never truly experiencing or “knowing”.

Although we cannot actually read minds, it is as though we attempt to, and can do so with success most of the time, when we infer. With experience, our skills of inference improve. Most of our beliefs and values and actions are not based on “reason” per se but rather on generically produced motives. Once we become accustomed to a person’s genre, we can make reasonably accurate predictions about their future actions, thoughts, and feelings. We can then respond in an appropriate manner. For example, a friend, let’s call him Joe, is a night-owl. He tends to wake up around midday. Based on this knowledge, I can shape my engagement with him. Should I get the urge to call Joe while drinking my morning coffee at 8am, I can use this generic knowledge about Joe to prompt reconsideration. I will call him later. Now, this does not negate the possibility that for some reason or other on *this* day Joe has decided to get up early and is awake at 8am. Nor does it negate the idea that Joe has changed his routine since we last spoke and is now an early-riser. But the inference that I make is based upon my usual, expected, experience of Joe. Should I find out that he is now an early-riser, I can amend my inferential genre for Joe. Genre does not confine, does not limit reality, but offers instead a guide for response. One of the biggest complaints about Genre as a concept is that it is limiting but Genre is only limiting if we define it as such, live by such limited definitions, and finally if we do not actively develop our generic competence. In other words, Genre is limiting if we are ignorant. The more capable our generic competence – the more experience and knowledge that we accumulate – the more clearly we are able to recognise generic and thus inferential incompetence and so become better equipped to avoid it. In a similar respect, I have found that each time I read or go to see Shakespeare, as I move through life amassing generic competence with each moment of experience, I “get” more and more out of his plays.

IMAGINATION

The term “imaginative” has become, in similar ways to the term “genre”, a term which we apply only in certain circumstances. In much the same way that we might refer to “genre fiction”, we refer to “imaginative” people, projects, ideas, and so forth. But, imagining is something that we all do; we are all “imaginative”. And, imagining requires Genre. Defining imagination is a tricky task. When tackling the definition of this ubiquitous phenomenon, Modell asks the following questions, “do we consider everything that occurs in our head, in the absence of sensory input, imagination? Does imagination include everything that is mental? If not, what then are its limits and boundaries? ... How do we define imagination? ... What specifically characterises imagination?” (125-126).

Stephen T. Asma points out in his book, *The Evolution of Imagination* (2017), that most philosophers “characterise imagination as a kind of *cognition* rather than embodied *action*” and that “this common mistake demotes the imagination to a kind of weak knowledge – making it derivative or secondary to “real knowledge” (4). But, as Damasio makes clear, image-based knowledge is the only form of knowledge that we can “know” or be conscious of. To imagine is to *play* with the images constructed by generic maps.

Asma proposes to argue that “the imagination is not information processing” and that “an algorithmic approach fails to grasp the emotional and bodily basis of imagination” (5). While I agree that our brains are not computers, I believe that substituting the concept of the algorithm for the concept of the Genre ties up some of these loose ends with which Asma takes issue. As we have already discussed, Genre *is* about emotion, and it is linked to bodily processes as described by Damasio. Genre offers the much-needed plasticity which all computer analogies lack. Equally, there is not “spontaneous” creativity, all creativity is goal-bound, and all creativity is prompted by generic cues, expectations, and conventions – in just the same way that all images created in the brain are shaped by its generic structures. The more that we understand the goals of our imagining (their genre), the better equipped we are to be creative (to imagine). Think of Shakespeare; he took stories already told, well-known genres, and he used them as the structure for his imagining. He imagined new conclusions, new motives, new combinations. His imagining was not “unfettered”. “The imagination” is firmly rooted in our categories; our genres; our maps. Genre enables imagining to take place – it provides the structures from which we create and combine.

Imagining is, essentially, “as-if”-ing. When we imagine, we perform a variety of tasks dependent on the goal and context. We combine and synthesise. We edit and extract. We construct and embellish. When we do imagining, we are creating with generic “materials” and processes. Imagination enables us to act-out or try-out different versions of experience, different metaphors, different stories. We practice, rehearse, and play with them “in our heads”. Two researchers recently proposed precisely this premise. In their 2021 paper “Prospecting performance: Rehearsal and the Nature of Imagination”, Shaun Gallagher and Zuzanna Rucińska conceptualise imagination as *mental rehearsal*. They recognise that imagining enables us to “act-

out” experiences without *physically* acting them out, suggesting that “this idea of mental rehearsal involves what cognitive scientists call motor imagery and relates to various kinds of performance” and that by investigating how we achieve such a feat enables us to develop an “embodied and enactive” account of imagination. Thus, in common with all of the processes that have been discussed so far, we *do* imagining, to imagine is a verb, an *action*. Interestingly, the conceptualisation of imagination as mental rehearsal corresponds perhaps most intuitively to our common-sense view of imagining, our linguistic reference to it, and, once again, it brings us back to our Genre concept and its performative notions.

In modern times, incredible progress has been made in attempts to determine the brain-basis of imagination. Neuroscientists at University College London, Nadine Dijkstra and Stephen Fleming, explain that “in order to function in complex environments, humans have evolved to move beyond stimulus-triggered responses to guide behaviour via offline simulations, such as imagination and planning”, “allowing for a vast increase in cognitive sophistication” (2021). A less recent but still relevant proposal for the physiological basis of this feat takes the form of *Mental Synthesis Theory* (MST). MST can be reduced to the idea that multiple independent neuronal ensembles synchronise to form unified consciously imagined constructions (ensembles would be termed genres or maps under SoCo). Andrey Vyshedskiy describes mental synthesis as “likely a uniquely human faculty... responsible for so many of the uniquely human traits, such as mental planning, modeling and engineering”, which enables the purposeful and deliberate creation and inspection of a seemingly endless array of *novel* images. Vyshedskiy extended the commonly accepted Hebbian principle that “neurons that fire together wire together” by proposing that in order “to account for the limitless human imagination, the binding-by-synchrony hypothesis would need ...to include the phenomenon of mental synthesis whereby the prefrontal cortex actively and intentionally synchronizes independent neuronal ensembles into one morphed image”. Thus, we are able to perceive multiple disparate objects as one unified construct. Vyshedskiy believes that by investigating further the neurological mechanism of mental synthesis insights will be gained about how this ability evolved and, consequently, about human evolution in general and the evolution of language specifically.

MST complements SoCo and the new conceptualisation of genres in several ways. Timing is key in the synthesis process because it is key in all performative and constructive processes. We have all experienced a poorly-timed joke. In order to synthesise, the ensembles and their signals must *synchronise*. However, different signals come from different parts of the brain and body and so must travel varying distances. The performance must be timed according to the varied length of connections in order to achieve the unified image. An important factor in this process is a type of cell called a *glial* cell. In order for the connections to conduct signals with the correct velocity, glial cells wrap an insulating substance called myelin around the connections in order to affect their speed according to the distance that the signals must travel. Glia will be discussed further later. When it comes to interpreting generic signals, we must infer the *ground* which they cover and the conceptual parameters which they communicate. This similarity begs the question of what force or mechanism coordinates such simultaneous activation and thus unified perception. The organisational process which dictates conceptual plotting and dramatic timing is Genre. To achieve synthesis – to imagine – the brain must send signals to multiple

ensembles to activate them in unison. The process is reminiscent of the generic cues and signals which we interpret when we watch a play or read a book. In both cases, what emerges is a composite, unified image. Overall, mental synthesis theory is helpful but the specification of locales for such synthesis muddies its application, particularly due to research about the imagining which takes place during dreams confirming that different brain regions are involved from conscious imagining. The useful element regards the *synthesis* which takes place. Furthermore, I would add that not all imagining or synthesising is purposeful or deliberate; it can be describe more fittingly as *functional* or *responsive*.

In a more recent study (2021), Joseph Kable and his team confirmed that the Default Mode Network (DMN) enables us to imagine future events. Furthermore, they established two “sub-networks” of the DMN which operate simultaneously in order to achieve this feat. One network constructs the future event and the other evaluates the event. The researchers argue that these findings provide “strong evidence for a neurocognitive dissociation between (1) the construction of novel, imagined events from individual components from memory and (2) the evaluation of these constructed events as desirable or undesirable”. However, when considered in combination with hypotheses such as those proposed by MST, property-based and use-dependent cellular and body memory research, and Damasio’s SMH, it becomes clear that such an ensemble as creating and evaluating cannot be separated, and the various ensembles from which they emerge cannot be “dissociated” unless as a result of injury or disorder. But, Kable et al do emphasise the two crucial elements of the imaginative process; creating and evaluating (“vividness” and “valence” as outlined above). And so, when we are imagining, we could say that our brains are asking (and/or answering) the questions of “how much?” and “what *kind*?” Crucially, if our imagination shuts down – when we feel unsafe, our mind cannot *play* – then we cannot imagine the future or make goals. Without imagination we cannot play, and thus we cannot create or evaluate.

Because we can remember genres, we can *choose* between different ones to utilise in our imagining. Damasio recognises that “we can, more or less deliberately, more or less automatically, review mentally the images which represent different options of action, different scenarios, different outcomes of action. We can pick and choose the most appropriate and reject the bad ones. Images also allow us to invent new actions to be applied to novel situations and to construct plans for future actions – the ability to transform and combine images of actions and scenarios is the wellspring of creativity” (24). So, our images and the maps which allow us to construct and reconstruct them are anything but static, rigid, and algorithmic. In fact, our maps enable us to create and recreate and choose and manipulate and combine. Without any conventions or past experience of using our maps and constructing images, we would not be able to transform them for novel use. There is a clear comparison here with Shakespeare’s experimental use of Genre and its conventions. When approaching his source materials, Shakespeare chose different elements and discarded others, he manipulated the outcomes of existing scenarios to create more appropriate or effective results. To return to King Lear, Shakespeare’s decision to kill poor Cordelia was not warranted by the map of previous tradition – in no source did she die – but what was created was a heightened tragic effect. Time and time again, Shakespeare transforms generic

convention to create novel dramatic situations, much in the same way that we experiment imaginatively during our engagement with the world.

Gallagher and Rucińska suggest that future research might attempt to answer how imagining can *surprise* us, or in other words, how it can create new meaning. The answer is simple; every instance of Genre is unique. Though it might be true that much of our everyday imagining straddles a similar vein, each instantiation will be at least subtly different, and depending on what we choose to imagine about, certainly we can construct innovative and unanticipated instantiations. Furthermore, because imagining is a form of “as-if-ing”, which enables us to create new meaning, imagination is a process disposed naturally to creation of new meaning. The “as-if” quality of imagining is made clear by our capacity to recreate in our imagination mental states and experiences that we are not actually experiencing and may never have experienced. All that is required for such work is that the individual has encountered *the concept* of the experience before. The more that we engage with the imaginative process in a curious and purposeful way, the more likely we are to surprise ourselves, and do so continuously as we go on imagining about the world. Such individuals are usually called great thinkers.

An important feature of imagining, and a feature highly likely involved in the craft of Shakespeare’s plays, is that we engage in constant trial-and-error. Play is, indeed, the thing. We try out new image manoeuvres and manipulation all the time. Asma notes that imagining is like a “generate-and-test method for getting maximum grip on one’s situation”, and he lists the following instances of this kind of experimentation: “My strange bait caught the fish, for example, so I learn. My joke got no laugh, so I learn. My improvised blade cannot cut this hide, so I learn. My offering to the gods was rejected, so I learn” (22). When we do trial-and-erroring, we are updating our genres so that we can make “better” or more useful images. And, much like in performance, practice seems to make perfect. When we imagine, we repeat or rehearse responses so that we can attempt to perfect them. We must also keep up with an ever-changing environment. Other animals are capable of repetition, but it seems that we are capable uniquely of such complex experimentation, combination, and change.

8. ATTACHMENT, CONFLICT, AND CONTROL

ATTACHMENT

I interpret *Attachment Theory (AT)* as a successful approach to identifying the different genres of early experience – the different types of response – in human development and behaviour. Genres of attachment have been called variously schemas, patterns, and styles. Bowlby describes AT as “a control theory of attachment behaviour” (180). Control theory relates to the development of models to control dynamic systems. He says that by “proposing the concept of a behavioural control system to account for the way a child maintains his relation to his attachment figure between certain limits of distance or accessibility, no more is done than to use these well-understood principles to account for a different form of homeostasis, namely one in which the set-limits concern the organism’s relation to features of the environment and in which the limits are maintained by behavioural rather than physiological means. The maintenance of a child within certain set limits in relation to an attachment figure is, of course, one example only of what can be called environmental homeostasis” (372). Bowlby connects the attachment process to homeostasis, a process explored already above. As with homeostasis, there are “certain limits of distance or accessibility” which shape creative development. Of course, this argument fits nicely with all that we have discussed so far. A term synonymous in many ways with a “set of limits” is “*Genre*”. “New concepts are needed” Bowlby expressed in 1969, and he put forward attachment as an “organisational concept”.

Clearly, when faced with the various choices – pattern, schema, style – I believe *genre* to be the superior and most fruitful term. There is considerable rationale for that belief. There are many ways in which Bowlby’s control theory of attachment behaviour is analogous with the process of *Genre* and its emergent stories. However, SoCo develops the evolutionary implications of *AT* into a theory of creativity. Not only does this involve *AT* in a theoretical framework with much

broader scope, but also, by borrowing the concept of Genre from literature in order to frame the theory, the term genre opens up an entirely new repertoire of information from which to approach experimental to research and, more importantly, self-directed investigations of attachment genres and their effects (or, I should say, *affects*). Conceptualising attachment schemas as genres offers a new vocabulary and approach which enable an *accessible* route for making positive change – or simply for getting to know better the individual “self” and the “selves” of others. We can use this model for creating understanding, for gaining generic competence, and thus engaging more successfully in the social world. By conceptualising attachment patterns or schemas as genres they become at once more accessible and more fluid, more creative, more ambiguous. Bowlby recognises that “whenever several different sorts of behaviour commonly have the same consequence (or at least contribute to the same consequence) they are usually gathered into a category and labelled by reference to that consequence” (182). Attachment patterns are gathered into types based on experiences and subsequently predicted outcomes. Categories or genres are about predicted outcomes, their function is to cue expectations. The way that we predict outcomes or the way that “behavioural control systems” work is by co-constructing maps which we utilise for rapid and appropriate (synchronised) regulation of social interaction. We have looked already at the similarities between maps and genres but here it is worth linking the idea of maps or genres with Bowlby’s conceptualisation of schema, proximity, and specification.

“Once the concept of a behavioural control system has been grasped” Bowlby suggests, “it will be realised that the particular forms of behaviour that are employed to maintain the organism within whatever limits are set are of secondary importance, merely alternative means towards a specified end. Whether a child moves towards ... by running, walking, crawling, shuffling ... is of very little consequence compared to the set-goal of ... locomotion, namely proximity” (372-373) to the primary social connection. In other words, the system does not account for specific details of ensuing action but instead is programmed to achieve set *goals*. As with works of literature, each *instance* of behaviour reflects a means to achieving a generic goal; it is a *type* of behaviour. Our focus must address the organising principle of the goal: the *type* of behaviour. The means by which goals can be achieved are seemingly infinite in their variety. This characteristic of the attachment behavioural system – or Genre – enables us to achieve the same effect or goal in a variety of ways, reminiscent of Shakespeare’s schooling which taught him to express an idea in as many ways as possible and his literary tendencies wherein he tells an old story in the *best* way. Adult attachment behaviour must be viewed thus as a matter of translated “means” or techniques – essentially, an expansion of the choices that we make – rather than the set goal. Our maps are intricate hierarchies of generic information shaped, in the first instance, by our very first social interactions. We keep the initial gist or goal with us throughout our lives. That goal is proximity or *grouping*. The first “spatial relationship” (Bowlby, 237) with which we engage and to which we seek proximity creates our first conscious map. Bowlby explains that individual behaviour is of little concern and instead the general goal of attachment is to be addressed. Similarly, the individual work of literature offers little without the shared understanding and memory of Genre. And most crucially, consciousness must be emergent from more than the sum of the brain’s parts based on generic structures which produce a seemingly infinite variety of unique instantiations.

Another pleasing analogy can be drawn from Bowlby's assertion that "in order for a control system to perform its function effectively it must be equipped with sensors to keep it informed of relevant events, and these events it must continuously monitor and appraise" (373). Naturally, sensors must be *cued*. Again, we are reminded of Genre. The successful generic interaction requires that we sense and respond to generic cues. In order to develop attachment behaviour, we sense and response to the cues from our social world. As pressed throughout this book, each experience is individual and its combination of instantiations any of a seemingly infinite variety. Thus, the generic framework which is built will be unique but because it is co-constructed it will be in many ways "the same" as other individuals. From our first experiences we start to build our hierarchical structures of value and meaning which will wax and wane throughout our lives in lesser or more creative ways. The initial generic foundations lay ground for our expectations of life. Genre cues our expectations – and our expectations can be met or not met. We can have conflicting expectations. A therapist once told a teenage me that I had based my life upon pillars of negative expectations and so thwarted any good which might come my way from time to time. It was a difficult pill to swallow but it is also the most profoundly important story that I have ever been told about myself. Looking at my life *this way* was empowering and tackling change felt achievable. Notice in this example that positivity challenged my negative expectations and threatened, quite literally, to destroy the foundations on which I had built my entire self and understanding of the world. There are many notable examples of such patterns in Shakespeare's characters. Iago's come to mind most prominently. The villain of *Othello* does not see himself as a villain. In fact, all of his behaviours operate to maintain and justify his generic codes of honour and service. Bowlby emphasises the significance of a secure base from which to base generic development and secure social bonds. It can be said with some certainty that Iago built his narratives on an *insecure* base. In SoCo, the emphasis on a secure base translates to a proposition of *an innate need for Genre* – for relations and the boundaries and stories about the point of interaction which emerge. Again, Bowlby's idea that "certain limits of distance or accessibility" (proximity – categorisation) leads us to believe that certain *types* of response informed by the first social interactions set the parameters for all future conceptualisation. Our early social interaction shapes the genre of our life, which goes on to shape all of our future social interaction; a *strange loop*.

Because our initial goal is proximity, we base most of this work on a core metaphor "toward-away" which works perfectly well with our map metaphor, too. Extensions of the proximity metaphor can be seen in "hot-cold" and "in-out", too but they may also class as their own separate categories, notwithstanding. It would seem that by this point in evolution the categories are mixed enough to be classed as extensions of one another. All of the instances evoke *direction*, and in fact are directive words. We use this extended proximity metaphor for all sorts of concepts: moods or demeanors are classed as "distant", or "forward", "hot", "cold", "introverted", "extroverted"; often we conceptualise love as a "journey", we might think that someone has "the key to our heart", we "fall in" love (and "out" again), we "come", we can feel "led on"; the phrase "I don't know whether I'm coming or going" is a very illustrative example, too.

SoCo posits that all of types of experience – including attachment experiences – emerge somewhere along a generic spectrum. The spectrum is a

spectrum of spectrums, a system of systems. Bowlby explains that while the psychoanalytic approach works “from an end-product backwards”, what is attempted by his theory of attachment is “in many respects ... the opposite”. Attachment theory attempts “to describe certain early phases of personality functioning and, from them, to extrapolate forwards”. And finally, “in particular”, he says, the aim of attachment theory “is to describe certain patterns of response that occur regularly in early childhood and, thence, to trace out how similar patterns of response are to be discerned in the functioning of later personality” (4). But, while Bowlby’s claim that this change in perspective is “radical” may be correct, new perspective still fails to account for the fluid dynamic and the emergent properties of the attachment process. The perspective which we must adopt is one which encapsulates and facilitates both “backwards” and “forwards” work. The new conceptualisation of Genre fulfils this criterion. Genre entails generic tradition or lineage but also generic potential – a shaping of the future. The concept of genre offers a hinge between the two approaches: working from an end-product backwards and or elaborating future predictions based on generic experience. Genre embodies the feedback loop. When thinking about this quality of Genre in terms of literature, the end product becomes the text. We must investigate the end product by its features and structure – its genre. The end product of the psychological Genre process is the self – personality.

Bowlby explains that the model he presents “derives from object-relations theory” and thus “gives as much attention to the conditions that terminate an act as to those that initiate one” (20). We are reminded, perhaps, of Shakespeare’s engagement with Genre. Shakespeare wrote each of his plays with a keen sense of the generic traditions which informed them. Now, he may be found both employing and also omitting different aspects of different genres on any number of occasions but he is most certainly *aware* of the generic implications of his work. It is the *interaction* of these choices which interests him. It is the nuance to be found almost everywhere in life which blurs the boundaries that we create so obsessively and rely upon so profoundly. Bowlby stresses that “it must be emphasised that in all higher species, and not in man alone, instinctive behaviour is not stereotyped movement but an idiosyncratic performance by a particular individual in a particular environment – yet a performance that nonetheless follows some recognisable pattern and that in a majority of cases leads to some predictable result of benefit to individual or species” (39). Again, what is required is a concept which embodies both individual difference and general predictability. To assign a genre to a performance comes naturally to us and when we conceptualise behaviour as action or story we can get to the “root” of our choices. Bowlby outlines conditions for attachment as follows: “(i) the sensitivity of [a] figure in responding to the baby’s signals, and (ii) the amount and nature of interaction between the couple” (332). In other words, generic development depends on the type and consistency (frequent experience) of the relationship. As we grow, so do our generic referents.

One of Bowlby’s keenest insights was about the evolutionary function of sociality. He observed that attachment behaviour is common to lots of mammals, and that developing maps to deal with social interaction serves the evolutionary function of *enhancing the likelihood of survival*. “The attachment behavior system is an important concept” says Social Psychologist R. Chris Fraley (2018), “because it provides the conceptual linkage between ethological models of human development and modern theories on emotion regulation and personality. “According to Bowlby,”

he clarifies, “the attachment system essentially “asks” the following fundamental question: Is the attachment figure nearby, accessible, and attentive?”

The process of attachment feedback, Bowlby explains,

is simply a process whereby the actual effects of performance are continuously reported back to a central regulating apparatus where they are compared with whatever initial instruction ... given; ... further action is then determined by the results of this comparison and the effects of its performance are thus brought ever closer to the initial instruction. Like an athlete intent on running a four-minute mile who trains with stopwatch in hand to check his time round each lap, the [organism] is constantly checking the effects of its own performance and basing its further actions on the extent to which these effects conform with instruction.

(41-42).

Various implications can be ascertained from Bowlby’s account. Primarily, feedback is a process about regulating performance based on experience of social response. Our expectations are shaped by early instructions, usually from the primary caregiver(s), and they go on to shape in turn our future instructions and behaviour. It should be the perfect feedback loop – we become what our parents believe us to be, how they relate to us, and we “as-if” we were *them* until we are *us*. Object relation *is* subject relation. Our bonds are reflected in our behaviour. Unfortunately, there is a glitch: children who are raised in traumatic or insecure environments must carry the cross. And, as Cozolino reminds us, choosing to rebel can have real consequences in the social realm.

To complete any picture of a child’s attachment, Bowlby says that “it would, of course, be necessary also to construct a complementary profile of how the child’s mother behaves, including both how she responds to his attachment behaviour in each of a comparable series of situations and how and when she herself initiates interaction” (335). Genre requires interaction – genres are about relationships, between people, between organism and self, between all “objects”. Genres denote the pattern of interaction of a particular relationship, be it a social relationship or a literary association. Of course, the individual interacts with other individuals and with the SoCo and their own consciousness. It is a dynamical system of systems, an intricate plot of relationships, of *kinds* of relating/responding/feedbacking/infering meaning/communicating. Such processes are by nature, Bowlby suggests, “circular processes with far-reaching effects” (343). As a child grows and their perceptual range expands, Bowlby notes that “individual variation, already great, becomes even greater” (207). What he implies here is that increased sociality and thus increased generic competence and its corresponding contextual, historical, and personal complexity, increases our individual *uniqueness*, though, at first consideration, this order of things sounds paradoxical.

Bowlby proposed the view that the evolutionary function of attachment behaviour is “protection from predators” (224) and thus *survival*. Well, if we think about SCOs, the function of their sociality is strength... strength in numbers, survival, protection. Attachment and relationships are about surviving, coping, and hopefully,

flourishing. *Co-habitation and social control*. The same goes for children. Any behavioural affects are subsequent. For instance, thumb-sucking is at once a form of contracting into oneself and also an expansion of self into a pseudo-social relationship, which according to evolutionary experience heightens the likelihood of survival. But primarily, life is about protection – survival – at all costs. Plasticity is key to the process. We begin by learning “the gist of things” and pick up or create the rest through imitation and elaboration. Genre is about surviving at all costs, too. Despite all of their changes and extensions and digressions, literary genres go on surviving anyway and retain their semblance of sameness. Genres may fall out of common usage from time to time but they are revivable when resurged, and they remain accessible for recollection.

Unfortunately, the attachment process still must take place somehow even in unsafe or uncertain environments. It seems that the process is intensified a great deal, actually, as a result of such experience. In support of this view, Bowlby recounts several experiments with animals, including A. E. Fisher’s research with puppies (1955) and Harry Harlow’s research with rhesus monkeys (1959), whose results showed that animals will form attachment bonds even through insecure or disorganised relationships and in fact furthermore that their attachment behaviour *intensifies* in such situations. Bowlby notes that puppies who were punished regularly or instead if they faced constant uncertainty about the nature of their treatment “actually spent more time with [the researcher] than did control puppies whose approaches had been rewarded with uniform petting and kindness” (213) and that “Harlow found that an infant monkey clings the more intensely in the face of punishment” (215). Paradoxically - and tragically – poor-treatment, uncertain safety, abuse, neglect, or any kind of traumatic or confusing environment intensifies the attachment process. While they appear paradoxical, Bowlby suggests that such circumstances are the “inevitable result of attachment behaviour’s being elicited by anything alarming” (216) and that the finding is “compatible with the view that the function of attachment behaviour is protection from predators” (226-227). So, once we understand the function of attachment behaviour which is protection – *conservation*, responses to insecure circumstances *make more sense*. We get attached to whatever we are exposed to, what we become accustomed to. The social interaction that we are offered shapes our expectations of what life will offer us “in general”.

Obviously, the most desirable situation in the first instance is a secure base from which a child can construct its “self”. But, in order to brighten the perspective for individuals who are not offered a secure base, we should remember that genres shaped by attachment are not the be-all and end-all of everything. Cozolino suggests that “earned autonomy appears capable of interrupting the transmission of negative attachment patterns from one generation to the next” (410) and that “this “learning ability” may be part of the explanation of why some parents who experienced negative childhood experiences are able to provide a safe haven for their children”. “Their earned autonomy”, he states, “is convincing evidence of ongoing neural plasticity and the repair of insecure attachment later in life” (418). So, not only is there hope for changing the generic trajectory of experience but doing so actually re-shapes the brain.

Because of the resulting nuance which emerges from the attachment process, each individual must be approached as a unique combinatorial, emergent, and ever-developing product of the SoCo in which they engage but such an approach must be informed, as Karen Horney recognised, by the idea that there are certain “types” or genres of behaviour. “In each of these types”, Horney suggests, “we shall find that the basic attitude toward others has created, or at least fostered, the growth of certain needs, qualities, sensitivities, inhibitions, anxieties, and, last but not least, a particular set of values” (1945, 49). It is only “by examining first the functions and structure of a set of attitudes, reactions, beliefs, and so on in types where they are comparatively obvious”, Horney concludes, that it is possible to discover or “to recognise similar combinations in cases where they appear in somewhat hazy and confused form” (49). Put more simply, once we have interpreted the genre we can go on to recognise its various implications, shades, affects, paradoxes, subtle gestures, and so on. When we understand the genre, we can understand the person. The key aim of attachment is, as viewed through the SoCo lens, *generic competence*. In other words, the key aim of attachment is understanding life and ways of dealing with it.

Genre is an organisational concept *for* organisational concepts. Bowlby explains that “by proposing that child’s attachment behaviour is controlled by a behavioural system conceived as an organisation existing within the child, attention shifts from the behaviour itself to the organisation that controls it” (373). Translated through the generic lens, Bowlby’s point would read as follows: by proposing that the performance of the organism is controlled by *Genre*, conceived as an organisational system within the organism, co-constructed through the relationships and interactions of the organism with its social relatives, attention shifts from the *performance itself* to the *genre* which controls it. Thus, when we attempt to understand a person’s psychology, or, indeed, one of Shakespeare’s dramas, *we must focus our attention on the generic engagement at play*.

CONFLICT

The premise that personal psychology emerges from social interaction demands a caveat. Social interaction implies some kind of *conflict*, broadly conceptualised. Boundaries emerge from interaction creating conflicting perspectives. Often, compromise is required when such conflicts and boundaries arise. Furthermore, when we find conflict there must also be *Genre* – the boundaries created at the point of interaction (the basic conflict and the basis for attachment proper).

Many of the theorists cited in this thesis support the idea that all *stories* -or at least all “good” stories – involve conflict. Of course, we have already surveyed the key role of stories in our methods of conceptualisation. Cozolino says the following about our engagement with stories:

all stories contain trouble, and it is in this fact that their essential evolutionary value is contained. Narratives, just like our autonomic nervous systems at a more primitive level, have been shaped around avoiding and getting out of trouble. Without conflicts and resolutions, good and bad, a story seems pointless... By identifying with the heroes in stories, movies, and folklore, we enter into the conflict with them, struggle with different feelings, and learn about ourselves.

(2006, 392)

Jonathan Gottschall agrees that story depends on conflict. However, he suggests that “regardless of genre, if there is no knotty problem, there is no story” (49). But evidently, Genre is implicated inherently whenever we speak of conflict, and certainly story cannot emerge without Genre. Conflict implies at least two distinctive genres, if not more. Conflict always concerns Genre. Conflict is an inherent emergent property of social interaction – which itself cannot be achieved without using Genre to communicate. Gottschall states that “the key ingredient of story” is “the plot contrivance of trouble” (51). But the key ingredient of story – the structure which makes story creation and interpretation possible – is Genre. We know that it is troubling that Hamlet hesitates to kill Claudius because he is acting against the generic type of the revenge hero – he is acting against generic conventions and expectations. We know that the conflict will come to a head because we are watching a tragedy. But we can only appreciate the generic nuance of Hamlet’s character when we acknowledge the different variants of a similar type which have preceded him: when we acknowledge the generic lineages which inform the play. In the same way, we enjoy individuals who go against type in the social realm. We enjoy conflicting types. Gottschall recognises our attraction to stories about conflict. But, all stories are about conflict. At the very least, stories are “about” the conflict between the individual and the SoCo, and more often they portray also conflicts between different ideologies and concepts within the individual.

In the attachment process, conflict and compromise are constant tenets – of both secure *and* insecure attachment. It is not just insecure or disorganised interactional relationships which involve conflict. “In a happy partnership there is constant give and take” Bowlby concurs, and he suggests that even in secure attachment relationships “there is likely also to be constant minor conflict until such time as set-goals are aligned” (355). Of course, our set-goals never align *perfectly*. There is always give and take between our own specifically constructed set of goals and values and the goals and values of the SoCo at large, without even considering the mass of micro-conflicts which emerge from the unique attachment partnership. The attachment process is one of “getting used to” your specific conflict-compromise combination.

Horney sees conflict as playing a key role in psychological development. In her work *Our Inner Conflicts*, she posits that “trends” – called “genres” by SoCo, or “styles”, “schemas”, or “patterns” in attachment theory – are indicative of conflicts. Horney’s work focuses on “neurotic” persons but she admits that “at one time or another our wishes, our interests, our convictions are bound to collide with those of others around us. And just as such clashes between ourselves and our environment are a commonplace, so, too, conflicts within ourselves are an integral part of human

life” (23). Horney recognises that the human prerogative and “burden” is that we are able to exert choice and in modern civilisation the choices available to us are staggering in complexity and variation. Of course, the masses of options we now have to choose between offer us a wide variety of paths to take but also they open up many more opportunities for conflict. In day-to-day life we have to make copious amounts of decisions about all sorts of things – consciously or otherwise. In most cases, we deal with conflict unconsciously. This mode of operation is extremely useful but also often leads to most people being generally unaware of their conflicts.

Horney says that the “basic conflict” that we are faced with is to choose “between the attitudes of ‘moving toward,’ ‘moving against,’ and ‘moving away from’ people” (3). Of course, Horney’s theory fits very nicely with attachment theory and SoCo in that it states the basic conflict as involving generic types of response. The securely attached individual is likely to have developed a balanced approach to each of these options and will be able to choose the most appropriate options on an ad hoc basis. The insecurely attached individual will have an exaggerated tendency to one of these “trends” or “genres”.

Our basic conflict is social initially. But, as we develop various conflicts emerge within our construction of “self” and our subsequent attitudes to our self and behaviours. Of course, what this observation implies is that conflict is a part of the very structure of ourselves and the way that Shakespeare’s characters convey consciousness makes this clear. The greater the disparity and discord incurred by any particular conflict, the greater an effect it will have on our self-image, our system of values, and our way of approaching the world. Horney agrees that first conflict “starts with our relation to others” but in time comes to affect the entire personality.

Conflict stems largely from our interaction with the *codes* that we learn as communicated by our SoCo. Bernard J Paris links the idea of social codes with Horney’s thesis about inner conflicts in his work *Bargains with Fate* in which applies Horneyan analysis to Shakespeare’s major tragic characters. The title of the book, he explains, “derives from [the] thesis that the principal characters in Shakespeare’s major tragedies are in a state of psychological crisis as a result of the breakdown of their bargains with fate” (xix). He defines a “bargain with fate” as a “defensive strategy” which people “employ to cope with an adverse environment” (xx). However, as noted earlier, it is my view that such strategies are borne not just of traumatic or “tragic” environments and characters but of all experience. We create our own strategic approach to life based on our unique combination of experiences – conflictual or otherwise. Conflict, “bargains”, and “strategies” are not limited to adverse experience but are an inevitable emergent property of engaging with the SoCo and its codes.

An individual’s conflicts and subsequent bargains can be understood by analysing their engagement with the genres contained in the SoCo and the personal genre that they have co-created. Our strategic style denotes our expectations of others and of “the way things are” in the world. For instance, a popular bargain which marries quite harmoniously with the SoCo at large goes something like this: “If I am good to others, they will be good to me”. When such expectations are not met – which is often the case – conflict emerges. Such bargains and the expectations

which emerge from them are not unfounded. Such a code of expectation is inherent within most religions and moral values. But, of course, the codes are “made up” – essentially. Most people agree to adhere to codes which the SoCo generally promotes. But, there are no physical laws which prescribe such bargains. We learn our codes socially. Paris suggests that such bargains allow us to feel as though “we can control fate by living up to presumed dictates” and we believe that “if we think, feel, and behave” accordingly, “we receive our just deserts, whatever we may think they are” (2). Whether or not we choose to embrace or reject a certain code depends on our specific engagement with the SoCo – with the socially accepted and shared repertoire of genres and their generic codes. Accordingly, Paris notes that the characters of Shakespeare’s plays “are all members of the same culture” within their respective play-worlds, “but they embrace different codes because they have different character structures” (32). They each respond to the same codes but they do so with individual nuance, utilizing them in unique ways to justify their specific behaviours and values.

Shakespeare comments on the contradictory nature of social codes and people’s engagement with them. Regularly, he takes a contemporary issue and considers and conveys the various types of response to it. The overriding answer that we get from the questions asked by Shakespeare’s plays and characters about different social codes is: “it depends who you ask”. An individual’s handling of social codes depends crucially on their unique perspective. The ways in which characters operate within social codes offers bountiful information about their generic type; their character structure. For instance, based on Iago’s world-view, his actions are justified. His is a warped Christian view. He believes in loyalty and duty and service but his engagement with the world has shown this code to be worthless and so he must adapt. Instead he adopts the code of manly honour and personal ambition. Such a code is not welcome in the Christian code of loyalty and service. However, his definitive and prejudicial views about women and about Othello because of his race remind us again of not-so-holy patriarchal Christian “values”. In a sense he sees himself as God, doling out the punishments to those who have betrayed the code of loyalty. At the same time, he becomes the white devil – more evil and cunning, in fact, than he. Essentially, he has betrayed his own code by seeking advancement and personal ambitions. But, after working hard and loyally for years as Othello’s aide, to him the world has shown that the code of loyalty does not work and that in actuality every man is out for himself and those who are loyal are foolish. Obviously, even from such a short analysis, we can glean that Shakespeare’s aim was to create complex and intricate – “real” – persons within his plays, whose personalities engage with general social codes by all means not in a “generalised” way but in highly nuanced, conflicted, contradictory, and unique ways. Just like us.

Hence, conflict emerges from the interaction between unique individuals and the SoCo. Paris seems to suggest that only Shakespeare’s tragic characters deal with conflict. Conflict is about social identity – it is not the exclusive material of tragedy. To suggest that comedy does not contain conflict misses the “point” of comedy. Comedy as a genre is, along with its products – jokes; mishaps; confusions – based entirely on conflict. Comedy is generally about “getting it wrong”. But, in comedy conflict is resolved (be it for better or worse) and in tragedy it implodes, leaving every person involved at a loss. Nobody wins the fight in tragedy. In comedy conflict is resolved if only in an “unrealistic” way. Shakespeare in fact often uses

“unrealistic” tropes and devices to resolve comedies. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare inserts the bizarre deus ex machina of Hymen, the god of marriage, to bring the events of the play to a magical close. Comedy perhaps pokes fun at the idea of neat overarching solutions which solve everyone’s problems. In most of Shakespeare’s comedies, we are left feeling that the characters aren’t happy at all, actually. In tragedy, we see that certain results of conflict are tragic: when the “bad” codes defeat the “good”. In comedy, love and “good” wins. Gottschall may bandy about the term “regardless of genre” but it is clear that while all stories revolve around conflict, their resolutions differ. Comedy can be seen plainly as unique individuals coming out on top of the SoCo – they successfully change the codes of the SoCo. Tragedy is the failure to change the more questionable codes within the SoCo. Comedy is about overcoming conflict – tragedy is succumbing to it. In tragedy SoCo overtakes the individual whereas in comedy the individual manipulates and makes their mark on the SoCo. Genre is always about problems: Genre denotes the type of response to a conflict (interaction). Genre and conflict emerge simultaneously at the point of interaction and so conflict is inherent within any interaction between the individual and the soco, and beyond is inherent within the individual’s own generic framework which is socially constructed. If something can be compared it is about Genre, if something can be distinguished it is about Genre. Everything is in competition in the hierarchical spectrum of consciousness; there is always conflict. We are “made up” of our conflicts and the generic boundaries or perspectives which they create in conflict with the social world; and later within the self.

But, there is no reason to despair. Conflict is not only necessary but it is *good*. Conflict both implies and encourages *change*. Without conflict, there would be no progression. Without conflict, stories would be “pointless”. Stories are “about” the point of interaction wherein conflict is borne. The “point” of story is, then, to show the different perspectives created by the point of interaction. Shakespeare knew that to tell a story well you must “argue both sides” – to show the conflicting and contradictory perspectives of a certain interactive issue. Our conflicts communicate the structure of our self and our experience of life. In fact, conflict enables our reaches into higher consciousness. Scientists have already discovered that we engage in metacognition only when something conflicts with our conscious experience and expectations in some way. But, overall, History at large is a history of conflicts – wars; mistakes; obstacles; change – and human response to such conflicts. Our personal histories are histories of the conflicts that we have met with throughout our lives and the changes and achievements that we have made in response. The culmination, or the history of conflict, of the interaction between social and individual, is at the very core of who we are and enables us to understand and create new understanding. Conflict is perhaps the very essence of our nature. Genre is the inner process of negotiation between social and individual, both of great importance for progression and creative development, and it is what allows for such wondrous human creativity. Wilson says that “internal conflict is not a personal irregularity but a timeless human quality” (2014, 179). And the results of combining sets of experience is productive of new experience.

To get the most out of experience we must develop the capacity to *address* our specific conflicts. To do so requires generic competence. In order to tackle specific, individual problems, we need to attain a sense of our general approach to life. Subsequently, individual problems can be “figured out” because we understand

the underlying goals and values of our self-genre. Horney agrees that “if we want to see how conflicts develop, we must ... take a panoramic view” of the personality type, and suggests that “though we lose sight for a while of details we shall gain a clearer perspective” (42) of the individual’s specific strategies and ensuing conflicts. So essentially, singular conflicts can direct us to the root of their conception (our genre) but it is only by considering the genre as a whole that we can find prompts for discrete conflict resolution. In other words, we cannot expect to iron out the details of our conflicts without first constructing an idea of “the big picture”. “It is the *kind* of reaction” (my italics) Horney clarifies, “that indicates what has to be worked through” before any individual problem can be addressed. Our kind of response is our genre; our conventional reaction to problems. Much as literary genre provides an indication of how to proceed with any particular text, Horney suggests that “a thorough comprehension” of our general values “will provide an indication of how to proceed in any particular instance” (233) of psychological conflict.

Once we have assessed our generic types of response we all have the capacity to make positive change. Our goal is not to remove the potential for conflict in our lives. As we have considered already, removing conflict removes the “point” of life. Furthermore, it would be impossible. Instead, we need to try to change our generic structure. All stories have conflicts but they are dealt with differently depending on the genre of the story. So, we can think about changing our “tragic” perspective to a “comic” one. Such a task is not simple, and does not mean simply that we start to find all of life’s problems hilariously funny. Of course, it is about gaining control over the conflicts in our life, instead. If we see life as a story or a performance, our perspective – our genre – becomes available for development and change. It is something which we can craft and develop, “work on”, “get better at”, “see differently”.

Primarily, we do such work by *asking questions*. To know ourselves we must ask ourselves tough questions about life and once we figure out our answers we can make movements to change them if they are not what we expected or how we want to live. Questions reveal the contradictions and conflicts between our own values and behaviour. The reason that Shakespeare’s plays are so enduring is that he shows us individuals in conflict over the principal values of life and their engagement with such values. By showing us characters who ask questions of others and themselves, we are forced to ask those same questions of ourselves, to survey our reactions to the behaviour of the persons of the plays and thus become more aware of our own values and conflicts. Horney acknowledges that “to experience conflicts knowingly, though it may be distressing, can be an invaluable asset” and she asserts that “the more we face our own conflicts and seek out our own solutions, the more inner freedom and strength we will gain” (27).

CONTROL

Ultimately, our happiness, social competence, and psychological “wellness” – as well as psychological and social turbulence – centres around the concept of *control*. We need to feel that we bear a reasonable level of control over our environment and our social relationships. When we feel “out of control” we resort to more or less desperate measures to assert control. To feel “in control” aligns with the concept of “security” in attachment theory and the genre of “comedy” in literature. A secure base means that we feel we have a reasonable amount of control in our social relationships and our world. In Shakespeare’s comedies, we see characters who exert control in their play-worlds by various means from gender-fluidity to social competence. To feel “out of control” aligns with the concepts of insecurity and disorganisation in attachment theory and the genre of tragedy in literature. An insecure or disorganised base makes us feel – it communicates to us and the world – that we have little control over the events and relationships in our life. In Shakespeare’s tragedies, we see the complete breakdown of control. The concepts of control and out of control align also with the processes understood as self-regulation and self-regulation failure by Roy F. Baumeister et al (1994), and drawn from the concept of homeostasis, which can function effectively or poorly.

Of course, “control” is a concept. It is symbolic. Control is about perception and regulation rather than “reality”. This observation does not sully the seriousness of the concept but reminds us that we are capable of change. Just because control is a matter of perception does not mean that any individual’s experience of feeling out of control is any less serious or “real” to them. As we know, perception shapes our reality. In fact, Cozolino explains that

the perception of control has been shown to reduce emotional arousal and stress. It is likely that cognitive processes involved in prediction and control activate frontal functioning and downregulate amygdala activation. In other words, thinking we have some control puts us in a state of mind that prepares us to think and activates prefrontal functioning, which reduces our emotionality.

(2010, 169)

Correspondingly, the perception of “out of control” has equally real and detrimental effects on our emotional function and our capacity to cope with stress.

During our early development, our perception is structured by finding out to what extent we can control our social environment – primarily, the responses and behaviour of others. Thus, we form a world-view based on whether or not we feel secure in or control over our relationships. If it turns out that very little control is maintained by the individual, subsequently they will seek alternative ways of gaining perceived control which may be a detriment to their conception of self and others. It is worth remembering that control is a very precarious thing in childhood. Children generally don’t have much control. But, if they have a secure base – relationships in which they can exert control but also learn to make reasonable compromises – they should develop a feeling of being in control of their life. An insecure base prompts, on the other hand, a perception of being *out of control*. If the child’s interactions produce little or negative response, the child will feel that they have little control over the events of their life and their self-esteem, confidence, and self-belief will be

diminished. Boundaries are defined and inferred – they do not simply “exist”. They are co-constructed. We learn the limits and boundaries of our capacity as a social being through our actions with others and if we perceive that we have no control over what goes on in our lives then we clutch desperately at opportunities to exert control.

Our main goal during childhood and beyond is to effect change in the behaviour of those around us. “To effect change in behaviour” offers a useful definition for “control”. If we feel that we cannot effect change in the behaviour of our social ties, our perception of life will be that we are “out of control”. Healthy development requires that we learn appropriate responses (environmentally and experientially dependent) - so a child who develops an insecure attachment pattern has done so perfectly reasonably in response to its environment (which must be in some way insecure, uncertain, or disorganised). That patterns of insecurity no longer serve in adulthood owes to their inappropriate nature in presumably now secure environments. Founded on the initial level of control perceived from the attachment relationship, we elaborate to create our “self”.

Our “self” is symbolically and incrementally inferred based on the feedback that we receive about our capacity for control during our early social interactions. This idea is supported by Bowlby’s discussion of the “oral symptoms” which emerge in the human infant. He explains that “by means of a symbolic substitution” oral symptoms such as thumb-sucking or over-eating may be regarded as “the equivalent of a relationship with a person; for him the part represents the whole”. He clarifies that such behaviour is not unusual but instead that

in work with human beings we are so accustomed to seeing one activity take the place of another by means of a symbolic equivalence between the two that it may be difficult to imagine that superficially similar substitutions may also occur at an infra-symbolic level. Here are two examples. A child in disgrace sucks his thumb; a child separated from his mother over-eats. In such situations it is possible to think of the thumb and food as being symbolic of mother as a whole or at least of nipple and milk” (218-219).

This symbolic behaviour is reminiscent not only of the work that we do with literary genre but furthermore it reflects our rhetorical tendencies. Such figures as metaphors and synecdoche rely entirely on symbolic substitution. Our symbolic behaviours and styles represent an attempt to recreate and reaffirm constantly the attachment style – our genre. Thus, the development of each of the senses can be viewed as symbolic. Each sense elaborates on the previous representation. The logical extensions of the initial premise of physiological functional categorisation are the development of categorical senses; the attachment relationship; and, finally, conceptualisation. Concepts are elaborations – they are symbolic. When we conceptualise we bring two or more “things” together to make something new – a symbol with which to express meaning. We build our world in this way: conceptually; symbolically. Such a theory explains how the “whole” of consciousness is more than the sum of its parts but equally that the whole can be understood by reference to individual parts only. We fill in the gaps based on the cues that we receive from our environment. In this respect, thumb-sucking is a method of “taking in”; conceiving. It is with good reason that Terrence Deacon names us “the symbolic species”. Thumb sucking recreates the attachment relationship – it stipulates a pseudo-relationship.

The child engages with the thumb “as-if” it is a person. Thumb-sucking is thus a method of self-soothing and one would expect an excess of such behaviour in stressful or insecure environments. Bowlby supports such an argument by recounting Anna Freud and Sophie Dann’s observations of children who spent time in concentration camps. Freud and Dann note that the children were all “inveterate thumbsuckers” and Bowlby explains that they “ascribe to the fact for all of them ‘the object world had proved disappointing’”. In other words, children who possess limited control over their environments seek control symbolically. A child’s relationship with their environment shapes their symbolic behaviour. So, if the world proves disappointing in terms of the child’s expectations – which are constantly updated throughout development – the child takes symbolic measures to have their expectations met. In an unsafe world, the child will find ways to self-soothe, self-gratify, self-protect, and to exert control over their experience.

Unfortunately, thumb-sucking is not the only symbolic representation of taking control as a result of insecurity. There are immeasurable ways in which the concept of “out of control” can translate into disorders or destructive behaviours which can impair the lives of those who develop such symbolic substitutions. According to Horney, “variations in the means of control are infinite” (1945, 64) and in response to an unsafe or inadequate social environment, individuals attempt to “take control” by more or less tragic means.

It is the unique combination of experience which makes a person what they *are*. But, I think that we all exist on a sort of spectrum of *sociation*. The spectrum ranges from dissociation to association with *sociation* falling somewhere in the middle. The spectrum of course changes as related to the SoCo. The measures on the spectrum are two-fold. The first measure rates the *amount* of sociation, in other words, it asks the question “how much?” The second measure categorises the *kind* of sociation experienced, be it good or bad (secure or insecure, comic or tragic), and so can be understood as asking the question: “what kind?” Thus, the spectrum would take note of the combination of the amount of sociation from lots to none and the kind of that sociation from good to bad. The resultant personality would fall somewhere along the spectrum of sociation, with highly-dissociated personalities at risk of disconnection from the SoCo and highly-associative personalities at risk of self-effacing disorders. Of course, these measures are relative to the specific circumstances of any given individual and there is nuanced variety in the combinatorial patterns which emerge from experience. But, the idea is that a *balanced* sociation would result not in identical personalities but a variety of successful combinations.

What kind: Good (secure) |-----| Bad (insecure/disorganised)

How much: Lots |-----| None

It would be tempting, for example, to predict that the combination of “bad” and “lots” might make for homicidal, whereas “bad” and “less” might make a lesser “evil” or different kind of psychological disorder. Psychosis would seem to accompany either combinatorial diagnosis of “bad” and “lots” or “bad” and “none”. We might expect in these instances high levels of dissociation, trouble socialising, extremely fragmented or underdeveloped sense of self, underregulated emotions, etc. A

remove from the SoCo. Or even enough to split the individual consciousness into different states which deal with intense emotions. In such compartmentalisation the process entails dissociating categories of experience. If we see “alters” or distinct “simultaneous psychological existences” (Janet), as *characters* instead – or roles, it may be more readily understood that we can and do perform various characters throughout “normal” or “neurotypical” or “sane” life. When we are performing one role we are absorbed in it completely and do not pay heed to other roles we might adopt in alternative circumstances. However, it seems with dissociation it is a matter of conscious awareness or memory being split between characters or roles. When one cannot understand the different performances as part of being a whole self. Clearly, what is lacking is the conceptualisation of one whole and overruling, contiguous, self. When the self is underdeveloped due to abuse or neglect, it would be expected that the various characters performed would not be conceivably reconciled.

But, most importantly, our position in the spectrum can be developed creatively. Unfortunately, we are vulnerable in the same respect to responding to our position destructively. It would seem that acts of social destruction would be more likely at the extremity of the dissociative pole. In order to reach a balanced sociation we must engage creatively with the SoCo. The truth is that things can go either way and are often partly good and partly bad. Experience can be constructive *and* destructive. For instance, love is both painful, dangerous and foolish yet also wonderful, magical, and transcendent. Most of life is *grey*. Interestingly, Shakespeare doesn’t stage the grey bits? We understand intuitively that he is filtering them, whereas in our reality we couldn’t cope if dramas were not punctuated by grey bits. We cannot live in a melodrama.

From this spectrum of sociation or responsiveness emerges a corresponding spectrum of *control*. It’s all part-and-parcel of the same process. Those of us who are lucky enough to have experienced a reasonable level of “control” or safety and security and a normative and responsive social environment do not need to exert control because we feel ourselves to have already a reasonable or adequate level of control. Actually, feeling you are *too* in control or completely out of control are two separate ends of a spectrum essentially neither of which are desirable. The ideal is a balanced sense of control. Typically, those on either end are more interesting, or so we tend to think. This tendency explains our thirst for gossip, the way that incongruency grabs our attention, the recently insatiable consumption of serial killer documentaries, and our love of Shakespeare’s villains. No one wants to see a character who is strictly true to type – they know the SoCo already, to a similar degree as the individual sat next to them. We like to watch people from different rungs on the spectrum because it offers us a new way to experience life – as the character perceives it. We see the world from their perspective. And, then, of course, we get to decide whose perspective we like best, whose we cannot condone, whose we cannot understand – or all of the above! We get to live vicariously as the main characters of stories different – or similar – to our own. Good stories will be a combination of different and similar, specific and general, local and global. A variety of generic competencies will find glimmering among this unique combination something which they can take with them. Like taking home pebbles from a beach. The collaborative conscious performance demanded of the interpreter-reader-audience produces the generic effects cued by the material. Whenever organisms engage in collaborative performance or synchronised action to produce an implicit

type of effect or response, they are engaging in a Genre-like process. The clever human part comes through sharing a *conscious* understanding with others that certain responses mean certain *extra* things as a form of social communication and control. For instance, a well-organised and intimidatingly-timed tribe dancing with perfect synchronicity might suggest the gist *intelligent and dangerous predator*. Another instance is the genre *female*, which might have been founded upon the facts of childbirth – women have children. Such logic may have been extended to include “therefore stays safe at ‘home’”, and subsequently, “and thus the males go to ‘work’ hunting fighting and manly things”. Obviously, the concepts of “home” and “work” have their own generic trajectories which developed separately while interacting with other genres. These genres evolve together in an interactive web with new genres evolving at various times and joining the web. That web is what I call the SoCo. The SoCo follows on from the natural process of evolution but only because we were able to strange loop ourselves into social and then individual consciousness.

The concepts of *control* and *out of control* align also with the processes understood as self-regulation and self-regulation failure by Roy F. Baumeister et al (1994). We can achieve self-regulation only after we have mastered social regulation or *sociation*. Indeed, if an individual’s education in social regulation is limited – if they have not been provided with and supported through adequate learning experience about how to interact with others – their self-regulatory skills will present in a similarly limited capacity. Social- and self-regulation both are achieved by identical means: functional categorisation. Baumeister and his colleagues define self-regulation as “any effort by a human being to alter its own responses”, performances which might include actions, feelings, desires, and thoughts. They suggest that self-regulation begins with competition between multiple simultaneously occurring physiological processes. This observation could be shortened to read as follows: self-regulation emerges from conflict. With this snappier observation, a syllogism can be constructed as follows:

Self-regulation emerges from conflict.
Conflict infers Genre.
Self-regulation emerges from Genre.

Furthermore, as Baumeister et al point out helpfully, in order achieve self-regulation, “it is also necessary to have some concept of a hierarchy among these multiple processes... Self-regulation involves higher processes overriding lower processes; when the reverse happens, it is a failure of self-regulation” (8). Now, the three psychologists use the phrase “understand” instead of “achieve”, to be exact. However, I want to suggest that the utilisation of a hierarchical conceptual system does not constitute not simply a method of understanding self-regulation but instead it is our method of *achieving* it. It is not the mind or brain which tells the body the value of our copious physiological processes. Our conceptual capacity predates conscious conceptualisation by far. We can see just how wrong it can go when “left in our hands”, so to speak. Once we enter the realm of conscious conceptualisation we see the huge errors which emerge as different groups make unsubstantiated claims that they bear higher social value than other groups. Social genres will be discussed later, when it will become obvious that conceptualisation depends prominently on *perspective*. The original capacity emerged from functional categorisation.

The principal issue is *perspective* – Genre, then. And it is our perspective which we must develop creatively. How do we conceptualise control? Do we *feel* in control? Thus, the initial work must involve an endeavour to *understand* the self-genre, to learn its shape and rules and style. As demonstrated with examples from Shakespeare, the more that we understand Genre, the more that we “get” out of its creative products. Furthermore, we can look easily to examples from real life. If we do not understand the generic information in a joke – its referents, implications, inferences, associations, contrasts, and so on – then we are not going to “get” it, or in other words, to understand the message which it conveys. Similarly, if we do not understand the self-genre we cannot hope to understand our behaviours and the messages which they convey. The more that we understand the genre, the more that we “get it”, be “it” a joke, a personality, a “motive”, or any such meaning. Without first investigating the *self-genre*, it is impossible to change our conceptualisation of control.

9. SELF IS A GENRE

Issues regarding the concept of the *self as a genre* have emerged regularly throughout the thesis, interacting with all of the processes and concepts that have been discussed so far. The conceptualisation of self as a genre is valid and furthermore it is useful and constructive in multifaceted ways. There is no vain hope here to cover the complexities which self as genre implies and it may be that a future work dedicated to the topic is required. But for now, it suffices to establish SoCo’s definition of self as a *genre*. Of course, there are many implications from this new conceptualisation affecting multiple fields of study including psychology and neuroscience but also implications which can assist people in their daily lives. Here, I offer an overview of the concept, how SoCo implicates the concept, how the concept implicates further conceptual development, and optimistic predictions about how the concept may be used in order to approach self-development, social communication, and relationships.

The biological underpinnings of the self have been tackled already by renowned thinkers such as Damasio and Hofstadter, and more recently by innovative researchers such as Oakley and Halligan. I do not purport to be an expert on the biological science but I believe that reconceptualising the self as a genre not only aligns with such theories but furthermore makes them more accessible and offers insight about *how* the processes might “work”. The Genre concept makes sense of the science; it offers an overarching theory for all systematic, communication, and control processes. Damasio calls the brain, “in short, ... a system of systems” (2000, 331) and it is this basic foundation upon which we can

begin to draw comparisons between the self-process and the process of Genre. Additionally, we can imagine that the SoCo and the self are systems of systems, too; they are *genres of genres*. *The self is the genre of genres created through social interaction about and from the unique perspective of the individual*. The self-narrative or the subjective conscious experience emerges from the self-genre, as any story emerges from Genre and as the self emerges from the physiological processes of the brain.

Psychologist and author Robert Epstein wrote an article called “The Empty Brain” in 2018 condemning the computer/information processing (IP) metaphor which has dominated neuroscientific inquiries over the last half century. “To see how vacuous this idea is” he suggests that all we need to do is consider the brains of newborn babies. “Thanks to evolution,” he explains,

human neonates, like the newborns of all other mammalian species, enter the world prepared to interact with it effectively... newborns come equipped with powerful learning mechanisms that allow them to *change* rapidly so they can interact increasingly effectively with their world, even if that world is unlike the one their distant ancestors faced.

Epstein goes on to remind the reader of various other metaphors we have utilised in our attempts to understand the brain and notes that each metaphor reflects “the most advanced thinking of the era that spawned it”. Now, from my perspective, this aspect of the metaphors constructed and utilised by scientists is wherein the problem lies with their endeavours. Surely, we will not find the answers about the brain – an unequivocally *old* thing – by comparing it to modern technologies. We should be looking for an *old* metaphor. But, regardless of the success of previous metaphorical frameworks, the fact that we do use metaphors to understand implies that we use Genre. Metaphors require Genre. Metaphors are essentially generic comparisons. “The IP metaphor is, after all, just another metaphor – a story we tell to make sense of something we don’t actually understand. And like all the metaphors that preceded it, it will certainly be cast aside at some point – either replaced by another metaphor or, in the end, replaced by actual knowledge”, Epstein explains. But, the problem is that there is no “actual” knowledge. There’s only experience and Genre. Actually, albeit unwittingly, Epstein hits the nail on the head here – metaphor is what we *do*. We make up stories using Genre. We *make* knowledge where there is none. Furthermore, when we make knowledge, we do not “store” every detail in our brains, we just construct gist-maps (genres) for all of our experience, while prioritising important gists. Genre is not only an old process with which to construct a new metaphor but it also replicates even *older* processes of sensing and responding which all types of organisms have utilised throughout evolution. Our defining skill, I would say, is *imitating* the generic process which we use to navigate the external world and applying it to our *self*. Making the generic process *conscious*. Turning the generic process back onto the organism (similar to the way Bartlett says that memory is a “turning back”). Such a feat requires social communication and imitation. Through practice and repetition, we gain more generic competence in turn rendering us more aptly-prepared to act and endowing us with more skills with which we can constantly improve our performance. Our generic maps or neural patterns denote *kinds* of things and the *kinds* of responses required when we interact with them. So, everything is only *is like* or *as if*.

Epstein's desire to "build the framework of a metaphor-free theory of intelligent human behaviour" will never bear fruit. The computer/IP metaphor may be a lost cause but we cannot understand *outside* of metaphor. Similarly, we cannot construct metaphors or understanding without Genre. After shooting down the computer and IP models – quite rightly, Epstein fails to actually offer any suggestions for future theoretical directions. That's where SoCo comes in. The "answer" to the hard problem will always be metaphorical. Our metaphor may as well be one which promotes creativity, social progression, and self-development as high pursuits.

The self-genre concept can be integrated with ease into the theories of the "as-if" and the "strange loop" concepts established by Damasio and Hofstadter. But, Damasio's work *Self Comes to Mind* (2014) was particularly enlightening as I searched for "evidence" that the self is a genre. He defines the self as follows:

*a **dynamic collection** of integrated neural processes, centered on the representation of the living body, that finds expression in a dynamic collection of integrated mental processes.*

(9)

And furthermore, he offers a similarly Genre-like definition for consciousness:

Consciousness is...in the very least, about an **organisation** of mind contents centered on the organism that produces and motivates those contents.

(10)

I have emphasised in bold the relevant terms for our comparison. The self is a *dynamic collection*; consciousness requires *organisation*. Both of these terms are synonymous with our new definition of *Genre*. Moreover, Damasio asserts that the "the focus" for his understanding of self and consciousness "is on how the human brain needs to be *structured* and how it needs to operate in order for conscious minds to *emerge*" (6, my italics). In other words, the experience of self *emerges* from *neural structure* in the same way that a story *emerges* from *Genre*.

Perhaps the most important concept utilised by Damasio to understand the self and most relevant to conceptualising self as a genre has been mentioned already: *map-making*. We are map-makers, it is what we *do*. "We humans never had to microfilm various and sundry images and store them in hard-copy files," Damasio explains, "we simply stored a nimble formula for their reconstruction and used the existing perceptual machinery to reassemble them as best we could" (135-136). So, we don't remember exact details, instead we construct based on *genres*. The comparison between maps and genres is supported further by Damasio's recognition that "our memories of things, of properties of things, of people and places, of events and relationships, of skills, of life management processes – in short all of our memories, inherited from evolution and available at birth or acquired through learning thereafter – exist in our brains in dispositional form, waiting to become explicit images or actions. *Our knowledge base is implicit, encrypted, and unconscious*" (144). The idea that our knowledge, understanding, and memories are based on dispositional codes rather than entire stories once again reminds us of the

function that Genre provides when we deal with literature. A genre is a *disposition*. Consciousness emerges from dispositional neural maps in the same way that stories emerge from genres. The specific story or self is shaped on an ad-hoc basis by the individual's unique perspective and their unique engagement and relationships with the maps of the SoCo. "Dispositions are not words; they are abstract records of potentialities" Damasio explains, offering yet *another* appropriate definition for genres, and noting that we approach much of conscious life using this dispositional information, including that "the basis for the enactment of words or signs also exists as dispositions before they come to life in the form of images and actions, as in the production of speech or sign language. The rules with which we put words and signs together, the grammar of a language, are also held as dispositions" (144). In the same way that Genre is the organisational process for literature, map-making and utilisation creates the organisational structure of the brain. I would be particularly interested to see this research expanded into experiments focusing on *Arborisation* and *Instantiation* because it seems as though these processes align with the concepts of map-making and Genre. Furthermore, we can compare these processes to the process of building conceptual patterns. I encountered the terms first in Cozolino's work, defined as follows: *Arborisation* is the process by which "experience sculpts the brain through selective excitation of neurons and the resultant shaping of neural networks" (2010, 67); and *Instantiation* is "the specific combination of activated neurons involved in a particular function" which is "sculpted and modified by experience" and which encodes "all our abilities, emotions, and memories" (2014, 31). I propose that arborisation and instantiation align with Damasio's concepts "mapping" and "maps"/their co-constructed emergent "images", and with SoCo's multifunctional term, *Genre*. It is presumed that these processes play a large role in *remembering*, as well, of course, and the higher capacities which remembering facilitates.

"The brain's mapping ability serves its managing purpose" Damasio explains, "and when our minds avail themselves of multiple maps of every sensory variety and create a multiplex perspective on the universe external to the brain, we can respond to the objects and events in that universe with greater precision ... we are able to plan ahead and invent better responses" (72-73). In other words, the function of maps or genres is to generate *types of response* or *types of action*. The genre, then, works as a guide to direct action or respond to different types action. A clear comparison can be made between the directive or managerial function of maps in the brain and the same function which Genre fulfils in the creation of literature. *Genre directs the action of a play*. So, too, does Genre direct the action of *play*. We know that certain kinds of games call for certain types of action or response. Damasio acknowledges that "when the possibility of maps arose, organisms were able to go beyond formulaic responses and respond instead on the basis of the richer information now available in the maps" (134-135). So, in order to achieve a creative response, we must utilise a mechanism which in many ways "remembers" the traditions and conventions and expectations of the past. By utilising maps/genres, we are able to transcend *formulaic responses* – think stock characters, popular tropes, clichéd action – and instead construct richly textured responses based on our dispositional or generic maps. Maps are essential for "improving action" in this way, Damasio says. So, when we choose to write, we must understand that engagement with Genre is essential. We cannot *choose* to create *outside* of Genre and we certainly cannot hope to "improve" the medium without

engaging with it seriously. Similarly, we cannot hope to improve our responses – our action within the social world – without paying attention to our self-genre. We need to “figure out” our self-maps and work with them creatively.

Thus, because Genre directs action or signals types of responses, it is itself *generative of action*. This analogy makes the accepting the unambiguously-singular science of the brain more palatable. If action emerges from Genre, then it seems more reasonable that consciousness could emerge from the – distinctly Genre-like – physiological processes of the brain. What’s more, action is not the only emergent process of Genre. Significantly, *roles* emerge from Genre. A “role” of course, is a central concept of the self. Damasio suggests that our role as self is as “*knower*” and the process “gives a focus to our experiences and eventually lets us reflect on those experiences” (8). In essence, we are creating a *perspective* for ourselves. The role of knower emerges from the categories which it comes to know. The knower role emerges from and with the self-genre. Both develop together in a strange loop.

Damasio remarks that “the oddest thing” about the emergence of the self-role, about the *performance* of consciousness, is “the conspicuous absence of a conductor *before* the performance begins, although, as the performance unfolds, a conductor comes into being”, suggesting that “for all intents and purposes, a conductor is now leading the orchestra, although the performance has created the conductor – the self – not the other way around”. But, he explains that to dismiss the self or “the conductor” as an “illusion” does not help us to achieve any clearer understanding of it” (24). By conceptualising this self as a genre, we can understand how it emerges from action which itself emerges from Genre. It is a map of maps, a genre of genres. And furthermore, Damasio’s metaphor of a symphony performance combined with the new Genre concept helps us to understand how the conscious experience is more than the sum of its parts. It is a performance, and a *type* of performance. A role, and a particular *kind* of role. Action, but *genred* action. The constructor conductor? emerges from the performance.

And “what *kind*?” or “*how*?” or more abstractly “*why*?” are the questions which we implicitly ask of our encounters in the world. *We want to know which genre of experience we are dealing with so that we can respond accordingly*. Damasio acknowledges this focus of our map-making process, suggesting that “spontaneously and nonconsciously, the brain stem answers questions that no one poses, such as, how much should the situation matter to the beholder?” (187). In order to answer this question, we need to be able to infer what *kind* of situation we are dealing with. The brain asks: “How much?”; “What kind?”; “What type?”; “How should I respond?” and creates what Damasio calls a “nonverbal narrative” (203) and later an “unsolicited description of events, the brain indulging in answering questions that no one has posed” (204). When we deal with literary genre, it fulfils very much the same function. Genre tells us what kind of text we are about to experience and how we should respond, what we should expect, whether or not we predict that we will enjoy the experience, and so on. How? Genre asks and answers. What else does this *mean*? It remembers. What should we *infer* about this event or object? What should we *do*? Genre directs our response. The self-genre answers these questions from the unique perspective of the individual, aided as it is by our accrued and constructed emotional genres and generic experience.

The self-genre emerges from social interaction. All genres emerge from *sociation* be it at cellular or cultural levels (micro or macro Genre). The self-genre emerges through imitation of the biological generic tendency – grouping, monitoring, communicating, and so on. There is much support for the self as an emergent product of social interaction and of non-conscious processes. Primarily, Damasio confirms that map-making is an emergent social process. “Maps are constructed when we interact with objects, such as a person, a machine, a place, from the outside of the brain toward its interior” he explains, adding that he “cannot emphasise the word *interaction* enough. It reminds us that making maps... occurs in a setting of action to begin with. Action and maps, movements and mind, are part of an unending cycle, an idea suggestively captured by Rodolfo Llinas when he attributes the birth of the mind to the brain’s control of organised movement” (64). From these observations we can glean that the self-genre emerges from continuous, open-ended social engagement and organisation, and that its construction is the result of an interactive and circuitous relationship between the individual and the social consciousness.

Another advocate is Philippson, who in 2009 wrote a book called *The Emergent Self: An Existential-Gestalt Approach*. He devises what he calls an “emergent-relational approach” for understanding the self. He evokes a similar cyclical creative process, quoting celebrated Gestalt psychotherapist Fritz Perls who believed that

the ‘self’ cannot be understood other than through the field, just like day cannot be understood other than by contrast with night...the ‘self’ is to be formed in the contrast with otherness. There is a boundary between the self and the other, and this boundary is the essence of psychology.

(Perls, 1978, Philippson, 1).

In other words, the self cannot be understood other than through the *social*. Philippson defines our construction of self as *intersubjective*, indicating that the process is inseparable from social interaction. “For me,” he expresses,

the primary function of consciousness is about engagement and experiencing in the world, and this involves much more than the activities of the individual brain. ... conscious states are emergent from lower level processes involving many aspects of our functioning, our environment, and also the quantum field of which all of this is a part... However, those processes would have no meaning except in relation to the people using it, developing it, adding content to it and communicating through it. (9)

Philippson reminds us that there is no “actual” knowledge or meaning, but it emerges as a creative product of sociation and therefore can be understood not only as a product of the generic framework of the SoCo but furthermore creates a genre in itself. And thus, our conscious experience is more than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, Philippson recognises that “we need an account of the coexistence of order and disorder, predictability and unpredictability, not just in our lives but as a fundamental fact of the universe... If the world is too ordered, there is no place for us to choose. If it is too disordered, choosing becomes mere randomness” and so the

question becomes “whether and how sufficient order can emerge from disorder to account for the world as we experience it, and so that our intuition of choicefulness or ability to make choices can be meaningful” (14). To account for this paradox we need a process which achieves both sameness and also difference. Genre fulfils these criteria perfectly. Philippon suggests that individuals are both “field-relational” *and simultaneously* “choiceful” and in doing so evokes the social-individual loop mentioned above. The self-genre emerges from the interaction of the individual and the social. Moreover, social interaction – or “sociation” – requires Genre or a framework of shared social understanding or meaning or stories in order to facilitate social communication.

In her book, *You and Me: The Neuroscience of Identity* (2016), Greenfield defines the biological basis of the mind as “*the personalization of the brain through unique dynamic configurations of neuronal connections, driven by unique experiences*” (57). The self is an intricate and complex concept produced by our past experience. Our self-genre distinguishes us from others, like any other category or concept. But our genre can only exist *in relation* to these others. Our conceptualisation exists not singularly or intrinsically within ourselves, it emerges from and requires for development our shared social consciousness. The creation of selfhood occurs in the generic negotiation between individual and others. Rochat tells us that “without the individual there would be no self to be conceptualized. However, without *others* that surround and are external to the individual, there would be no reason to conceptualize the self. Both are mutually defining of selfhood” (14). The same logic applies to all creative development. Both the social and the individual are necessary for Genre to develop, and thus, essentially, we can see the self as an emergent and ongoing creative product, too. We create and are created, like *Genre*.

The social-constructionist conceptualisation of the self is shared by notable theorists such as Cozolino, Oakley and Halligan, Rochat, and Burr, along with many others. “The self emerges from relationships”, Cozolino states (421). As mentioned above, “self as a genre” works with Oakley and Halligan’s recent theories which posit consciousness as a means of *social communication*, wherein lies its evolutionary benefit. In light of the current theory, the self is the genre which we use to communicate socially, it shapes our rhetoric, and action, and roles, and so on. Thus we use Genre not only to communicate but to communicate with the goal of control. We communicate through the generic lens of the self, much as a writer could write through a pastoral lens, or so on. We cannot communicate – cannot create or signal or interact – *outside* of Genre. Our self is our genre, our perspective. As Oakley and Halligan recognise, the “contents of consciousness” are formed backstage by fast, efficient non-conscious systems. These systems seem analogous with the cultural process of Genre. Similarly, they see the conscious self as the “end-product” of nonconscious processes geared towards social communication. Burr defines the self as “a complex product of all our past and present relations ... our selves are negotiated are constructed in relationships, and each new relationship we make will in turn bear the mark of the other, earlier relationships we have formed” (141). This definition bears striking resemblance to our new conceptualisation of Genre, and we can draw a comparison between the self which “bears the mark” of its past relationships and the genre which “bears the mark” of its previous instances. A genre – be it the self-genre or, let’s say, literature’s *revenge* genre – is a complex,

emergent, and constantly changing product of interactive relationships. “The idea of making a division between things lies in the rules you use to say what makes them different from each other” Burr explains, “Any category or concept can only ultimately be described by referring to yet other categories or concepts from which it is different... The meaning of a sign resides not intrinsically in that sign itself, but in its relationship to other signs” (52) and she manages to encapsulate here the rather difficult task of describing Genre’s cyclical and intersubjective nature while at the same time recognising that categories require relatively stable *rules*. This element of categories is not restrictive – as most people perceive “rules” to be – but in fact it is what renders creativity at all possible. We develop Genre, and Genre develops us. The rules *change*, over time.

Rochat positions what he calls “self-consciousness” as a transactional product of social interaction. “As a concept,” he declares, “personal identity is indeed constantly renegotiated, reassessed, and, more importantly, reframed in relation to others and social circumstances” (202). Furthermore, he suggests that in order to create the self, we need to ask questions such as “where are my boundaries?” and “What delimits and determines I versus thou?” or, as he puts it, “in less phenomenological and more conceptual terms, the question is, What constitutes a person and what is the nature of our identity in the midst of constant changes and fatal, inescapable disappearance in physical death? What is the sum of invariants that we call the *self*, and are these invariants the same in both third- and first-person perspectives?” “These questions” for Rochat “form the conundrum about self-consciousness” (192). Of course, these questions address *Genre*. Certainly, the mere evocation of *boundaries*, *limits*, and *determination* welcomes us into an arena of thinking about categories and rules but, as well, Rochat understands that any concept of the self must be capable of accounting not only for the constitution of a stable identity but also its work-in-progress-like nature and its capacity to retain structure despite constant change. The “answer” seems to me to be Genre – both a process *and* a “thing”; intersubjective, both social and individual; remains the same while adapting to constant changes. The “answers” to Rochat’s questions change depending on our social circumstance but each answer will inform the fluid and accumulative self-genre. Rochat recognizes this quality of the self and suggests that the self is “multiple and constantly changing, sometimes in the most contradictory ways” (196). This quality of the self so shrewdly represented in Shakespeare’s characters is one of the reasons that they seem so “real” or “conscious”. Hamlet has become notorious for his indecisiveness, in fact. Our self-genre delimits and determines us as a unique individual with a specific perspective on life but that perspective responds to social experience and changes as-and-when necessary. My vision for utilising the self-genre concept is that it will empower us to take control by making conscious and generically competent choices and perhaps engage in experimentation and creative development of the self.

The self is the role which we construct during social performance and it is established primarily through *imaginative play* during childhood. Rochat notes that the very word consciousness “derives from the Greek *suneidesis* meaning “communal knowledge” or knowledge that can be shared with others” (51). The self-co is interwoven with the SoCo, or what Rochat calls “co-consciousness”. Rochat cleverly adapts the old adage *Cogito, ergo sum* to read *cogitamus, ergo sum* – we think, therefore I am. This new motto assimilates the basic idea of SoCo quite nicely.

A self cannot emerge *outside* of social experience in the same way that a work cannot emerge *outside* of Genre. To situate our understanding of the socially-constructed nature of the self, Rochat offers an insightful quote from M. R. Montgomery which captures a feeling probably very relatable for most readers:

If you are very small, you actually understand that there is no point in jumping into the swimming pool unless they see you do it. The child crying, “watch me, watch me,” is not begging for attention; he is pleading for existence itself.

Saying Goodbye: A Memoir for Two Fathers. (Rochat, 88).

What Montgomery implies is that we can only create a self in relation to others – if we are not social we simply do not exist. Social isolation or neglect in the childhood experience then would be expected to present in adulthood as a fragmented sense of self. I owe my current happiness, at my own estimation, to honing a skill which was unique-enough to my self-genre and for which I could be *recognised and receive feedback from the social world*. We need social interaction and the resulting recognition of our self in order to feel that emergent self as existing. If no one recognises a self in us, how can we be said to have one? It is a question which follows a long line of seemingly unanswerable questions. I hope that SoCo offers a tangible approach not necessarily to find the answers to these unanswerable questions but instead to consider our own unique interpretation of them.

It is our understanding of different generic roles and types of responses – the rules of the game – which offers the foundation of our successful navigation of the social world. And it is those roles which are particularly relevant to our own experience which come to shape our self-genre. Rochat proposes, in fact, that an individual’s “essence” or their personal identity – their self-genre – “*emerges from the process of transition from one role to another*” (206). So, in other words, our “self” emerges as we experience or enact *change*. The self-genre is not purely the “sum or average of all his social roles”, but as Rochat suggests, is more than the sum of its parts. The self-genre is constructed by the *connections between* the roles which we adopt or are born into. If the self was merely the collection of roles then we would have a lot of very similar people walking around. But, this is not the case: everyone seems very *unique*. So, if there are only a limited number of roles available with which to work, our “essence” or our “self” must then emerge from our unique perspective and interpretation of those roles and how they connect with each other in order to make up a unique personal identity.

In her study of the neuroscience of identity, Greenfield offers a charming and helpful account of our role development:

Most of us start off as sons or daughters, then realise that we are grandchildren, as well as sisters or brothers, nieces or nephews and cousins. As we grow beyond the family unit, so we have different roles as friends, playground enemies, imagined cowboys or Indians or fairy princesses; and beyond the family as a member of some other group: of a school class, of a social class or religion, of a football team, a choir, a workforce, an army... The response required within a certain role will depend on the values and beliefs prevalent in that particular scenario of choir, classroom, family home or place

of worship, as well as being influenced by your particular life story: how often you have responded in this way before, and what happened to you subsequently when you did. In turn each of these experiences will be leaving its specific and unique signature on your ever dynamic neuronal connectivity.

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Hence, we begin as babies by learning basic genres which will then form the secure base for our memories and the construction of the self-genre. Subsequently, we engage with an ongoing, life-long and unending creative work during which over time we expand upon the initial genres, eventually creating a vast web of connections out of our unique individual experience. We evaluate and connect. Our connections are of personal significance to us. Our genres *are us*; our social consciousness and within this our individual consciousness – *ourselves*. This is how we fill our world, our lives, with meaning. The self-genre produces a role through which we can act in the world.

As we would for a dramatic role, we must rehearse the self regularly, improving and developing our performance. Marshall W Alcorn Jr wrote an excellent essay called “Self-Structure as a Rhetorical Device: Modern Ethos and the Divisiveness of the Self” (1994) in which he notes with similar emphasis that “the self is... an effect of learning, a coherent behavioural role acquired through repeat performances” (5). Alcorn Jr compares the self to a rhetorical device. First, he offers the following diagnosis of exclusion:

Clearly, the self is not a mere radio receptor for social discourse. It is not a passive vehicle, constantly animated in different patterns by the passing through of ceaselessly changing social discourse. The self does not become each and every socially constructed discourse formation it encounters; something within its own inner organisation prompts the self to identify with certain social forms and to reject others.

(13)

Furthermore, he clarifies that “the self is not just a ‘text’; it is an active and complex process of disorganised organisation – a moving, interacting effect of discordant self-components” (14). To compare, he defines rhetoric inclusively as “a well-focused and carefully crafted strategy for changing self-organisation. Rhetoric seeks to participate in the modification of self-components in order to produce changes in human action or belief. Rhetoric requires discipline – strategy, organisation, planning – because selves are not passive receptors of discourse” (14). “Clearly, rhetoric can work – it can have practical effects on the ways people act and behave” he confirms, “but,” he asks, “what makes these effects possible? How does mere language have a lasting effect on a biological organism?” He provides the answer to these questions as follows:

It must be that effective rhetoric is something like self-structure itself. Not a mere collection of words and voices, not a passive structure of language, rhetoric – like self-structure – manipulates the properties of linguistic form that

articulate the components of the self. Both structures... actively employ language to organise human feeling and behaviour.

(16)

He concludes that “some principle organises and focuses human experience”. He suggests that the “self-structure is precisely such a principle” and that it “gives meaning, focus, and organisation to diverse segments of human experience” much like “effective rhetoric, in a similar manner, uses this same principle of focus and organisation” (16). But while he has defined rhetoric and by exclusion and comparison has defined the self as having recognisably similar qualities and mechanisms, his definitions remain incomplete. What is this “principle of focus and organisation” which enables the construction of both the self and also effective rhetoric? SoCo proposes that it is something like Genre. Effective rhetoric must be organised, like an effective self-narrative, by Genre. Rhetorical performances achieve their powerful effects by utilising genre. Genre is the principle which organises and focuses human experience.

Interestingly, when Alcorn compares the self-genre to a rhetorical device he evokes the sort of binary-action-spectrum that has emerged throughout this thesis. The self-genre is constructed by our tendencies to either accept or reject the infinite generic conventions of the social world. At the basic psycho-literary level our response is either comic or tragic, and comparable binaries from various conceptual fields map onto these genres as follows: in/out; facilitation/inhibition; branching/pruning; expand/contract; identification/rejection; conform/subvert; secure/insecure; happy/sad; and so on and so forth. The self is not a text, it is a *genre*. The subjective conscious experience of the self-genre in action is the text or self-narrative. We construct infinite instantiations or texts throughout our life time. Often, we repeat similar patterns over and over again. Which leads to the next observation about the self-genre.

While we may perceive the self as one continuous story, it is in fact lots and lots of instances of our self-genre – so lots of stories which come together to represent an overall self-vibe or essence. We glean from the self-genre and its millions of instantiations a narrative arc which we identify as the self. It is easy to mistake the self-genre as a continuous narrative, of course, and the fact that we do is built into Genre’s function. We’re *supposed* to perceive it this way. Genre helps us to fill in the gaps.

Many theorists from a wide variety of fields have compared the self to a story or narrative and are not wrong for doing so. Prentiss and Walker et al tackle this concept in *The Science of Story* (2020). For instance, in her chapter “Mindfulness and Memoir” (199-218), Julie Wittes Schlack quotes the neuropsychologist Paul Broks, who declares that “the extended self, which is what we think of as our self, is essentially a story” (Schlack, 199). In another chapter, “The Secret Lives of Stories: Rewriting Our Personal Narratives” (177-185), Frank Bures refers to the “*life story*”, noting that while it is “never really finished, and is always subject to revision”, still “it determines much of how our life unfolds” (181). This determining role of the life story, its utility in the social world, “has to do with causality”, Bures suggests. He defines causality as “the thing that helps you plan ... helps you decide what must be done to

get what you need, or want, or want to avoid” and proposes that if you want to know the answer to the world’s “*how?*” questions, “you have to understand causality”, only then can you attempt to adapt or change the order of things so as to support your goals. “When you tell a story, you’re trying to bring ... ‘causal coherence’ to events” (183), Bures states, and he points out that “We see causality constantly, incessantly, and effortlessly: when we read the news, when we gossip about neighbours, when we watch a movie or read a book” (183).

But we don’t “see” causality anywhere or anytime. We *infer* causality based on the genres of the SoCo. We don’t “see” it, or “find” it; we *create it*. And we infer causality in our own lives and identities – our self-stories – based on our self-genre. “What causes greatness? What causes failure? What causes happiness? What causes goodness or evil? What causes sadness and fear?” (184), Bures asks. The answer? Nothing. We “make up” cause based on the SoCo viewed through the unique lens of the self-genre. “For,” as Hamlet explains, “there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so”. Bures cites some old advice that he received from National Public Radio producer Keith Talbot which, actually, gets to the nub of the issue at hand: “Every story is an answer to the question: How should I live my life?” (184). The operative word is *how*. Bures recognises its importance but fails to connect it with Genre. The lack of insight about Genre or its importance was perhaps the only striking omission from the Prentiss and Walker collection, and it is certainly not a unique omission. I have found constantly throughout my research that Genre is omitted from a most theoretical works, even as they recognise the analogy between literary construction and the construction of the self, the workings of the brain, and many of the other themes of this thesis. It seems that Genre is staring them right in the face and yet its presence goes unnoticed. It is not surprising. This quality is what facilitates Genre’s highly useful, rapid, and flexible functioning. Furthermore, it supports Genre’s invisible ubiquity.

Genre answers the “*how?*” questions of life. Or, it does not answer them so much as it facilitates an inference based on past experience. And, this function suits us just fine in our daily lives. Genre helps us to infer “how” by sort of remembering or cataloguing or organising “what kind”. We’re just inferring the codes of the SoCo when we explain “how”. Essentially, we’re just elaborating on “what kind”. Our “life story”, then, is an elaboration of our self-genre. We “fill in the gaps” in order to create “meaning”. We *construct* meaning – rather than “finding” or “seeing” it – through interacting in the social world, and our unique life experience forms the basis for our detailed life story.

Our life story is writ through experience but from the *specific perspective* of our self-genre, of our organism’s experience of experience. Schlack cites Sven Birkerts summation of the author’s mission as “to discover the nonsequential connections that allow ... [individual] experiences to make larger sense; they are about circumstance becoming meaningful when seen from a certain remove” (Schlack, 199). The first point elucidates Genre’s key function. However, the latter point just misses the mark by a slight degree. The author’s role is not to achieve a *remove* specifically but to manipulate perspective more generally. The writer cannot remove their “self” from generic perspective but should seek instead to translate or construct a creative instantiation of their unique perspective and map its unique engagement with the generic framework of the SoCo. *Circumstance becomes*

meaningful by utilising generic perspective (for instance, the comic and lowly handkerchief becomes an instrument of high tragedy in *Othello*, etc.)

We all base our “self” on generic types and conventions and we reject or mutate others, and our identification with generic types can be utterly transformative, for better or worse. It seems appropriate to make a short excursion into the genre of the personal essay (and making use of the stream-of-consciousness device) in order to communicate my conceptualisation of some generic tropes which have influenced the construction of *my own* self-genre in its current state:

*My self character seems to be based on lots of “something from nothing” stories. It is interesting that I identify so much with this generic theme because my childhood was not poverty-stricken or oppressed by “low” class or anything like that. It is my emotional journey which I map onto this theme. Because I see the loss of my father clearly as a very “unfair” event and I see my development from then on as building a self and a successful life despite dire hardship. My father’s death is the catalyst then which starts my character trajectory. Initially, it looked like it was going to be a tragedy and my perspective was indeed tragic. I developed the “something from nothing” theme in my early twenties as I attempted to change my perspective and turn my tragic tale into a comic one. Songs such as “Shout to the Top” by The Style Council, “I’m Still Standing” by Elton John spoke to this theme and I still listen to those songs from time to time when I need to get “pumped up” to write or something. I identified with the film *Educating Rita* for the same reasons. I often think of myself as “rough” and having made it against the odds though I’m not sure that people necessarily think of me this way. Maybe they do. I related to the “underdog” character type and so often I find myself interested in outsiders and empathetic to their plight. I think that Shakespeare felt this way too. Other generic-vibes that inform my self-genre include *Lolita* by Nabokov; the “death-disc” or “teenage tragedy” / 60s girl-group musical genre (think, *The Shangri-Las* but I seem to interpret other songs which are not necessarily about teenage-tragedy but have the same tragic sound that I relate to. It goes to show that our generic interpretations are always “interdisciplinary” one might say or that we make odd, nuanced connections which others may not. Because of our unique self-genre and how it makes us perceive things); *Cordelia* from *King Lear*; *Can’t you sleep, little bear?* by Martin Waddell; the “black-sheep” figure.*

These generic conventions and interpretations are susceptible to change, of course. It will be interesting to see how my story develops. But the eventual story will always reflect the generic traditions of our past experience, despite changing over time. And while, my self-genre may not make sense to anyone else, it makes a good lot of sense to me. It is *how I make sense of my life and experience*, in fact. And your self-genre is how *you* make sense of yours. I hope to have conveyed a sense of my story and its generic influences. Of course, it helps us to see the self-genre as one coherent and stable story. Genre enables us to do so. It is the “unifying” or “organising” or “focusing” principle upon which we construct our self-narrative, and that generic narrative chops and changes over time, like with any literary genre or music genre or any other kind of genre. While we actually have any number of

component stories which make up our self-genre, our utilisation of the generic mechanism enables us to achieve a unified narrative which is indispensable to our evolutionary success.

In an article for *Vice Magazine* called “Why Your ‘True Self’ is an Illusion” (2021), Shayla Love speaks this time with Nina Strohming, psychologist and assistant professor of business at University of Pennsylvania who constructed an experiment to find out what constitutes our “true” self. The experiment led Strohming and her colleague Shaun Nichols to write a paper titled “The Essential Moral Self” in which they demonstrate that individuals commonly understand “moral traits – more than any other mental faculty” as “the most essential part of identity, the self, and the soul”. Strohming and Nichols note that “this feeling of a ... true self ... plays an important role, from how we understand others' behaviors to how we assess our own lives”. In other words, our conceptualisation of self shapes how we *act* – just like literary genre shapes dramatic action.

Definitions of morality vary from individual to individual based on our unique engagement with the genres of the SoCo. Accordingly, Philosopher Josh Knobe tells Love that “though we all believe in a morally good true self, our definition of what's moral varies—and we define the “morally good” part of our true selves based on our own values”. Love offers the following effective example of Knobe’s research in this area:

In one experiment, Knobe and his colleagues asked people to respond to the story of a man named "Mark" who was Christian and attracted to men. Conservatives responded that Mark’s true self was someone who wanted to uphold his religious beliefs, and acting on his attraction would be a deviation from the true self. Liberals responded that his sexuality was his true self, and that denying that for the sake of his religious beliefs would be an affront to his true self. Values dictated what the moral building blocks of the true self were—and this can lead to clashes in the real world of people who are holding different true selves to be true.

What this example reveals is that our values depend on our *generic perspective*. Our values emerge from our self-genre. That conservative views seem to align with the tragic perspective and liberal views with the comic perspective is an observation which the reader is free to make but supporting a particular political ideology is not the main concern of this thesis. Instead, the point to glean from this example is that the individuals involved in the experiment had *different perspectives and thus different morals and values*.

Our self-genre, co-constructed through intersubjective engagement with the SoCo, enables us to discern and assign value and shapes those consequential values. Our self-genre acts as a spirit level, say, by which to judge value. Csikszentmihalyi points out that “there is no way to know whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards, and there is no way to tell whether it is valuable until it passes social evaluation” (24). For example, when we say that one thing is “better” than another, what are we referring to? Better than what? Genre allows us to gain understanding of the minds of others and to learn the values which dominate the group. Genre provides the standards or models upon which we base

our value judgments. Ranking must be recalibrated constantly, in this sense, because genres are experiential, and genres are the pillars from which we construct our assessments. Our values are produced by this constantly changing and recursive process of comparison. Genre is necessary before judgment is possible.

Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson describe literary genres as implying “a set of values, a way of thinking about kinds of experience, and an intuition about the appropriateness of applying the genres in any given context” (291-292). Philippon defines values as “the kind of ways we find acceptable to engage with others, and include our morality and our preferred modes of relating”. He explains that “these may stem from our beliefs, or alternatively we might adopt beliefs that allow us to engage in the way we want. Or our ways of relating to people may even contradict our beliefs” but that, ultimately, “such values will have a major bearing on our immediate choices” (91). So, Genre is important for *action*. And Genre implies *choice*. Furthermore, our self-genre can construct values which contradict themselves. Shakespeare shows us characters who hold conflicting values all the time. But we can only make value judgments by inferring Genre. In stating the value of a text, or any object, we are thereby recognising that it belongs to a genre – to a history of interrelated texts – comparing the particular instance under evaluation to other texts or objects *like* it. We are subconsciously comparing the object to others of its *kind*, to the standards of the genre(s) at hand.

Our self-genre is a collection of our “kinds of ways” or “preferred modes”, it offers the foundation for our values and beliefs. So, our *kind* of experience creates our self-genre, which informs our beliefs and enables us to assign value. Our self-genre is a system of generalisation. For instance, take my own experience. I experienced trauma as a child surrounding the event of my father’s death. This event then created the unconscious metaphorical *belief* of *absence is love*. This belief led me to *value* particular kinds of men, usually the emotionally-unavailable, narcissistic, commitment-phobe type. And thus, my *actions* (i.e., getting involved with these types of men, starting ill-advised relationships with them, acting out when things go wrong) and my emotions (getting hurt and feeling negative emotions) were shaped, too. Understanding our self-genre, then, can be used to analyse and interrogate our experience, values and beliefs, making them transparent and so hopefully easing the experience of positive change and creative development.

To conclude my discussion about the self-as-genre conceptualisation, I want to offer some remarks with regard to *disorder*. SoCo defines personality disorders or self-disorders as the self operating from a *tragic* perspective, which will be discussed fully in the following chapter. But, it is worth keeping our material on self-as-genre organised so for now I will offer a brief synthesis.

The self-genre “is a fragile construction of the brain” according to Cozolino, and because of this it is “vulnerable to alteration and distortion”. He offers as a case in point the experience of anorexic individuals, who “with their bones protruding through their skin and their health in serious jeopardy, insist they look fat” (2010, 286-287). Because our experience shapes our self-genre, traumatic experience has the capacity thus to create a disordered or *tragic* self-genre. Philippon agrees that if, for example, “the only self-identification that is consistent with the feedback from the environment is that I am useless or bad, that will have to serve its purpose” (22).

Cozolino suggests that the most complex example of the plasticity of the self-genre is offered by individuals with “multiple personalities”, those who are diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder, which tends to emerge from extremely traumatic early experiences. Cozolino suggests that these individuals “generate many different subpersonalities associated with different experiences and emotional states” (287). The idea that each “personality” is made up of experience and emotions is perfectly congruent with our conceptualisation of self as a genre – the self-genre as generative of personality based on emotional (social) experience.

To use Love’s wording, there are “situations when the true self may break down”, and she comments that “psychologists are still learning what those are”. These types of crises emerge *when expectations shaped by our self-genre are unmet or infringed by experience*. Love notes that “a belief in the morally good self can give a person hope to keep trying. It is a powerful idea that even if your actions or your life circumstances aren’t ideal, that deep down, at your core, is something intrinsically good that you might be able to express one day”. However, she suggests that alternatively, “it could be fuel for a kind of existential crisis if your life doesn’t match up to your ‘true self.’ Everyone can relate to those moments of doubt if you’re on the right path or living a life that matches who you ‘really’ are”. According to SoCo, when our expectations are unmet we can adopt either a comic or tragic perspective. A comic perspective would enable us to overcome the obstacles that impede our expectations, to interpret the information comically, or enable us to adapt our expectations so that they are more conducive to a happy and successful life. On the other hand, the tragic perspective shuts down communication and thus development. The tragic perspective sticks rigidly to tragic expectations and suffers complete breakdown of the self when those expectations are overturned.

But, these disordered or fragmented stories do offer a kind of unique view on experience. In order to think differently – or what we would call creatively – one’s perspective must be removed somewhat from the norm. It is a delicate balance, then, a fine line, between disorder and creativity. Whitbourne (2021) recommends “tapping into the narrative tales” of individuals experiencing disorder as a method of achieving a better understanding of their symptoms and personality, and suggests that helping individuals to “narrate those lives in a coherent fashion” will facilitate the process of reconstructing their identities. What she describes is considered here the reconstruction or reimagination of the self-genre.

Importantly, my theory of Genre explains how our “self” changes over time and with experience. We are constantly updating our genres with each moment of incoming experience and knowledge. To find answers to questions we have about ourselves, we must determine the boundaries of our genres. Stating the self as a genre in no way casts a slight against the self. It is a complex and wonderful achievement. Seeing self as a genre in fact suggests that we have limitless options for development and creativity, or at least, enables us to identify limits so that we can stretch our conceptualisation to their very outer boundaries. Rochat says that “a person by definition is not singular, but rather multiple and constantly changing, sometimes in the most contradictory ways” (196). If we conceptualise Genre in terms of SoCo, then we can use and manipulate this negotiation to take control of it in order to benefit our lives. Since self is our genre, our code, personal creativity results when we expand the boundaries of our own personal domain, and to be

successful in this endeavour is to be able then to communicate our personal generic experimentation to others, and for our unique interpretations to be accepted by and integrated with the SoCo and therefore constitute creative development.

We mix our “self” genre with generic tradition to create new work. Writers view genres through their generic lens, their “self”, their perspective, and consequently, Genre is reinterpreted and thus developed – if the reinterpretation is deemed useful or meaningful. When we read a work, then, we must consider the author as a genre in the same way that we would consider a more formally accepted genre such as Tragedy. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we must consider, tragic and comic conventions, among others, but we must also consider the generic lens of Shakespeare’s self and his specific interpretation of generic conventions – both literary and also social.

The diverse range of research – sociological, psychological, philosophical, theological, and critical – into the concept of the self indicates its centrality in modern debates about identity, but the concept remains elusive. The problem, or at least part of the problem, lies in the struggle between theory and evidence to develop a satisfactory explanation of how self emerges from and situates itself in reality. SoCo’s comprehensive theory of Genre, one which challenges our thinking about Genre itself and literature, draws us hopefully a little closer to a plausible and compelling explanation of how the self “selfs”, as it were.

Understanding the self as a genre helps us to understand its changeability. “The upside” of accepting the self’s plasticity, Cozolino tells us, “is that difficult or confusing memories can be restructured” (418). We do this all the time with genres and stories anyway, we make them more relevant all the time, more specific. We are not *confined* by Genre, Genre guides us and we use Genre to make sense of the world. But, we need to acknowledge Genre’s everchanging-ness and apply that to our conceptualisation of the self. And, once we have taken this approach to our self and our interpretation of experience, it will be much easier to go about making positive and creative changes. Essentially, by recognising this quality of the self-genre we are able to achieve *earned autonomy* – that is, we are capable of changing our perspective despite how our generic experience might have shaped us. “This ‘learning ability’ may be part of the explanation of why some parents who experienced negative childhood experiences are able to provide a safe haven for their children”, Cozolino suggests, and “their earned autonomy is convincing evidence of ongoing neural plasticity and the repair of insecure attachment later in life” (418). But, accepting the plasticity of the self can be a hard pill to swallow precisely because of the way that Genre functions. It functions as a structure for our experience and our identity. Accepting that we do not actually “have” a “true self” and that, in fact, our brains and our genres are changing and evolving all the time through *our social performance of self* threatens our conceptual stability. SoCo eases the transmission of the message through its Genre concept and creates tangible, accessible, and practical advice which people can actually utilise to experiment with the self-genre creatively and productively. We can only do the best we can with what we’ve got – our experience. But, we can use Genre to tell the best version of the story.

The task that we are faced with when attempting to achieve autonomy is in some instances the entire construction but certainly in all cases the *creative*

development of the self-genre. Our task is not to “find” the self. If your goal is to “find” the self, inevitably you will get lost or, in the process of searching, you will perform the necessary construction work which is required in to create and fill out the self-genre *without realising that it what you have been doing*. Furthermore, the self is open-ended, because it is a genre. It will develop and change over time until our final moments. The principle goal should be to identify our generic perspective. Once we have made the observations necessary to infer the operative lens – be it tragic or comic, we begin to understand and make connections between our behaviours, actions, emotions and feelings and if we are not satisfied with the way that our perspective is directing these creative products, then we can step in and make a change. By making changes at the level of *perspective*, we do not have to put particular effort into changing the creative products; the behaviours, the feelings, and so on. Once we change the perspective, the change will emerge in the style of the creative products over time.

Finally, Genre seems a well-evidenced candidate for the role of explaining both our uniqueness and at the same time our *sameness* – a request positioned by many of the scientists discussed in this book and beyond. Genre plays this key function in creativity – a creative product must be recognisable and interpretable by the field and yet change conventions in such a way as to be classified as distinctive. Of course, the self works in the same way. In her essay on mindfulness and memoir, Schlack asks the following question: *How do we make sense of our own experience without becoming a prisoner of our own narrative, our own construction?* (200). The answer, according to SoCo, is *creativity*. We must approach our self-genre in a flexible, experimental, and active way. We can assert creative control over our narratives by pursuing the following: experimentation; risk-taking; considering other perspectives; gaining experience and thus generic competence; practicing; learning; acting; questioning, and so on. Our goal must be to create the best performance that we can with the generic material accessible to us. The self is a work of art! A work in progress. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but by developing our generic competence, curiosity can lead us to much richer and satisfying lives. Genre enables us to achieve the sort of objectivity required to step back from the self and, where necessary, to redesign it.

Because of the self-genre we can achieve difference from sameness; freedom within constraint. We associate certain things with other things based on our individual experience, our individual memories. Some anecdotal evidence can corroborate this point. I was discussing the song “Love Really Hurts Without You” by Billy Ocean with a friend of mine. He told me that the song reminds him of the place he grew up, in South Manchester, UK. For him, it has a comic gist evoking happy memories; parties in pub function-rooms and sliding on knees across shiny wooden dance-floors and booting stray balloons into the air. As its title suggests, the genre of the song is essentially *tragic*. And yet, my friend interprets the song comically. How incredible it is that we interpret generic information in such highly personal and evocative ways. The additional construction of the self-genre enables us *to interpret the social consciousness from our own unique, individual perspective*. Wilde said that

Art is individualism, and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of

type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine.

(405)

Actually, art is the product of *individual interpretations of type, custom, and habit*. There is always a generic influence. Genre is *apropos of everything*. How else would we communicate our unique individualism? What would our individualism have to interpret or change or mark with their individuality? Wilde himself knew very well the value of conventions in facilitating comprehension and rhetorical effect; control. The characters in Shakespeare who reinvent themselves or manipulate their social identity by way of disguise are utilising Genre to control the behaviour of others – and to control the perception of their social identity. We need the push and pull of the individual interacting with the social consciousness. Our individual interpretation emerges from our knowledge about “how much?” and “what kind?” in terms of interacting with each genre at hand. What emerges is more than the sum of its parts. Thus, the human difference is the *individual interpretation of Genre based on the lived experience of the organism*. The result of this process of generating a self-map facilitates the emergence of subjective conscious experience. The goal is to accrue a balanced, effective, generically competent, and novel perspective. It must be novel so as to accommodate our unique experience and our unique interpretation of experience. Accordingly, for Literature the *novel* genre has served as the principal mode of conveying *unique interpretations of experience*.

PART

III / IMPLICATIONS

My new conceptualisation of Genre within The SoCo Framework can be used to structure discussions about important and wide-ranging issues which are pertinent to our lives. If you accept the basic utility of the preceding SoCo theory, then what follows is a selection of its implications or potential applications to *real life*. The work to this point has been creating the lens through which we can now interpret these implications fully. I believe that the following syntheses work not only to strengthen the preceding theoretical work but they are implications which can offer profound benefits with tangible utility across broad areas of human life:

10. GENRE, PERSPECTIVE, IDENTITY

The new SoCo theory can develop, extend, and inform current practice and theory in psychology. Based on the indicative research it is possible to construct not only a new central concept for psychological theory – Genre as perspective – but also critical explanations of the two general types of perspective – Comic and Tragic. The conceptualisations of the comic and tragic perspectives as pertains to individual psychology are informed and synthesised with their literary counterparts. The formulations offered below provide a viable foundation from which to begin testing the theory of SoCo. The definitions provided are purposefully general, and the concept itself of an individual operating from a type of perspective is conducive to conceptual comprehension and utilisation at a range of competency levels and ages. By plotting out comprehensive definitions of comedy and tragedy under the new SoCo lens, several major implications for both the field of psychology and also the literary field and creative practice emerge. What resonates throughout the discussions below is, in fact, the specific value of interdisciplinary research which enables us to eke out explanations by batting back and forth between fields. I found in the engagement below, particularly, that, should I become “stuck” in part of my conceptualisation in one field – psychology, say – if I changed my lens to that of the other field – literary genre, I was then able to “locate” the answer. Of course, I was constructing, rather than merely locating, and throughout my work I do not clumsily remove and replace lenses manually or consciously; there is no break in the frame, no interruption. What does this say about Genre? It shows that genres are not strictly delineated, that their boundaries are fluid and everchanging and uneven and bendy. It shows that Genre operates unconsciously and rapidly. It shows that we use Genre on an ad-hoc and experimental basis.

An individual’s experience and interpretation of the various concepts discussed in the indicative material produce a particular type of *perspective* around which the individual *builds their identity*. Essentially, the emergent perspective of the individual shapes how that individual “reads” and “performs” in the world and is shaped in turn, in a recursive and accumulative nature. The perspective is the “point of view” from which the individual perceives the social world. This perspective forms the basis of the *self-genre* and *social identity*. I believe that there are two basic or general types of perspective; *comic* and *tragic*. In this chapter, I will discuss the implications of this hypothesis for psychology and self-development and also I submit a focused interdisciplinary analysis of the comic and tragic perspectives which synthesises traditional Genre theory and modern psychological theory in order to recalibrate traditional conceptualisations of *Comedy* and *Tragedy*.

In a 2016 paper called “Genre, Identity, and the Brain: Insights from Neuropsychology”, Irene Clark made some good headway with the mission of highlighting the links between Genre and identity. However, like most of the research and thought that I have surveyed and reviewed for this thesis, her conceptualisation of Genre is once again simply too limited in its scope to achieve the profound insights which SoCo’s conceptualisation makes possible. Clark focuses on academic genres and the ways in which the identities of students are shaped by and engage with the academic genre. In the process, she makes available several much more interesting and evocative lines of inquiry about the interconnection between Genre, identity, and neuroplasticity but chooses instead to limit her discussion to the academic realm. She explains that

the brain can change frequently and... certain skills and experiences that contribute to identity formation can now be discerned in the brain...identity is not an essentialized, static construct but, rather, is multifaceted and alters frequently in response to various environmental factors... addressing genre and metacognitive awareness ... [is] a means of enabling [individuals] to *choose* the identities that they wish to assume.

(2)

And it is precisely because the brain and identity are so plastic that Genre offers such a useful heuristic for understanding how they function and how what emerges from the brain – “mind” and “identity” – amounts to more than the sum of its parts and performances. Identity must be positioned; *it emerges from a perspective which is shaped by our social experience*. Addressing perspective, addressing Genre, as Clark points out, enables the individual to make choices about that type of perspective in relation to their own emergent identity(/ies). The fact that the perspective can be changed does not revoke its centrality; plasticity is one of the principal functional properties of genres, perspectives, and identities, and Genre helps to explain how through our identities we achieve a difference within sameness, a freedom within constraint.

Fittingly, Clark quotes Anis Bawarshi who proposed “the genre function” – which constructs the writer as someone not only who writes but “who is also ‘written’ or produced by the genres that he or she writes” (Bawarshi, 2003), deriving from Michel Foucault’s concept of the “author function”. As Clark observes, “it is now recognised that writing in a particular genre... *requires* writers to assume a particular identity in order to enter meaningfully into the conversations of the discourse community with which that genre is associated—at least temporarily” (4-5). SoCo suggests that such observations can be applied far beyond the parameters of literature. Our engagement with the SoCo and our performances of the great variety of genres demanded by even mundane daily life demands that we assume or at least shift between different types of identity in order to communicate meaningfully in the social world. The genres which make up our self-genre inform our control over our performances of our different social roles and relationships. Our central conceptualisation of our own identity emerges from our unique engagement with the genres of the SoCo, as do the conceptualisations that others construct of our identity.

Clark argues that “although genres... may have at least some influence on identity, the interconnections are complex and fluid, can be understood in terms of performativity, and can be influenced by ... agency”. But, these features of Genre and identity are not negative or unusual. Clark suggests that “everyone ‘acts’ in response to situational requirements, but the acting involves performance, not a change of identity” (11). However, identity *is* performance; identity is the performance and emergent conceptualisation of our individual perspective. She separates certain responses as involving performance and others as “the real thing” when it is clear that *all responses are performed*. The only difference is that when we learn or remember or know a response well enough, we can do it automatically and unconsciously; we can improvise the performance or perform implicitly.

The perspective of the self is as much constructed, as much “made-up”, as a perspective one might adopt in a specific circumstance or setting in order to perform a role such as in a job or even in a theatrical performance. Clark refers as well to James Gee’s concept of an “identity kit” (11) which emphasises the importance of performativity and suggests that identity transformation is unlikely to occur if the individual does not have the corresponding experience. What both Clark and Gee suggest is that, in SoCo terms, an individual cannot utilise a genre to transform their identity unless they are generically competent (i.e., they are well-versed in the experience which that Genre communicates). Of course, this is true. But, both scholars fail to realise that all the roles and genres with which we engage *do* bear effect on the shape of our identities, no matter how incremental, that more often than not we do *choose* which genres we engage with, and furthermore that generic competence is as plastic as the brains and the identities which they discuss. We can learn a new genre, if so we desire and if we are willing to put in the work it takes to become competent with utilising that genre. In essence, we use many different kits all the time – we have as many different kits as we do social roles and genres. The “kit” that Gee refers to is basically the *genre*; we don’t bring a kit we learn the rules of the genre. And we no longer need to consciously remember or enforce those rules once we are used to them, once we have learned the genre, once we are generically competent.

As defined by SoCo, our perspective is *controlled (or determined or influenced)* but it is neither *simplistic* nor *fixed*. Each character is more than the sum of the generic parts which inform their construction in our conscious experience. The individual perspective is always unique in its interpretations of the SoCo despite the rigidity or expansiveness of those interpretations. An individual perspective emerges from and operates with various codes and narratives – in fact, one perspective can engage with all and any of the codes of the SoCo, and it does so all with its own unique flavour according to its emergent shape. Essentially, it is not the specific codes but the individual’s *engagement* with those codes from which their identity emerges. An individual’s unique perspective can be understood by investigating the genres which they engage with and how they engage with them.

In a recent article for *Lit Hub*, “Tell Don’t Show? What Brain Imaging Reveals About Readers” (2021), story coach Lisa Cron explains that “as counterintuitive as it may seem, a story isn’t about what happens in the world”. According to Cron, a story is about what happens in the *minds* of its characters, through “whose eyes we’re experiencing those events”. What we can glean from Cron’s observation is that our focus when interpreting a story should attend to the *general concepts* which inform a character’s perspective, rather than the *specific action* which they perform. We must interpret the *genre* rather than the *plot*. The plot emerges from the generic conventions which inform the creation of the story. We can determine the genres at play within any given character through their rhetoric, which displays their *logic*. “Whenever we talk about anything at all, we’re inadvertently revealing a piece of our own story” Cron agrees, “even when we think we’re playing it close to the vest”.

As with any role, the more the individual performs their genre – or any genre, the more skilled they will become at acting the part. Over time, the individual will develop skills and techniques to gain more control over their performance, eventually performing unconsciously and implicitly, elaborating the performance over time. The

type of action that any individual is willing or driven to perform is dictated by the codes which inform their perspective. Oftentimes, we find that we can't understand why people behave in certain ways *because we wouldn't behave in those ways*. But, what must be recognised is that, *according to their logic*, certain individuals *would* behave in those ways. To approach such problems, we need to interrogate the genre (the perspective, the logic) in order to understand the action and the willingness to act. We all have our own variations on what we will and will not do but, for the most part, individuals absorb the conventions of the more or less universal SoCo which emerges from our shared experience of positive and negative emotions. It is hard for us to interpret views which do not align with our own or with those of the SoCo. When an individual's narratives are at odds with the SoCo, the *behaviour that they are willing to perform or act out* will not align with the common view of what is acceptable. The extremity of their views is revealed in their language and behaviour. When an individual's desires or emotions do not match with the SoCo they may adopt a role which the SoCo classes as "bad" or "evil" or "wrong" or "strange" to a greater or lesser degree.

According to SoCo, the two basic types of perspective are *comic* and *tragic*. Again, these two types reflect the poles of a spectrum. The types of "tragic" and "comic" are generalisations, clearly, but they correspond to the attachment styles of *insecure* and *secure*, also generalisations. Theory has to be generalised. The disorganised attachment genre is here considered as a tragic perspective. I will outline typical comic and tragic interpretations of the experiential engagement variables considered above – storytelling, *sociation*, attachment, conflict, control – as well as their generic properties and emergent generic expectations. The main significance of attachment theory here is the simple idea that there are "ways" or "patterns" or "schemas" or *genres* of interaction which dictate future interaction and also physiological development, and from these different ways of interacting emerge different ways of *perceiving; different perspectives*. These perspectives form the base of our identity. They are, broadly speaking, tragic or comic. Imaginably, most people's perspective sits neatly near the middle of the two perceptual poles. But a true mixture, integration, or, essentially, transformation requires that the individual change the genre of an extreme perspective. In fact, SoCo proposes that this kind of mixture might be necessary in order to reach the height of creativity.

The mixed or integrated perspective tends to come only with considerable time and effort and usually it depends on a transformation from tragic to comic, while retaining the useful elements or the memory of the tragic. A similar effect in terms of social change will be discussed later. It seems that the comic to tragic transformation is less likely to produce an integrated perspective and it is more likely that the tragic perspective will decimate the comic. Interestingly enough, we seem to enjoy precisely such stories in our fiction – or in public scandal – we call these stories *tragedies*. Think of *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Othello*; each play begins with comic framing, comic characters, comic plots, and they end in unmistakable tragedy. Thus, such stories are supposed to provide us with catharsis, comfort and control. Mixtures interest us, and every individual is highly nuanced and will reflect both tragic and comic elements. Shakespeare's success in creating "real", "conscious" characters is owed in large part to his understanding and utilisation of this our generic but also unique nature.

COMIC PERSPECTIVE

The comic perspective is the more difficult of the two general types to describe or explain. My personal difficulty with definition here may be owed to my generic origins which are rooted in the tragic tradition. However, the difficulty we are faced with when trying to define comedy is matched by the difficulty of defining Genre in general and also by the difficulty of adopting the comic perspective or creating a comedy. It is the harder perspective to conceptualise and to achieve, primarily, I think, because it is so *social* and *general* and we tend to err on the side of the self and the specific as a naturally emerging product of the self's construction and function; to be in control. It's hard to think of others or to see from an objective perspective when we are driven to control.

One of the main problems which emerges in trying to explain the comic perspective is the task of separating the concepts of "comic" and "comedy" from funniness, laughing, jokes, silliness, triviality, superficiality and other such features with which modern individuals have come to associate them. Another separation must occur between the association with happiness, happy endings, "rightness", social harmony, and all other features which imply that the comic perspective is an "easy ride" or that the comic genre is all about love and happiness. Comic does not translate neatly to funny or happy, nor do funny and happy equate to the same thing. Funniness is not happiness, and happiness is not always or even that often funny. Funniness infers a subtext, and it emerges often from the opposite of happiness or "rightness". Humour and happiness emerge as useful tools and beneficial outcomes of the comic perspective but they do not constitute its function. If we tear away some of these conceptualisations of comedy it becomes easier to get acquainted with the comic perspective's principal features and its interpretive style.

However, even after the first problem is dealt with, we are faced subsequently with another; *the traditional model was "lost"*. "Aristotle's contributions to the theory of tragedy are, of course, widely recognised, and nearly all critics who deal with this genre consciously recognise their debt to him" Leon Golden wrote in 1984. He explains, however, that "the field of comedy is a rather different story. A number of scholars take the view that, short of the discovery of a lost second book of the *Poetics*, Aristotle's theory of comedy will remain forever a veiled mystery" (283).

Golden attempted to extrapolate a theory of comedy from Aristotle's respective works *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. He rejects the notion of an Aristotelian comic catharsis of "pleasure and laughter" as a profound error. He recognises a range of generic features including superiority, incongruity, fantasy, strained expectation, errors, rigid, mechanical, or disruptive behaviour, subversion, and what Freud defines as "festive feeling" or "the liberty to do what as a rule is prohibited" (284). Yet, he fails to note that all of these features are commonplace within tragedy, too, not just in comedy. Thus, he confuses features, devices, contents or methods used to *enact, cue, set-up, or communicate* generic perspective with the *differences between perspectives*. Most other Genre theorists fall victim to the same

classificatory error, and it is hard to avoid doing so personally. As soon as I reach a conclusion about the genre of a particular trope or action or character type or feature, I realise that it can be utilised equally well by its apparent “polar opposite” genre. It is because we are conceptualising Genre as a set of rules or features, still, instead of a *perspective* or a *type of response*; a way of *interpreting* the features of life. The perspective or type of response encapsulates or shapes or translates *all* features. Still, it is possible to mount a tentative narrative for comedy once we understand that it is a perspective or a way of perceiving as opposed to a collection of props, gags, and common, happy, silly time-wasting. Certainly, there are specific tropes which can be more closely associated with each genre – as long as we remember that the interpretation of any trope must be informed by the general, overall perspective.

The classical model scraped together from the incomplete *Poetics* and which treats comedy largely as tragedy’s *opposite* does not bear relevance to what we know about how the human brain works nor does it recognise that the genres are parts of a whole. Furthermore, it clarifies Aristotle’s fixation on class and external or supernatural forces such as Fate and Fortune, about innate social value or deservingness. It confirmed his own perspective and thus that of the dominant SoCo of Ancient Greek society. Golden notes that “Aristotle identifies the object of tragic imitation to be both ‘noble actions and the actions of noble human beings’” and thus Golden surmises that “comedy represents the actions of ignoble human beings” (286). Accordingly, Cyrus Hoy provided the following summary for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica [Online]* of the overarching conceptualisation of comedy which emerged in Aristotle’s wake:

the view that tragedy deals with personages of high estate, and comedy deals with lowly types; that tragedy treats of matters of great public import, while comedy is concerned with the private affairs of mundane life; and that the characters and events of tragedy are historic and so, in some sense, true, while the humbler materials of comedy are but feigned.

(“Comedy”)

It suited Ancient Greek doxa to formulate such distinctions, it “made sense”. It made sense, too, to conceptualise tragedy accordingly as the “higher” form. Not only did Shakespeare flout the class distinction implied by the classical model but furthermore he understood the inherent contradiction between Aristotle’s understanding of both comedy and tragedy as types of mimesis and yet the definitive insistence that comedy is performed or *more-performed* as opposed to tragedy which is “true”. To my mind, such a definition is misguided. Once applied to our modern genres, such as fiction and non-fiction, the definition flaws become apparent. Under such terms, non-fiction would always be tragic and fiction always comic. Shakespeare did engage with this generic distinction and his comedies are notably “more fictional” than his tragedies if we engage with them on a superficial generic level. However, when we take a closer look, his tragedies are full of the stuff of fiction, too; ghosts, and witches, and magic handkerchiefs abound. Shakespeare shows us over and over again tragic interpretations which involve impressive calibres of performance by show-stealers such as Richard III and Iago, and we find

quite often in his comedies his most sincere- and human-seeming characters, like Rosalind, Viola, and Portia. It is always a performance – the genre is the variable.

A particular insight which seems to have shaped a lot of Shakespeare's thinking in terms of the two genres emerges from his clearly apparent struggles with and explorations of the concept of *honour* or *nobility*. His suspicion of a syllogistic conclusion which could be worded as "to be noble is to be inhuman" or "in order to achieve social codes of honour one must perform in ways that are inhuman" provides, arguably, a code ubiquitous throughout his entire dramatic catalogue. He seems to be questioning whether or not one can be considered noble or honourable or achieve high social status without shedding that which makes them human; their identity. He deals explicitly and fervently with the honour genre in *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*, and he tussles with its codes from the different *perspectives* of a variety of unique characters, including Hamlet and, arguably, all of the royal characters who are forced unambiguously to conceptualise about generic themes such as the turn of power, ambition, revenge, and honour. Shakespeare conveys the notion that the whole issue – whichever issue(s) he chooses to work with – depends on *perspective*. Thus, in each play he tackles universal problems from a whole ensemble of different perspectives, and no issue more prominently than *how to be socially acceptable and valuable and yet retain personal identity*. It depends on your *perspective*. The distinction is not between types of people – class, gender, race, *et cetera* – but different *genres*; generic perspectives, generic competencies, generic interpretations, and generic responses. Naturally, the social genres just listed inform the construction of perspective but the perspective will correspond with the tragic or comic perspective, overall, too. Shakespeare's choices about which issues he chooses to present to us and which genres to cue speak volumes about which topics he cared about – considering we are often curious about his views. When he presents us with a topic, he knows that we will interpret that topic from *our* unique perspective and, in turn, by "acting out" or responding to his arrangement of the issues and perspectives in *our* conscious minds, we may produce profound realisations about *our* experience and *our* interpretation of such important social issues. We may want to change *our* opinions, beliefs, and behaviours or, at least, we are forced to question them.

Shakespeare reinterpreted the traditional model for Genre. He seemed to grasp that the class or status distinction was irrelevant to the human condition, which he understood as generic. But whereas social genres were based on socially-constructed values, he understood that *perspective* was derived from personal experience and could transcend social genres – or fall victim to them. His plays offer stories of the evolution or devolution of generic competence. In comedies, it seems that characters move from low generic competence to high, and in tragedies we see the reverse. What would usually be called a "fall" from nobility or grace in the traditional model Shakespeare sees as a *generic undoing*, a regression of generic competence, one which the individual has potential and opportunity to prevent. Shakespeare's characters can be ranked not according to status but according to generic competence; their ability to navigate the social world, retain their identity, and utilise Genre to their own and to social advantage.

This kind of transformation forms the action in *As You Like it* with Rosalind, who doesn't even know what love is at the beginning and comes to learn and expand

upon the concept through comic exploration, reaching a greater understanding of love, herself, and the world. But, it forms tragic action for Othello, who may be avant-garde in his competence concerning various matters such as race and honour at the beginning of the play, but ultimately allows Iago to reveal and goad a complete deficiency in his competence regarding the *gender* and *love* genres, reducing him to a stereotype. That's the comedy; that's the tragedy. Notice, how we can be competent in some generic areas but not others. Shakespeare shows us this nuance repetitively. It is this mode of operation by which presents us with "whole" human characters rather than the stock types which the traditional model appears to endorse. Genre (and thus comedy) does not function in terms of social *value* (as accords with a biased SoCo) – instead it functions in terms of social identity and generic competence; making choices based on our generic competence.

The insistence of associating specific genres with specific types or classes of people is inherently misguided, and explains why the progress of the comic genre has not been taken particularly seriously and cannot be traced with the same rigour as tragedy. The concept of social genres is a useful tool which will be discussed later, but the problem arises when we infer a hierarchical value to those social categories. The notion that tragedy imitates individuals who are better than average and comedy individuals who are worse distracts us from the true distinction of perspective. Shakespeare understood that the classical distinctions did not get to the point of the matter. Social distinctions are extraneous to the human condition. He took human tropes and treated them generically. However, it is clear that he respected inherently a particular feature of the traditional model. The part of the classical model that interested Shakespeare and which most accurately infers the comic perspective is *the comic spirit or the comic disposition*. Hoy goes on in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica [Online]* entry to explain that

the word *comedy* seems to be connected by derivation with the Greek verb meaning "to revel," and comedy arose out of the revels associated with the rites of Dionysus, a god of vegetation. The origins of comedy are thus bound up with vegetation ritual. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, states that comedy originated in phallic songs and that, like tragedy, it began in improvisation.

("Comedy")

Shakespeare prioritised this relevant element, the core tradition of the comic perspective; revelry, celebration, forward movement, growth, creativity, innovation, hope – in others words consciousness; *humanity*.

Marilyn L. Williamson suggests that in *AYLI* "we are given the impression that all the world must marry or live in bawdry" (255) but, Shakespeare shows that we can spend time learning and making choices, even if the stipulations of the SoCo aren't particularly logical. We cannot avoid Genre, but we can adopt the comic perspective in order to make our generic choices. In fact, Williamson recognises that by utilising the generic devices of the *pastoral* comedy, "the central portion of [AYLI] suggests that we are mutable, mortal, and very like the animals, especially in our mating habits. In short, it highlights our basic human limitations" (255). Thus, it must be recognised also that we are always *human* in our choices and our responses, whether or not we adopt a comic or tragic perspective.

The comic perspective sees in limitation the opportunity for growth and responds accordingly. Thus, while it is true as Williamson notes that “in the masque of Hymen [Shakespeare] resolves the themes we have been exploring, and he effects the resolution in the manner often employed by pastoral poets” (255), at the same time Shakespeare is poking fun at the idea that Hymen is responsible for the unique and well-developed pairing of Rosalind and Orlando. In fact, Rosalind is responsible; she takes responsibility, she takes action, and, highly creatively, she controls her story with Orlando. She retains her identity and feels the same emotions with sincere intensity but she exerts skilled and dedicated control over her responses. The fault is in ourselves, dear reader! Our destiny is not writ by gods or stars but by our generic choices. Finally, Shakespeare channels in his ending of *AYLI* another central feature of the comic perspective; resolution or *coming together*.

Ultimately, the strict and biased classifications of the traditional model are not helpful but its conceptualisation of the act of *revelry*, a creative energy, or comic spirit provides us with the *core* vibe or gist of the comic. In this respect, the traditional model does help us to conceive of the comic perspective, and Shakespeare cherished and utilised this element of the comic throughout all of his plays. This wonderful, indescribable element; the comic spirit. It is defined in part by its indefinability, its ineffability. The comic perspective is concerned with humanising, anthropomorphising, imbuing consciousness and meaning. It represents the unconditional creative aspect of the human condition in which we utilise what we have to our best capacity in whatever ways we can. That we engage in the world in a meaningful way. *We thrive*, as opposed to stagnate, when we utilise the comic perspective. Comic communicates *control*. Comic communicates *competence*.

Shakespeare transgressed the ancient model in the way that his comedies offer us a more realistic understanding of the comic perspective. It's not all happy and gay. Life is full of tragic elements. It is *our unique response* to these tragic occurrences which can be comic or tragic. To borrow Haruki Murakami's oft-used couplet, “pain is inevitable, suffering is optional” (2007). It's not all “fun and games” – not quite. Shakespeare understood that the comic perspective does not negate tragic events, it simply allows us to *interpret* them as part of a comic vision, a comic story. He shows us the *potential* of the comic perspective. The comic perspective prompts us to seek and get “the most” out of life. And so, while comedy was traditionally defined a “lower” genre than tragedy and its characters “lower” persons, the comic perspective is unquestionably the harder to achieve, the harder choice. Thus, to write a comedy is more difficult, and to adopt a comic perspective in life is more difficult, too. It may be due to the greater precision involved in subjective notions of comic and tragic. We all tend to find similar things tragic whereas comedy seems more subjective. Or, as is a common phenomenon, we know much more readily what we don't want or like than what we *do* want or like. Nevertheless, SoCo offers the following outline of the comic perspective:

COMIC INTERPRETATIONS

- ◇ **Storytelling:** The comic perspective generates a *whole* story structure – beginning, middle, and end – and is able to comprehend and tell a story in a coherent manner with adequate detail and understand the significance and emotional relevance of the different events. Stories will reflect emotional regulation, proper functioning memory, ability to attend, infer, and imagine – all generic capacities. Of course, the comprehension and telling of stories is inherently *creative*. “Not surprisingly,” Cozolino explains, “it turns out that securely attached children have more complex narratives, engage in more self-talk, and make more spontaneous self-reflective remarks ... Securely attached children appreciate that their thoughts are private and tend to “metacommunicate”; that is, they make comments about their thinking and their ability to remember things about their history ... They develop the capacity for self-reflection and alternate between acting and stepping back to consider their actions” (418). In this respect we can understand how creativity constitutes a central device of the comic perspective, and furthermore a crucial aid in achieving it.

- ◇ **Sociation:** The comic perspective is associated with healthy, robust, complex, well-developed, and mutually responsive interpersonal relationships, social confidence, secure social identity, and high generic competence. They are able to achieve skilful social control through various performative and rhetorical means. Yet, because the comic perspective emerges from a sense of security and control with regard to the self and others, the individual does not seek to display control beyond the principal comic purposes. These goals include *engaging* with the comic spirit – which is, as we learn through Shakespeare, worthwhile in and of itself – through humour, subverting conventions, song, dance, and play; and also for grappling with important social issues where rhetorical skill may be used to convince others of the comic approach. The control which the comic seeks is *creative* control.

- ◇ **Attachment:** The comic perspective can be compared to the *secure* attachment style as defined by *Attachment Theory*. The comic perspective interprets attachment as secure, safe, balanced, varied, confident, trusting, cooperative, and responsive. According to Bowlby, the securely attached or comic attachment presents as follows: “The picture [is] that of a happy balance between exploration and attachment” (338). The comic individual achieves a faith in their security and thus their social connections. The individual responds to others in a prosocial manner. The individual enjoys social interaction but is contented equally with self interaction. The individual responds less anxiously to negative emotions. The individual develops a varied and subtle means of communicating in the social world. The individual develops a cooperative and understanding perspective. Bowlby suggests that “a young child’s experience of an encouraging, supportive, and co-operative [relationship] ... gives him a sense of worth, a belief in the helpfulness of others, and a favourable model on which to build future relationships. Furthermore, by enabling [the child] to explore [their] environment with confidence and to deal with it effectively, such experience also promotes [their] sense of competence” (378). Evidently, it promotes the *actual* development of their competence, too. To refer back to the fundamental attachment question mentioned earlier, “Is the attachment figure nearby,

accessible, and attentive?”, if the answer to the question is perceived to be affirmative or “yes”, according to Fraley, they feel “loved, secure, and confident” and behaviourally they are likely to explore their environment, play with others, and be sociable. Cozolino explains the process of secure attachment in a similar way:

Secure parents share information about their internal states and ask their children about what’s on their minds. These discussions provide scaffolding for cognitive processing, emotional regulation, and an ability to think more objectively about our experiences. ...If a child is able to attach to someone other than the primary caretaker, the child may be able to earn a higher level of integration and security than would be predicted by the parents’ level of attachment.

(2006, 416)

Thus, the comic or secure perspective enables the individual to *play* and thus *learn*, becoming a skilled performer with a robust social identity which matches up more or less with their unique self-genre.

- ◇ **Conflict:** The comic perspective does not *evade* conflict, instead it accepts conflict as an integral part of life. Comic social engagement is full of conflict and compromise. Bowlby tells us that “In a happy partnership there is constant give and take” and “there is likely also to be constant minor conflict” (355). Comedy always centres around conflict (as does tragedy) but it is the *response* to conflict which differs. Conflicts tend to be resolved, at least temporarily, with the understanding that more conflict will come as an inevitability. Recognising the inevitability of conflict through the comic lens enables the individual to see the potential and opportunity of conflict – or, in other words, the potential of Genre. It is a more prosaic form of *Absurdism*. Conflict is interpreted in terms of its opportunity for growth or its creative, generative, *generic* potential through the comic perspective; such as the constant ironies life splits up from day to day at which we can choose to either laugh or cry.

If the tragic usually associates conflicts with overwhelming activation or inhibition of emotions, and the associated emotions will differ too because both factors dependent on experience, then the comic associates conflict not necessarily with underwhelming activation or inhibition of emotions but instead a balanced, appropriate, and controlled emotional response, and again, the associated emotions will differ because of the experiential shaping of the response. The comic associates conflict then not with positive emotions but instead with *manageable*, balanced, regulated, *controlled* emotions based on previous experience of conflict resolution. This understanding indicates that we must seek to accrue successful experience with conflict resolution if we are to achieve the comic perspective. This element of the comic interpretation certainly helps us also to understand that the perspective is not about laughing one’s head off all the time or about questioning relentlessly the tawdry (but useful) generic conventions encountered every moment of the day (one might be called then pedantic

instead of comic). Instead, it is about achieving a state of balance, a transcendence of our physiological processes for an allotted time, so that we may survey the options, that we might be able to see with a bird's eye the most significant, relevant, and productive opportunities. Rosalind tames her immediate sexual desire for Orlando and decides to set up a game which will enable her to make sure that he is worth her time. The comic perspective enables us to utilise Genre to our advantage and throughout Shakespeare's works and over our own human history, it is clear that our individual advantage is *tightly interwoven* with social advantage. The comic perspective sees the potential of inevitable conflict as a tool for developing the self and the SoCo. Conflict presents an opportunity to act rather than give up. Conflict demands creativity or defeat.

Hoy's account of comedy theory in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Online] includes the following reflection on contradiction:

'Wherever there is life, there is contradiction,' says Søren Kierkegaard... in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), 'and wherever there is contradiction, the comical is present.' He went on to say that the tragic and the comic are both based on contradiction but 'the tragic is the suffering contradiction, comical, painless contradiction.' Comedy makes the contradiction manifest along with a way out, which is why the contradiction is painless. Tragedy, on the other hand, despairs of a way out of the contradiction.

("Comedy")

But as we know, contradiction, conflict, and pain are inevitable. The comic experience is not painless. Kierkegaard himself constructed an analogy between comedy and Christianity, so he must have been aware that it is not painless. But, the comic perspective attends to conflict and pain no more than necessary or appropriate. Of course, such parameters are subjective. Each person will respond to pain in their own unique way. But, as accords with the dharma, the comic experiences pain but does not prolong unnecessary suffering – this is the function of the tragic perspective. To the comic individual, the blows of life are made worthwhile through the lessons that they impart, for either the development of the self or for the greater social good, or both (usually). The comic perspective explores conflict empirically. The comic perspective responds creatively to conflict; to pain. Whereas the tragic agonises over conflict, the comic interprets conflict as inevitable and it is because it interprets genres not as rigid and unchanging and so starkly contrasting with each other, but instead understands Genre's functioning as general, fluid, constantly blending, blurring, and overlapping, plastic, mutable, and changeable. The comic understands that individuals, events, emotions, and the like cannot be forced into neat categories and that their interpretation – and everyone else's – is shaped by their personal experience of engaging with Genre. Thus, conflict will invariably occur. Conflict is not always unpleasant or hostile. Most jokes depend on conflict and contradiction. The encyclopaedia account goes on to quote William Hazlitt, who wrote that "the essence of the laughable... is the incongruous, the disconnecting one idea

from another, or the jostling of one feeling against another” (1819, 6-7). The comic perspective can interpret and consider both the comic and also the tragic potential of conflict and respond accordingly – and often creatively. Often, we find that social “others” – as defined later – tend to be particularly creative in their response to conflict because they have to deal with it regularly.

- ◇ **Control:** The comic perspective emerges from and engenders a sense of control of self and a reasonable control in social interactions or otherwise no desire to assert it beyond necessary or beyond creative pursuits. Essentially, the comic perspective emerges from and subsequently shapes successful and in fact *creative* self-regulation. Baumeister et al explain that “when people are able to think beyond the immediate situation and interpret events with reference to long-range meanings and implications, they should be able to exert substantial control over themselves and override many impulses” (27). This sort of expansive, meaningful, investigative, and considered approach is typical to the comic perspective and depends on and engenders generic competence and thus deepens the secure sense of control. Control viewed by the comic perspective is understood as *choice*. Making choices is our principal method of control. The comic perspective interprets choices not as simply stipulated by rigid definitions of Genre but as requiring engagement, consideration, exploration, and sometimes subversion from the SoCo.

The comic perspective takes basically a *stoic* approach to control. *The Enchiridion* contains the Ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus’ stoic conceptualisation of control, and the first and principal tenet reads as follows:

1. Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions.

The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhindered; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, belonging to others.

(Project Gutenberg, 2014)

The stoic interpretation reflects relatively accurately the comic interpretation of control, and the comic perspective is characterised by its free, unrestrained, unhindered nature. It was Epictetus’ view that if we attend only to the things which emerge from our own choices and which we can control, we will prosper. The comic perspective, like the stoic, interprets the world based on not simply generic stereotypes but lived experience of engaging with Genre; on reason and observation of lived social experience and its resulting generic competence. And thus, life provides its own limits. The comic achieves a freedom within constraint.

While stoicism is interpreted often as dispassionate or detached from emotions, Epictetus made clear that *contentment* is in fact the goal of the stoic or comic approach. Stoicism demands that we constantly survey life. Stoicism prioritises calmness, conscious deliberation of options, and subsequently to act based on emotion, reason and empathy. Epictetus prioritises self-knowledge as the foundation of understanding the world. The comic perspective attends actively to controlling the self and thus it provides a natural social power. The comic perspective demands an exploration and ongoing understanding of the self so that you can understand and empathise with others from a secure base. We understand the responses of others by understanding our own engagement with Genre. Stoicism highlights the need for action; choices. The comic or stoic approach must be put into practical use; Genre is functional.

Epictetus resonates through Hamlet's words; "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (II.ii.244-245), and also through Reinhold Niebuhr's *Serenity Prayer*, "The Father, give us courage to change what must be altered, serenity to accept what cannot be helped, and the insight to know the one from the other" (Shapiro, 2010), and countless other adages that have accrued over the millennia, following the generic influence. Epictetus' generic influence extended to one of the most renowned psychologists of the twentieth century, Albert Ellis, who created Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) (1955), widely considered to be one of the first steps towards Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) (see Clark & Fairbank, 1997). Robert Epstein refers to him variously as "a creative revolutionist", "the prince of reason", and "a stoic philosopher with a sailor's mouth", surmising that "no individual—not even Freud himself—has had a greater impact on modern psychotherapy" (2001). I won't bargain over the latter point but evidently this grasp of psychotherapy as aiming towards a comic understanding of control "works" as it has provided the basis for most of modern thought concerning the matter.

Finally, the conceptualisation of control and Genre as spectrums is another crucial element of the comic lens. This helps to encapsulate the problem of "things that we have some control over" which emerges regularly in discussion of stoicism. The comic perspective recognises that the individual's relationship to control is in some ways generic and some ways unique, that it is situated at some point along the spectrum and disposed to moving around, and that this relationship emerges from experience. It is also within our capacity to make choices; perhaps our defining capacity. The comic perspective engages with matters of control both rationally but also radically, if necessary. This requires taking *responsibility* for one's choices. Once we get acquainted with the practice of observing and questioning our choices, we achieve the self-knowledge required for taking control.

COMIC PROPERTIES, TROPES, AND FEATURES:

- ◇ **Comic Expectations** – The comic perspective produces balanced expectations about relative safety, object constancy, the value, nature, and process of experience, and these expectations are based on engagement with but not necessarily conformity to the SoCo. Comic expectations are not necessarily “met” or matched by experience. Strained expectations can be comic or tragic. It depends how we respond to our expectations being unmet. We rise to the challenge and adapt to change, or we break down. And so, an abandonment of expectations can result similarly either comically or tragically, it depends on the perspective of the notion, the perspective of the action. The comic perspective responds to unmet expectations with exploration, adaptation, foresight, and generic experimentation.
- ◇ **Comic Scripts** – Statements such as “I can” or “All things must pass”. More appropriately, scripts adopt a question structure, which demands response, such as “Can I?” or “Should I?” “What kind of experience am I having?” “What is love?” “How do I do this?” and so on. *Imaginative* questions like “*What if?*”
- ◇ **Expansiveness** – The central feature of the comic spirit. As discussed earlier, expansiveness is translated throughout the various elements of experience. The most basic way of wording a conceptual description of what a general expansiveness in terms of perspective constitutes is “getting the most out of life”. Primarily, the comic individual accrues a wealth of experience and expands beyond conventional social genres and expectations, in turn expanding their social identity, the SoCo, notions of custom, and generic legacy. And thus, expansion is defined broadly to include social progression. The comic perspective looks *forward*, it is “progressive”. Comedies concern *forward* movement. Expansiveness can be interpreted as increased activity but one must be careful to define and thus perceive increased activity accurately. Increased activity can be defined more obviously as social interaction, decisiveness, active engagement, saying yes, trying things, experimenting, taking risks, opening up, asking questions, being affirmative, inclusive, and forward-thinking, and so on. But increased activity does not always mean physical or performed action. Increased activity can be defined too as engaging mentally with life, and not necessarily acting-out our response but exploring the options in our minds using the as-if, increasing the activity of thought, self-knowledge, and control, which can mean *not-acting*. Activity is about making choices, choosing when and how to act. Choosing not to act *is* active. But, we need to be generically competent in order to make considered and skilful choices. Thus, even when we choose to subvert genre we cannot ignore it – or at least, the comic perspective does not ignore it and thus prospers. People are not to blame for their experience, neither is it their “fault” or “destiny”. However, they are certainly responsible for their choices and their actions. It seems that either this true meaning of hamartia was lost in translation. The Greek root of the word suggests the definition “to miss the mark”. Hamartia came to be understood as a tragic flaw or error or some characters fault or guilt. Instead, “missing the mark” suggests “missing the point”. When we combine this different path to definition with what we have so far covered concerning concepts including inference, imagining, and memory, a fruitful synthesis emerges; hamartia suggests a misunderstanding or ignorance of Genre. Shakespeare certainly engaged with the common interpretation of hamartia and it is easy to locate all of the other rhetorical figures Shakespeare uses throughout the plays in order to achieve generic

effect, too. The characters who “miss the mark” cannot see the generic quality of life. The comic individual understands, accepts, and utilises the generic nature of life to their own advantage. The tragic character “misses the point” and thus cannot discern accurately any meaningful sense of responsibility. The notion of flaw or error or fault is moot, as Shakespeare makes abundantly clear. Responsibility remains with or without attention to action or choice to act in harmful ways. It is not about fault, it is about responsibility. The circumstances themselves are hilariously ironic because it seems that the traditional or typical conceptualisation itself “misses the point” and does not account for what we enjoy or what we get out of stories about generic transformation. Similar irony is laced throughout all of our everyday encounters. The comic takes advantage of the irony, the tragic misses the point. Shakespeare injects his characters with responsibility – or a marked lack of it. But, of course, we do get characters in comedies who miss the point and thus are utilised for comic effect. These characters may be said to be operating from the tragic perspective within a comedy. This understanding suggests that we can operate adequately in the social world from a tragic perspective, but our experience of life will be as if funnelled through a keyhole, as opposed to the expansive comic perspective. Because the comic individual interprets choices and their actions as their own responsibility, arguably they should be capable of eradicating negative emotions such as guilt and shame. Shakespeare recognised that while we are all shaped by experience and behave in generic ways accordingly, we are responsible still for our actions. Life as a continuous series of choices means that sometimes the comic option is to say no or to refrain from action. Inaction can be comic but it can be tragic, too, as discussed below. Furthermore, if comic inaction is interpreted by others tragically then the individual will be sort of helpless, such as is Cordelia’s fate in *King Lear*. Cordelia’s death is pronounced in its stark bleakness and misery *because* she operates from the comic perspective. Generic function is never clear cut, a point I try to impress repeatedly throughout this thesis. Expansion relates primarily to the expansion of choice; the expansion of Genre, and thus the extension of possibility. Expansion is their crucial achievement of the comic perspective – and, evidently then, Shakespeare was a comic genius.

- ◇ **Humour** – is a feature of comedy – it is not a definition for comedy. There is not scope here for a full discussion of humour. However, it suffices to say that we have come to use comedy as shorthand for funny and vice versa. We utilise synecdoche and interpret funniness as representative of the whole of comedy; it is not. Nevertheless, humour is one of the most powerful tools of the comic perspective and our acceptance that comedy does not mean merely funny does not negate the power of humour but recognises that comedy is *more* than humour. It functions not simply to make us laugh. Joking and humour hold vital positions in the comic perspective not just because we should be laughing grinning idiots but because it is a way of seeing the world. Seeing the world as absurd and funny and delightful and interesting and playful, rather than tragic. One of the ways in which the comic interpretation of the creative potential of conflict emerges is through humour. William Hazlitt remarked in one of his essays on comedy that “the first and most obvious cause of laughter is to be found in the simple succession of events, as in the sudden shifting of a disguise, or some unlooked-for

accident... The accidental contradiction between our expectations and the event” (7). Of course, to achieve a perspective which interprets these kinds of events comically requires generic competence. Humour is an indispensable tool for supporting our transformation to the comic perspective.

- ◇ **Sociation** – Self-knowledge and self-development are key aims and features of the comic perspective. However, we must remember that *sociation* demands equal import. Shakespeare shows us that social relationships are what make life worth living – they can also make life unbearable. The comic perspective aims for social harmony but not at the cost of their own identity and values. Overcoming self-caused suffering does not constitute the comic perspective in full, the comic spirit does not emerge simply from overcoming suffering, but from *flourishing*, as suggested by the comic Muse, Thaleia (Rose, 144). To flourish it is required that we *engage* with the SoCo and the social world. The self is the main concern of the tragic. The comic integrates responsibility to self with responsibility to society. *Sociation* demands generic competence and creativity. The comic individual understands that the work and achievements of self-knowledge serve the purpose of the greater social good. We can be of more *use* to society if we adopt the comic perspective (despite what the “loss” of a traditional model would infer). It’s funny (literally) because in Shakespeare’s comedies he usually puts soliloquys in the mouths of satirical characters – those operating from a tragic perspective within a comedy – and they tend to emerge as set pieces, histrionic performances, and or revelatory in some way. The tragic individual is the true soliloquist and tragedy the true home of the soliloquy; the ballad of the self. The comic perspective attempts to perfect and communicate their interpretation of generic information and to set the example for experience if their interpretations “break-through” the SoCo. Thus, social and self legacies are interwoven, combined. The comic perspective seeks to “get more” out of life and to communicate this “more” to others. The self cannot exist outside of the social, much as tragic individuals would have you believe, and so the comic perspective’s rationale is both social and personal. The comic perspective prioritises but also lends itself naturally to social integration, connection, and harmony, successful self-and social-regulation, bravery, protection of fellow humans, conflict resolution, music, fun, merry-making, nature, coming-together, communal circumstances such as playing, dancing, singing, eating, travelling, weather, time, love, danger, and much more. And yes, more often than not, sex. Comedies are rich, complex, and meaningful but also delightful, joyous, and fanciful.
- ◇ **Comic Properties** – Playfulness, creativity, curiosity, openness, security, exploration, expansion, learning, observation, responsiveness, acceptance, responsibility, choice, freedom, bravery, understanding, knowledge, development, growth, effort, thought, balance, arousal, festivity, forward-movement, integration, competence, sociation, connection, appreciation, transcendence.

The comic perspective is not just about looking on the bright side of life or adopting a sense of humour or putting on a brave face. It is a way of life, a response to life, an approach to life. Susan Sarrandon made an interesting remark in a recent interview when asked about her sexuality, which sums up the comic perspective perfectly, and will provide further insight later in the discussion of social genres:

“Everybody is somewhere on a spectrum, and I like the fluidity we have now. For me, it’s all about connection, curiosity, passion” (2021). Adopting the comic perspective does not guarantee that our risks will pay off. It’s a playfulness more than anything. A willingness. An openness. A freedom. An attempt to earn autonomy. ... resolution. Revolution. Full revolution. Full cycle.

The comic perspective is characterised by ineffability. Attempts to define it lead inevitably to idiomatic conceptual markers such as “je ne sais quoi” or “the X factor”. The comic is a perspective, a genre, an approach, a type of response; the substance, the emergence, the affect, is unwritten. The missing traditional model suggests that the option of adopting the comic perspective is a secret best kept from the awareness of the common individual. This presumption responds to earlier ideas about the sinful nature of catharsis or the arousal of the emotions. Furthermore, it seems no wonder that the text on comedy would be “lost” because the last things a hierarchical society would want to encourage in its individuals are growth, revelry, prosperity, curiosity, and experimentation. For a system to function there can’t be too many flourishers. There needs to be many who do not question the order of things. The comic spirit is deeply inquisitive and intent on thriving, learning, and acting.

The comic perspective revels in what life has to offer, as opposed to merely dwelling. Art is the finest example of the action of revelling. Shakespeare makes the comic perspective seem generally more appealing than the tragic perspective, or at least suggests that it serves some social purpose. He shows us that pain is unavoidable no matter which perspective we operate from. But, he communicates that the suffering is less or may be less in the future for other individuals when the comic perspective is utilised. He advocates the comic perspective, even if it doesn’t *always end well*. As we know, the ends of our stories are written generally already. It is a tragic ending; death. But, our journey need not be tragic. It ought to be comic. It ought to be *worth* something. What it’s worth is *Genre*; Genre remembers should we prove capable of changing the SoCo through Genre – for better or for worse.

Shakespeare seems to be suggesting in *Julius Caesar* and elsewhere that stoicism can be misinterpreted or interpreted tragically, i.e., it cuts us off from true emotions, social harmony, and such. Shakespeare infers that people tend to misinterpret the function or the “point” of old philosophies – of stoicism, which is contentment or balance, it is *comedy*. We apply generic information erroneously all the time. This is part of what the comic perspective grasps and capitalises on, whereas tragedy laments it. Typically, messages are garbled in communication, or reduced to stereotype as a function of memory. Shakespeare took full advantage of this phenomenon and laced throughout his works shining codpieces which have since been rattled off the tongues of billions, comprehension notwithstanding, in usually the most ironic of contexts. It seems simultaneously gleeful and dastardly – perhaps mischievous – to put a line such as “to thine own self be true” in Polonius’ mouth. Shakespeare approaches life’s generic incongruence, incompetence, changeability, and communicative blunders with the comic spirit. The comic perspective is not passive, it understands responses such as comedy or stoicism as performances.

The goal of the comic perspective is to achieve successful engagement and esteem within the social. This goal requires that (1) the individual is generically

competent but also (2) that they approach life in a unique way as accords to their own identity. The song “My Way” conveys the notion well. Again, the song is often misinterpreted as self-centred or egotistic. But, when we listen to the lyrics, we see that it is not straightforward. The character of the song does not disengage from life to focus on the self, nor is it an easy ride. The individual communicates “I did what I had to do”, he engaged with the SoCo and was generically competent. The individual has a few regrets, their “share of losing” they admit that there have been various times when “I bit off more than I could chew” and so the comic perspective is not about everything going right. The meaning of the sentiment of doing it “my way” tells us that this individual engaged with all of life’s offerings and thus is generically competent but through their journey they retained their identity, responding in their own unique way. A beautiful and succinct definition of the comic perspective emerges in the line “the record shows, I took the blows, and did it my way”. The comic perspective is not about doing whatever you want. It’s about doing what has to be done in order to engage successfully in the social world but in your own way. Taking the blows but retaining a sense of identity. Shakespeare performed in just such a way. In a denouncement of Ben Jonson, Hazlitt captures Shakespeare’s dazzling comic achievement as follows:

Shakespeare, even when he takes whole passages from books, does it with a spirit, felicity, and mastery over his subject, that instantly makes them his own; and shews more independence of mind and original thinking in what he plunders without scruple, than Ben Jonson often did in his most studied passages, forced from the sweat and labour of his brain. His style is as dry, as literal, and meagre, as Shakespeare’s is exuberant, liberal, and unrestrained. The one labours hard, lashes himself up, and produces little pleasure with all his fidelity and tenaciousness of purpose: the other, without putting himself to any trouble, or thinking about his success, performs wonders...

(72)

TRAGIC PERSPECTIVE

The tragic perspective is much easier to discuss because when the perspective is overt it rarely goes unnoticed by the individual who interprets the world from its point of view – or those on the “receiving end” of their interpretations. The tragic perspective tends to affect the life of the individual negatively and it is highly likely that it affects the lives of their social connections and their relationships, too. Thus, as is often the case in biology, we know more about disorder than order, atypicality than typicality. It makes sense in terms of the way that our brains interpret incoming information as well – the way that we attend, remember, and so on. It is how we achieve metacognition; we notice difference, we pay attention to change, we spot the out-of-the-ordinary because these errors do not adhere to our generic expectations.

Moreover, the classical model for tragedy was *not* lost and has influenced creative interpretations ever since. Aristotle stipulated that

Tragedy... is an imitation of an action that is of stature and complete, with magnitude, that, by means of sweetened speech, but with each of its kinds separate in its proper parts, is of people acting and not through report, and accomplishes through pity and fear the cleansing of experiences of this sort.

(Benardete and Davis, 17-18)

Aristotle prioritises action over character, and thus suggests that on plot, actions, all success or failure depends. He explains that humans “do not act in order to imitate characters, but they include characters because of actions” and that the structure and ending of the action are “the greatest of all” (21) generic signifiers. He adds that that *peripeteia* – a reversal of fortune – and *anagnorisis* – a recognition/realisation/discovery, or a shift from ignorance to knowledge, are two further features required in order to create a complex plot. He defines tragic action as the mistake of a character of a “better” (Benardete and Davis, 6) type, to a state of bad fortune in two stages of action, *desis* and *lusis* which Benardete and Davis translate as “entanglement” and “unravelling” (xxvii).

The principal problems which emerge from the traditional model concern the concept of *hamartia* and the stipulated class distinction discussed above. Shakespeare tussles with these generic problems arguably throughout all of his tragedies, utilising and flouting at will, but always engaging with these generic conventions and illuminating them to some effect.

Shakespeare’s variety of tragic characters make clear that he believed that tragedies cannot be categorised in terms of social class – it may seem to a modern audience that his tragic characters are all noble, but many of them would not have been considered high-status enough for conventional Greek tragedy. More importantly, he dismantles the conceptualisation of *hamartia* as tragic error, flaw, or fault. Instead, he presents a more “psychologically real” (i.e.; simultaneously generic and also nuanced) picture of human tragedy; it is not always black and white, and often no one or everyone is to blame. Furthermore, he makes ironically and abundantly clear that the individual *can* make a choice about how they respond to the events of the world. *Hamartia* conceived as a tragic flaw negates accountability and responsibility. When we interpret *hamartia* as a more or less general, or perhaps compartmentalised, instance of “missing the point” or generic incompetence, we realise that the tragic circumstances are in fact totally avoidable, rather than inevitable, and thus all the more tragic. *Hamartia* is *error* or *mistake*. It emerges from action; it does not exist within the personality. Of course, the risk of conflict or error emerges naturally and without exception in any generic engagement. A tragic error is one which is unconscious, which leads to the destruction of the self and others, and which could be avoided. Shakespeare explores the tragic potential of the choices that we make (and those that we ignore). Shakespeare recognised that Aristotle’s stipulation of tragedy as tragic *action*, as an imitation “of an actions and of life” (Benardete and Davis, 20), that tragedy is about plot and endings, renders the misinterpreted “tragic flaw” obsolete. A tragic character flaw is, as Aristotle suggests, subsidiary to plot.

Kiernan Ryan suggests that Shakespeare creates tragic characters “who can’t come to terms with their world reveals the capacity of human beings to be radically different from the way their world expects them to be”. But, this type of scenario is constructed from the tragic perspective at play – the perspective which keeps the characters from realising their generic potential. The world will always be hard, the SoCo will always suit some better than others. The task is to approach the challenge creatively, which in turn requires a comic perspective. The hope for a better future, the belief that change is possible. For instance, Rosalind doesn’t sit around bemoaning the fact that as a woman it is unsafe for her to go through the forest. Instead, she adapts, she devises a creative and comic response. Thus, tragedy is not the “fault” of the individual, but generic transformation *is* their *responsibility*. The tragic individual misinterprets, ignores, or flouts responsibility.

Shakespeare shows that both individuals and the SoCo at large can independently operate from the tragic perspective. Arguably, all of Shakespeare’s plays tussle with the same concepts of perspectives and social doxa. Where his tragedies differ is that their principal characters misinterpret or fail to pay adequate attention to Genre, and thus reveal a generic incompetence which leads to tragic ends. Othello lives in a world where the SoCo deems him an outsider. Yet, he is a respected outsider and has successfully traversed his social environment. We see that only a few characters speak about Othello as a racial other – he does have to deal with tragic interpretations of his race but it does not appear to be the overriding opinion of the persons in the play. It is generally Iago – and evidently Brabantio – harbouring, or at least employing, racist views. Thus, it is chiefly Othello’s own tragic engagement with genres including masculinity, love, and trust, which lead to his downfall. Hamlet accepts defeat by a SoCo which demands he avenge his father’s death based on a tragic interpretation of the concept of honour. In all of the tragedies, Shakespeare shows the mixture of tragic SoCo and tragic individual response. He shows that it’s not personal flaw but tragic interpretation, which he equates to blindness, a symbol he uses throughout his tragedies. The tragic perspective misses the point, cannot see. The tragical individual fails to understand that what is required is to change the SoCo. Take Edmund, for instance, he misses the mark in that his tragic interpretation of the bastard doxa which he so loathes and his emergent behaviour do not change or develop the genre of bastard but instead perpetuates the damaging and limiting doxa.

The prioritisation of plot or action is not “merely” literary; it aligns with the psychological and neurological understandings, too. The tragic perspective is reflected by brains with lots of messy connections; a complicated plot, by an under or overpruning; which we might interpret as inaction or hyperactivity – both deemed tragic. Along these lines, we can mount narratives for tragic features such as the perceived inability to act, incoherent choices, and their acting on impulse without exploring, observing, and understanding. The specific details – the interpretation – of the story must be relevant to the action. In a major tragedy, the details are crafted in such a way that the plot seems to have emerged from them, as opposed to vice versa, which is the constructive order; structure of action precedes episodic detail. When I speak of “major” literature I am speaking about work which has broad generic appeal; which is both generically competent and at the same time innovative. And so, in literature as in the brain, Genre enables us to achieve the strange loop

which flips causality and makes emergent properties seem or feel “as-if” they are causative, like our perceptual ordering of thought and action.

Shakespeare shows us the tragic potential of Genre and limited generic competence and how it can “undo” individuals. In the tragic perspective there is a great dependency on a conceptualisation of events as inevitable or inescapable. In tragedies we expect a central noble figure with an individual flaw which begets their downfall. Certainly, Othello interprets his position as such, that he is noble but “loves too well”. Furthermore, as an audience generically we interpret the action tragically, not only because we know that we are watching a tragedy but because of limited generic concepts such as the narrow definition of hamartia. The interpretation of hamartia as solely a tragic feature constitutes itself a tragic interpretation as it shuts down hamartia’s potential or at least our understanding of its potential as a generic tool. Othello’s tragedy is that at the end he still doesn’t “get it”; he’s missed the point. With further irony, we can infer from the responses of the other characters, particularly Emilia, that the story will be communicated in a way which makes people miss the point. Still to this day most people that I have spoken to about Othello think that in the plot Desdemona is unfaithful. That’s the garbled story, and Shakespeare knew it. He did everything in his power to focus on the male characters, yet still we get the story wrong. All of the irony in Shakespeare’s plays involve getting the story wrong, and interpreted thus, hamartia is utilised in comedy, too. The tragedy of *Othello* will be generically interpreted as a black man seducing and killing a white woman, and a white woman’s fidelity coming under fire. Thus, multiple destructive doxa are perpetuated; against the black genre, the female genre, and the action of interracial relations. Actually, they are in love, Desdemona is “innocent”, and it is Iago’s indoctrination which has entangled this tragedy but because Othello has subjective choice in the matter, the overarching problem emerges as toxic masculinity and misogyny as well as a general narrowmindedness, not asking questions, not experiencing for yourself, gullibility, generic incompetence.

Shakespeare retains in his plots the conceptual trace of Aristotle’s *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. Yet due to the complexity of Shakespeare’s interpretation of these concepts and his creative implementation of them, not only does he achieve feats which stretch far beyond the remit of the traditional model for tragedy but furthermore he calls the concepts themselves into question. He makes clear throughout his plays that the concept of Fortune is tenuous at best and fatal at worst. Similarly, he renders *peripeteia* all the more tragic by showing us that even after a character has made the discovery, they still remain quite ignorant – like Othello. Arguably, it is Shakespeare’s exploration of these two tragic plot stipulations in *Hamlet* which singles out the play as such a unique, remarkable, and effective dramatic imagining and which imbues its titular character with the *consciousness* so often-perceived in him by spectators and critics alike. Thus, Shakespeare makes tragedy “more human” by questioning and adapting the traditional concepts, suggesting that a limited or biased understanding of Genre has led to concepts which do not capture the human experience. If we are to make use of our natural capacity for Genre, we must understand that it does not work so rigidly, and does not always align with what seems logical.

Shakespeare shows that it is not just action which changes in tragedies but furthermore, and more importantly, *perspective* changes. He shows that while the

action and the ending denote the genre, the specific experience enables us to develop our generic competence because of its nuance and the creativity with which people use Genre and language in real life. Individual psychology emerges from the SoCo and interprets it both generically – comic or tragic – and also uniquely – according to their individual experience. As audiences, as *humans*, we like to know what comes next; we want to predict. We don't like unpredictability, it unsettles us, it makes us take notice and attend when we could be doing other things or interpreting with more speed and ease. We try to generate easy solutions such as that people are “evil” or “monsters” but it's always so much more complex. Shakespeare shows us the complexity. He takes roughly the same actions – the same entanglements and the same unravellings – but he interprets them in such complex ways that stretch Genre to its very limits that by doing so he extends both the genres at hand and also the social conceptualisation of Genre. Benardete and Davis suggest that a translation of *Iusis* not as denouement but as “resolution understood as something like analysis... or interpretation”, for which there is evidence to be found in the *Poetics*, cues us to infer that Aristotle understood complex or major tragedies “to supply their own analyses” (xxvii). Naturally, Emma Smith makes corresponding remarks about the characters of *King Lear*. She notes that the persons of the playworld

are all trying to make sense of random, horrific, ultimately senseless events: by alluding to medieval concepts of a rotating fortune, with reference to cosmology, or to human inhumanity. Perhaps in this they are their own tragic theorists. Like these characters, commentators on tragedy have tried to propose some model in which senseless events contribute to a kind of moral, structural or political logic: like the characters, commentators often find the events of the plays resistant to such interpretations. The ongoing attempts to define tragedy may, like the reasons offered for the events in *King Lear*, register both the human necessity, and the intellectual difficulty, of making sense of senseless events.

(2004)

The tragic conceptualisation of meaning or sense leads to tragic action. The comic perspective interprets meaning as something which is created, co-constructed, through experience. Comic individuals accept that meaning is subjective and complex but also generic and predictable (but not inevitable), and they go about creating and communicating and acting out their own unique meanings, ensuring that they constantly develop their generic competence so as to make the most creative and yet widely-relatable meaning. The principle and futile goal of the tragic perspective is, as Shakespeare understood it, trying to find meaning in a world without meaning. The fact that the world is without inherent meaning and that meaning is not interpreted in the same ways by all individuals is not tragic, but to ignore that we imbue things with meanings and thus can change those meanings *is* tragic. And by presenting individuals operating from tragic perspectives, ignoring, bewailing, or acting out the tragic potentials of particular genres, Shakespeare forces us to attend to those genres and the different types of response to them. Thus, while it is argued that Shakespeare does not achieve the traditional effect of catharsis, rather he *complicates* catharsis, its definition, and in turn its generic function. Shakespeare succeeds in setting up the emotions of pity

and fear but he shifts the responsibility. The responsibility belongs not to fate or fortune or the gods but *human and social agency*. The pity emerges not because fate has writ such a terrible end. The fear is not that we will be undone by the stars. The fear and pity emerge as self-and-socially directed. We pity the doxa which rules Shakespeare's worlds and their individuals. We fear that we will make the same ill-decisions, that we will fail to act, that we will take for granted Genre and its function. Catharsis translates basically to the "as-if-ing" of emotions; empathising. Our tendency to "as-if" means that we experience the same generic responses as the characters. Thus, Shakespeare sets the stage for our "as-if" experience; he cues our generic responses. The responsibility to analyse the choices made throughout the action is placed firmly with the individual; the individual character and thus the individual audience member.

If Shakespeare interpreted the comic disposition as revelry and thriving then his interpretation of the tragic disposition corresponds with dwelling and stagnating. The tragic perspective reflects a failure of control, of responsibility; a passive engagement with life and generic incompetence. The tragic conceptualisation of a downfall is right. But, rather than class Shakespeare interpreted "estate" as state of generic competence, moral state, humanness, consciousness. The downfall can be interpreted as a transformation from comic to tragic. However, Shakespeare shows us that such transformations are not transcendent, instead revealing the character's pre-existing generic incompetence or tragic conceptualisation. Hamlet is singular because he seems highly generically competent yet at the same time he conceptualises tragically. But, he is young, and the SoCo of Denmark is doomed, as he says. It's why it's such an interesting and ineffable play. Shakespeare recognises tragic expectations and conventions and plays with them. He infers through his tragedies – as through his comedies – that individuals emerge as an instantiation of a generic combination. The tragic perspective emerges from a tragic arrangement or combination. He understands and helps us to co-construct the heart-wrenching nuance of tragedy. He portrays successfully the complex spectrum of the tragic perspective. Thus, the action performed by a unique individual emerges from a socially interactive repertoire of generic experience but with an addition, a perspective, and thus a responsibility; human agency. The basic plot of *Othello* is woman marries man, man kills woman. Generically, it is a tragedy no matter "why" or what episodes emerge from this plot. But, Shakespeare revels in his creative skill exactly by crafting these "episodic" interpretations. Shakespeare agrees that in the end it is action which denotes Genre. However, he shows that the details or specifics or the "episodic" details can make it harder to discern responsibility, and show that simple plots are acted out in complex and ambiguous ways. In other words, we are much better prepared if we are generically competent but we can never predict with complete certainty.

SoCo offers the following outline of the tragic perspective:

TRAGIC INTERPRETATIONS:

- ◇ **Storytelling:** The tragic perspective generates incoherent, inadequate, rigid, limited, and fragmented stories with little to no structure. Story comprehension is translated through the tragic lens and thus rendered limited and self-serving (in terms of protecting and justifying the already vulnerable self-narrative). Inattention to detail and inadequate generic competence further complicate and diminish comprehension. Stories will reflect emotional dysregulation, poor-functioning, selective, and often warped memory, reduced capacity to attend, infer, and imagine, or a hyperactivity and thus functional failure of these capacities. Stories are basic, ill-considered, lack self- and social-awareness and reflection, reflect a misinterpretation of boundaries and thus do not necessarily lead to metacommunication. Van Der Kolk explains that under ordinary conditions, rational and emotional memory processes “collaborate to produce an integrated response”. However, in cases of tragic experience, the high arousal response disrupts the balance between these processes and furthermore disconnects other brain areas necessary for functional integration of incoming information. As a result of such activity, Van Der Kolk observes, “the imprints of traumatic experiences are organised not as coherent logical narratives but in fragmented sensory and emotional traces: images, sounds, and physical sensations. ...But ... little or no story” (176). Traumatic or tragic experience is considered here to constitute any damaging effect on social identity and thus personal security, ranging anywhere from embarrassment to abuse. Coherency is defined as cohesion with the shared understanding of the SoCo. Adequacy is defined as the limit of experience with which to inform narrative construction. Both coherence and adequacy are spectrums. Our unique combinations developed from interaction with the SoCo fall somewhere along these spectrums and one would hope to attain at least a balanced position somewhere in the middle of each. Adequacy and coherency are identified by asking “how much?” and “what kind?”. Essentially, we build narratives from the genres which we co-construct during our early social experience and we continue to use these genres throughout life. Unfortunately, when our childhood experience is traumatic, the tragic perspective is constructed and we develop genres which are either inadequate or incoherent (or both) for dealing with the social world as an adult. “The child’s brain may become shaped in ways that do not support his long-term survival”, Cozolino explains, noting that “nonloving behaviour signals to the child that the world is a dangerous place and tells him not to explore, discover, or take chances” (206). The tragic innocence of the developing child who must draw on whatever experience is offered to them in order to build the generic frameworks which will inform the rest of their lives cannot be overstated. A person’s narratives are the creative instances of a generic lineage which spans beyond their own childhood experience past their parents and further. Cozolino recognises that children’s narratives reflect the “editorial choices” made by caregivers whose narratives themselves are informed, of course, from their own caregivers, and the lineage precedes ad infinitum.

If our narratives are incoherent to the SoCo then we will struggle to communicate with others, and our values may be skewed with regard to social “norms”. The more extreme the removal from the social consciousness, the more extreme symptoms may result: paranoia; hallucinations; feelings of

isolation and alienation; delusions. If our narratives draw on inadequate information we may be capable of constructing only a limited self-narrative and a limited understanding of social interaction and emotional cues. In some cases, an inadequate generic repertoire will lead to a hypervigilance and hyperjudgement of social and emotional cues. Hyperadequacy – overspecification – may impair a person’s capacity to generalise or “see the bigger picture” or nuance in expression of cues. Problems arise with narrow generic repertoires due to lack of experience with which to inform narrative construction. Narratives will be definitive, rigid, and “black-and-white” in nature. A limited self-narrative can produce the feeling of a lack of “sense of self” and impaired memory; anxiety; emotional instability; low self-esteem; underdeveloped social responses; trouble coping with life in general and stress in particular.

Of course, there is infinite overlap and unique combination of adequacy, coherence, and ultimately generic *competence*. Competence requires both adequacy and coherence but furthermore requires practice, time, and *control* (confidence and responsibility as a result of safety – familiarity) which leads to creativity. There are wide ranging variant types of response along the spectrums of coherence and adequacy and considerable “cross-over”. For instance, inadequacy can be widespread across all categories or it may affect only certain categories. A person may have actually a “hyperadequate” fear category (which is problematic itself) but have an underdeveloped category for love if they have not actually received it and don’t know what it is *meant to be like*. They cannot “as-if” about love. Here, we could see a crossover into incoherence if other material is substituted and consequently misattributed to the category of “love”. For example, oftentimes food or superficial objects or the concept of control will be substituted and associated with the love category. In more tragic cases, abuse is categorised as an act of love. In such a case it is imagined that the narratives produced from generic experience will be both incoherent and inadequate, and will lead to an impaired generic competence for the character at their centre.

- ◇ **Sociation:** Tragic sociation presents as difficult interpersonal relationships, social anxiety, avoidance, manipulation, insecure social identity, emotional dysregulation, and limited generic competence. Consequently, development of self is arrested or fragmented. Tragic sociation represents a coherent or adequate response to an incoherent or inadequate situation. Very broadly speaking, SoCo proposes that incoherence is a result of *abuse*, and inadequacy a result of *neglect*. Again, it should be stressed that the two qualities of narrative exist on spectrums which interact with each other and that any reference to them infers “only” the *gist* or *type* of the experience; its genre. It is reasonable to suggest a link between the types of experience and the types of emergent narratives once we consider certain implications of limited or disorganised experience. A child who is neglected has no opportunity to copy, learn, or practice in any meaningful way the “rules” of the social world. Thus, their generic repertoires will be sparse, limited, and underdeveloped. Inadequate generic repertoires make the world a very scary place because the person has insufficient information at their disposal to use

in dealing with the world. A child who grows up in an abusive environment is offered warped information with which to inform their generic repertoire.

- ◇ **Attachment:** The tragic interpretation of attachment aligns with the insecure attachment pattern, and encapsulates the various kinds; avoidant, anxious, and disorganised, because in each case the individual's social and thus conscious experience will be affected. Attachment to others is interpreted as unsafe and unresponsive and the tragic individual's performance will correspond. Bowlby defines insecure attachment as imbalanced, passive, and anti-social, and associated with stereotypical or formulaic movements and responses, little exploration or initiation of contact, and consistent anxiety (338). Thus, the tragic perspective is associated with stock roles and stereotypical behaviour. An individual who develops an insecure attachment and thus operates from a tragic disposition does not do enough of the testing, exploring, trialling and erroring, or interacting which is required if one is to develop nuanced responses and behaviours. Instead, they must rely on basic stereotypical action; creativity is stifled. Of course, it makes undeniable sense that when we feel unsafe we are not likely to take risks and experiment. The tragic perspective answers the fundamental attachment question – once again, “Is the attachment figure nearby, accessible, and attentive?” – with a more or less resounding “no”. According to Fraley, attachment behaviours continue until either the individual is able to resolve the attachment wound or the individual is finally “worn down”. The tragic perspective has little to no sense of security or confidence in other people's responsiveness or care. As pointed out by Cozolino, tragic experience correlates with less secure attachment and “a decreased ability to think about internal states. Interestingly, Cozolino suggests that the result of this developmental pattern is “a greater tendency to ‘act out’ instead of being able to think about, discuss, and come to understand... feelings” (2010, 418).
- ◇ **Conflict:** The tragic perspective attempts desperately to evade conflict, or desperately to create conflict, and once involved in or confronted by conflict, agonises and obsesses over it. Thus, conflict is the central concept in the tragic perspective. Attached to this focus on conflict is an expectation and thus usually a real outcome of irresolution. Conflict is usually met with overwhelming activation or inhibition of emotions and the associated emotions will differ too, both factors dependent on experience. Once again, we find how much and what kind. The tragic individual fails to see the potential of conflict, the other side of the story, and fails as well to see that the conflict itself is not in their control but instead they must attend to their response. Baumeister references Hamlet, who he describes as spending much of the play caught between incompatible obligations, “paralysed by indecision, ruminating about the proper course of action, misbehaving in various ways, and even seeming to lapse into madness” (15). Hamlet agonises over his conflict. Really, a conflict consists of a set of opposed choices. He agonises over his own inability to choose. It is not conflict itself which makes life tragic or comic but instead it is our *response* to conflict which constitutes our perspective. Having bad luck does not equate to tragedy. The tragic perspective interprets conflict as inherently personal and usually malevolent rather than as a neutral, natural, and common result of different perspectives. Their conceptualisation

is limited and thus their response is limited, and limiting. Conflict is perceived as unresolvable and inescapable. For the tragic individual, life is conflict, love is conflict, and “to be” in general is conflict. Because conflict seems relentless and inevitable and unfair, the tragic individual fails to respond or responds in an inadequate or incoherent manner.

The tragic perspective fails either to grasp or to accept that conflict is inevitable and contradiction is inherent. Kierkegaard explains that the tragic is to suffer or despair about conflict. There is no use in agonising over our dependency on Genre and its fallibility and the continuous conflicts which arise from it. We must either act or at least laugh. The tragic perspective misses the point and thus chooses to suffer, which explains the ironic quality of the tragic response; its outcome and inherently its goal is *suffering*.

Shakespeare’s understanding of the tragic genre enabled him to communicate its nuance, and his tragic characters remind us of the true meaning of hamartia; it does not pertain to fault, guilt, blame, fate, destiny, fortune, or the gods, it pertains to responsibility, creativity, and the SoCo. If we do not understand how Genre works or if we do not attempt to change it when we notice that something is wrong or outdated, then we set ourselves up for tragedy. Furthermore, if we respond to errors, contradictions, flaws, unmet expectations and other forms of conflict tragically, we cannot see the comic potential of conflict. The endeavour to avoid error is futile and limiting. The potential for error cannot be removed. Instead, we must respond creatively. Error creates the potential for creativity in the first place. But whereas the comic perspective understands the inevitability of regular failures, errors, and conflicts throughout life’s course and contemplates how failure can be reinterpreted as cause for observation, experimentation, and generic potential, the tragic perspective misinterprets these concepts. Making an error doesn’t have to be the end of the world (although certainly it can feel that way). Errors enable us to remember what not to do in preparation for future action, failure is how we learn and develop competence. *Failure is crucial for creativity*. Failure is a necessary part of life which the tragic perspective fails to acknowledge, understand, or accept. As a species we do tend generally to conceptualise failure from a tragic perspective. Most of us “miss the point” of failure; its function. Evidently, comedy is not about avoiding errors but responding to them creatively in order to reach some kind of, at least temporary, resolution and learn something along the way. Tragedy begets tragedy. Irresolution begets irresolution. It is the refusal to change response to conflict rather than conflict itself which impairs the tragic perspective. I have not yet reached a decision about what this means in terms of Aristotle’s “complete action”. Perhaps Aristotle meant “historical” or “done”, “unchangeable”, “having happened or been experience already”. By my own estimation of tragedy, it represents an incomplete cycle; stunted, arrested, not a full turn, unresolvable inner and outer conflict.

- ◇ **Control:** The tragic individual perceives themselves to be *out of control* – and, while not always, it is possible that others will perceive them in this way, too. Or, the individual is controlled by *unconscious drives*. Different instantiations of this perception might include feeling that they are not in control of their self,

that they are not in control of others, that they cannot control the events in their lives or their feelings, and so on. Usually, a combination emerges. There is an inability or, more accurately, an unwillingness to accept responsibility, for any plethora of reasons, and without responsibility and agency, control cannot be achieved. Tragedy regards the failure to control the self as well as attempts to control others or external events or other uncontrollable things. Unfortunately, no matter how much we inflate such individuals with romanticised misfortune, evil bombast, or tragic nobility, *all* tragic roles are reducible to stock types. Comic identities are harder to fashion, both on the page and in real life, because they “break the mould”, so to speak. A tragic character’s central feature is their weakness – they do not have the strength (as detailed by Baumeister et al) to transform their perspective, to take control, to create an original role for themselves. It is in comedies which we see strength of character. Of course, it is the comic elements throughout Shakespeare’s tragedies which show us these characterological glimpses and flesh out their roles. Genre is how we regulate, it’s how we control. If our perspective is tragic, the action which emerges will be tragic, too. Again, it is a matter of responsibility. Baumeister et al point out that humans are not “helpless, passive victim[s] of being overwhelmed by forces that make self-regulation impossible; rather, in a sense the person chooses to stop keeping track of his or her own behaviour and thus actively allows self-regulation to fail”, adding that “it is rare that human behaviour is the result of inner forces that the person is entirely helpless to stop or control” (30).

Responsibility remains unchanged whether or not the action was performed as a result of ignoring your options from which to choose, acting too quickly or too slowly, getting confused, or making the wrong choice either purposefully or unwittingly. Action equals responsibility. Intention/fault is irrelevant. But Shakespeare shows that actually we don’t usually interpret it as such. We care about the reasons why someone acts and potentially will change our mind about our interpretation based upon such information – what Aristotle would call “episodic” (Benardete and Davis, 28) detail. Interesting. It’s almost as if our capacity to reconsider our choice after our initial instinct and based on more detailed information is our defining skill; to interpret a different story from the same actions. We use Genre to achieve such reinterpretation.

Certain circumstances weaken our ability to control and give us insight into the way that the tragic perspective interprets control generally. In a recent discussion about the impacts of the pandemic on self-regulation for *The Observer* (2021), Baumeister explains that *uncertainty* weakens self-control. When we feel unsafe or denied the things that we need for successful self-regulation, we are prone to “losing our will power” and making questionable choices. The tragic perspective interprets their experience as uncertain, unsafe, and bereft pretty much *all of the time*. It’s worth noting that Shakespeare creates such uncertain or unfamiliar circumstances constantly for his characters. What he makes clear is that while our circumstances may affect the balance of control, we each remain responsible for our own choices.

Finally, the stoic approach highlights the difference between the comic and tragic perspectives in terms of control, and the fate of the tragic conceptualisation. Epictetus wrote in his *Enchiridion* that

The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhindered; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, belonging to others. Remember, then, that if you suppose that things which are slavish by nature are also free, and that what belongs to others is your own, then you will be hindered. You will lament, you will be disturbed, and you will find fault both with gods and men.

TRAGIC PROPERTIES, TROPES, AND FEATURES

- ◇ **Tragic Expectations** – The tragic perspective produces limited, rigid, and incoherent expectations about relative safety, no faith in constancy, definitive and/or skewed views about value, nature, and experience, based on inadequate or unsafe engagement with the SoCo in early experience but not necessarily supported by current experience. The tragic perspective responds to unmet expectations in extremely emotional and limited ways, and often the individual will regularly engage in situations where their expectations will be thwarted in a kind of self-fulfilling type of justificatory behaviour, so as to fulfil the tragic narrative by which they live their life and understand the world. Tragic expectations might include the following: that people will leave, that people will treat them poorly, that life is unfair, that they will have bad luck, that things will go wrong, that every situation will turn out the worst, that love and trust are painful and scary.
- ◇ **Tragic Scripts** – The “I can’t” script is perhaps the touchstone of the tragic repertoire. Exactly, so it is their inability to change response, not the conflicts themselves. Scripts tend to take the form of generalisations, they are stereotypical, reductive, repetitive, negative, rigid, largely irrational, often accusatory or utilised to shift blame or responsibility, often self-centred, and so on.
- ◇ **Self-Absorption** – The observation of this quality of the tragic perspective is not meant to be insulting, rather it is difficult to describe succinctly. The individual operates through a sort of tunnel-vision which blinds them from being able to comprehend the experience of others, to see beyond the self. The perspective is self-absorbed as opposed to social. The individual is not generally aware or “conscious” of this quality of their perception. It is almost as though the self is so fragmented or the generic competence so limited or the tragic experience so overwhelming that the individual cannot see past the self. There is a focus on the self and an inability “to see from another’s point of view”. So much effort has to be put in “manually”, so to speak, in order to achieve self-control when equipped with deficient regulatory systems based on tragic experience that there is no further scope to attend to anything beyond the self. There is no recognition and thus no understanding of the nuance of experience and interpretation, of the variety of perspectives and the

specificity and limited relevance of our own experience and interpretations to other unique individuals. Because this understanding is absent there is a general disposition of black and white conceptualisation and understanding subjective perspective as the accurate and “right” worldview as opposed to individual who hold other views, who are “wrong”. Again, this style emerges from generic incompetence which, although not necessarily the individual’s “fault” initially, becomes certainly their responsibility to address and change. All tragedy is self-contained in a way. Tragedy is the true home of the soliloquy; the ballad of the self. In tragedy the universal is destroyed by or destroys the individual –Shakespeare illuminates their co-occurrence. The tragic prioritises the individual, the individual desire, and the past. Place and position are interpreted only through the lens of personal significance. The tragic perspective revolves around self-protection but in its distortions and limitations achieves only destruction to both self and also others. In this respect the tragic perspective is dissociative but simultaneously co-dependent; it is associated with social rejection, isolation, separation, fragmentation, discord, and non-responsiveness but at the same time the tragic individual depends almost entirely on external validation because their understanding and estimation of their self is so poor as accords with their experience. Also, the tragic individual tends to shift the blame to the social or the external. And finally, because of their limited competence, the tragic individual struggles with communication and interpretation, and thus develops problematic interpersonal relationships which perpetuate the tragic conceptualisation. Therefore, tragedy is about severing social connections, yes, but at the same time the tragic identity is wholly dependent on the social.

- ◇ **Destruction** – Tragedies are about shutting down; breaking apart. The tragic perspective is associated with isolation, suffering, downfall. Aristotle stipulated that an important aspect of tragic plot is the “Scene of Suffering”, “a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like”. However, Benardete and Davis note that in their interpretation *pathos* translates not only to “suffering” but instead serves a range of meanings from “experiencing” or “undergoing” to “suffering” (3). Merriam-Webster offer the following account of pathos’ etymological journey:

The Greek word *pathos* means "suffering," "experience," or "emotion." It was borrowed into English in the 16th century... "Pathos" has quite a few kin in English. A "pathetic" sight moves us to pity. "Empathy" is the ability to feel the emotions of another. Though "pathology" is not literally "the study of suffering," it is "the study of diseases." You can probably guess at more relatives of "pathos." "Sympathy," "apathetic," "antipathy," "sociopath," and "psychopath" are a few.

So, pathos can be defined as emotional experience in general. Pathos functions to engender experience, the interpretation of experience, and the response to it. Benardete and Davis suggest that the tragic formula indicates that “we learn through suffering or undergoing (*pathei mathos*)” (xxvi). But, according to the broader definition, we learn through emotional experience *in general*. It is our response to emotional experience which defines the genre. Pathos can be responded to comically or tragically. It is the tragic response to

experience, the tragic interpretation, which transforms it into *suffering*. The tragic interpretation of emotional experience is dysregulated, caricatured, and destructive. The tragic response seeks to shut down, sever ties, defend, and hurt because the perspective is associated with insecurity, distrust, desperate self-protection, and acting out. The perspective is critical, dismissive, disinhibited, harsh, unhelpful, dysfunctional, damaging and detrimental. Tragic individuals may engage in self-harm, experience difficult or even chaotic interpersonal relationships, destroy good opportunities, and discount positive events, achievements, people, or feedback. Their interpretation of experience tends to be extremely personal and negative, and can be distressing, intense, hurtful, or scary. Experience is translated through the tragic lens without external evidence but instead produced “merely” by the genre, the perspective.

The tragic perspective translates minor lapses into major breakdowns. This phenomenon can be observed at a physiological level. Van der Kolk explains that “trauma interferes with the proper functioning of brain areas that manage and interpret experience” and so the individual is being “constantly assaulted by, but consciously cut off from, the origin of bodily sensations” losing their capacity to sense and communicate experience (247). Thus the tragic individual cannot simply revisit tragic experience but each time they *relive* the experience. Essentially, instead of remembering experience, the tragic individual “as-ifs” the experience; the body responds “as-if” the traumatic events were reoccurring and reexperiences whatever kind of tragic response they performed in the original instance. Accordingly, Van Der Kolk explains that “it is the body’s response to the foreign object that becomes the problem more than the object itself” (247). The event continues to be interpreted tragically.

A useful marker for the tragic perspective which emerges from these observations is the tendency to pick apart insignificant details as a strategy for avoiding the main point – the conceptualisation. It is a key avoidance tactic, or based on generic incompetence may reflect a genuine incapacity to conceptualise. Both are products of the tragic perspective; communication and conceptualisation are shut down, understanding is thwarted, interaction is repetitive, rigid, limited, defensive, overprotected, narrowminded, connections are destroyed. The tragic perspective deems attending to higher levels of meaning for whatever personal reason unsafe. Unsafe to physical body, to reputation, to social connections, to self-esteem, to justification of expectations and perspective, and so on. Unsafe because they fear change. And so, communication is shut down. Interestingly, Van Der Kolk points out that during truly terrifying experience, or confrontation with “the horror of ‘inescapable shock’, the memory system “becomes overwhelmed and breaks down” (176). So in the wake of tragic experience, the tragic perspective becomes associated with shutting down, inaccessible memory or experience, incapacity to then override or overwrite or overrule. Because during singularly traumatic experience the mind shuts down, subsequent attempts to process the experience will result in the same shut down. What remains is the generic trace, the curiosity, the anxiety, the uncomfortable feelings, the sense of unfairness, the fragmented scenes, and of course, the tragic perspective.

Furthermore, if traumatic experience is constant or prolonged it becomes taken-for-granted, unconscious, and thus “forgotten” but known, implicitly. Our body remembers. Because it feels ordinary, it does not capture the attention. What becomes the ordinary is the tragic response – shutting down. The most heartbreaking element of the destructive tragic perspective is its paralogical goal; self protection. This is why the perspectives are so complex, and Shakespeare knew. There’s two sides to every coin, and there’s constant irrationality in our rationality, to use Benardete and Davis’ words.

Destruction can be achieved by ignorance or wrong action. The responsibility remains with the individual. Once again, responsibility can be placed with the individual alone because they alone are capable of regulating their choices. The concept of tragic fortune or fated destruction is appealing because it negates responsibility and obfuscates social and individual responsibility. Their experience is tragic, but it is their responsibility to make sure that they respond to it comically. It is of course the responsibility of society and all of its individuals to make changes so that tragic experience does not take place. But the destructive tragic perspective is, like any generic trace, hard to shake, hard to unpick.

- ◇ **Limitation** – The stereotypical action and stock characters from tragedy reflect one of the tragic perspective’s principal functions; to *limit*. The tragic perspective is characterized by general limitation, interpreting Genre as limiting and constricting, failing to conceptualise its potential. Of course, the perspective is limited primarily because it is hyperfocused on the self. But as well, the tragic individual is prone to limiting conceptualisation and action: they jump to conclusions, clutch to predetermined values, act impulsively, rigidly, spuriously, formulaically, and predictably. They fight futilely against the SoCo instead of trying to change it or their self positively or constructively or to their advantage. Their definitive views leave little to no room for adaptation, exploration, experimentation, or empathy. Limited scripts such as “I can’t” or definitive, black and white answers shut down further engagement. Experience is perceived as inevitable rather than made up of choices. There is little to no personal responsibility and thus little to no autonomy. While the tragic perspective may be rooted in inescapable shock or horror, in adulthood the tragic individual fails to acknowledge, understand, or accept that experience or our response to experience is in fact escapable, or at least it can be changed, or we can choose to see it differently. Iago could just quit and find a more fulfilling professional role where he could establish a new and more rewarding social identity. But, he operates from the tragic perspective. The tragic perspective prioritises defence, arguably to the exclusion of all other goals, and thus all energy must be directed towards that goal; there is no hope for offense – for attempts at meaningful, strategic, proactive performance. As we know, a successful performance in a game requires both offense and defence, much as a successful dramatic performance requires an integration of generic and novel features. The aim of defence is to minimise. The aim of offense is to increase. The tragic perspective is reactive compared to the proactive comic perspective, defensive as opposed to playful, and limited as opposed to expansive. Despite their total preoccupation with the self, the tragic individual lacks self-awareness due to their skewed and limited

perspective. They never think themselves that they have a tragic perspective. They think that they are right. It is the only way that they know how to be. For instance, a villain never thinks he's a villain. To an extent Iago bends this rule but his actions are comic according to his narrative. To varying degrees, then, the tragic perspective is always delusional, or at least, we must always acknowledge the centrality of perspective. They are committed to their side of the story. They are committed to their limited role because it is all that is "holding them together" or "stopping them from falling apart". They cannot shed the limited role because it would mean facing the entire breakdown of their identity; an existential crisis. It's a very precarious position. The tragic perspective in its limited capacity is untenable, extremely sensitive, weak, vulnerable, prone to break down, insufficient and overly formulaic, poorly regulated, basic, and more or less generically incompetent.

Horney notes that "an understanding of neurotic trends much depends on recognising their difference from ... *ad hoc* strategy" (45). *We use Genre* when we *ad hoc* but when our genres are limited or incoherent we cannot improvise. The genres become rigid and the narratives that they produce are formulaic. *Ad hoc* Genre work is flexible and creative. It demands coherent and adequate information and furthermore competence in playing with Genre. Rigid strategic trends or genres produce predictable, limited, and limiting responses. Horney suggests that the pursuits shaped by traumatically informed strategic trends "are almost a caricature of the human values they resemble. They lack freedom, spontaneity, and meaning. All too often they involve illusory elements. Their value is only subjective, and lies in the fact that they hold the more or less desperate promise of safety and of a solution for all problems" (58).

Limited genres produce "narrow-mindedness"; inability to take even small risks; fear of change however slight; little connection with emotions; lack of sense of self; depression; anxiety. Cozolino notes that "depressed patients tend to evaluate their world in absolute terms, take details out of context, and experience neutral comments and events as negative" and that "common depressive thoughts include the expectation of failure despite many past successes, and thoughts that one is alone despite being surrounded by friends and family" (39).

Shakespeare shows his characters being reduced to or affected by stereotype, he shows the banality of stock response. Characters such as Iago whose world-view affects rigid generic definitions of the world and its inhabitants can be compared to an individual who develops rigid and narrow-minded views such as racist views but an also extremely self-centred vision of the world in general. The individual is reduced to a predictable stereotype with unwavering opinions based on tenuous; constructed; or non-existent supporting evidence. "The more indispensable the neurotic trends are for a person, and the more questionable their actual value, the more vigorously and rigidly must he defend and justify them", Horney clarifies (66). The tragic perspective and its limited generic repertoire inform the entire organisation of the life narrative, and an affront to some generic cue or feature is an affront to the entire personality, the entire world-view, the entire way of coping with life.

Furthermore, Horney highlights the perpetuation of traumatic structure by translation into narrative and action. The strategies developed, says Horney, entail attitudes which “tend to be generalised in order not to leave open any loophole” (66). Viewing the world through rigid generalisations and using them as the basis for mapping action offers few routes and leads to stereotypical and limited behaviour. Racist views and the justification which people use to support them are a perfect example. Genre as a tool for social progression will be discussed at more length later in the thesis. But, we all *need* our expectations to be met, even if they are formed by traumatic experience. It takes continuous hard work to identify and to change rigid tragic expectations developed in early experience. The principal limitation of the tragic perspective is the unwillingness to change, to try; the refusal to accept responsibility.

(It is worth making a disclaimer here about the creative potential of the tragic perspective because of its unique interpretation of experience. We love stories about the tragic perspective, because they are interesting. This potential will be addressed more fully later).

- ◇ **Tragic properties** – limited, destructive, dissociative, dependent, precarious, intense, self-absorbed, rigid, all-encompassing, magnifying, formulaic, definitive, incoherent, inadequate, generically incompetent, vulnerable, arrested, hypervigilant or shut down, narrowminded, fearful, defensive, risk-averse.

The tragic perspective echoes the withering, untended garden, rotting and knotted with weeds. And thus, tragedies impart the following lesson: tend to your garden! Pay attention to the perspective from which you operate, the choices that you make, the effort that you put into engaging with life. Hamlet is such a profoundly interesting, strong, and “realistic” character because he is willing to put the time in to attend to his perspective but his problem is that he does not act upon it – which is why people sort of interpret *Hamlet* correctly but not for the right reasons. Shakespeare creates a truly authentic rendition of a very human response; he shows that we can know the “right” answers and yet still we do not act or we do not change our behaviour. It reminds me of my own early days in psychotherapy. Hamlet shows us that even when one has the personal strength and generic competence required to uphold comic values, they may be – are often – beaten down by the SoCo, anyway. We see in Iago and Hamlet two starkly and ingeniously different types of tragic perspective – but both individuals are operating from and within the tragic perspective, nonetheless. Many critics interpret their self-destruction as ironic; it is not ironic but to be expected. While Shakespeare understood irony as inherent within both perspectives, self-destruction is the essential, implicit goal of the tragic perspective. To destroy the other is to destroy the self. The tragic response is to shut things down. It is up to the individual to change perspective. Once again, pain is inevitable but suffering is optional. Life happens no matter how you respond, as conveyed wonderfully by King Lear’s fool who remarks of the storm, “here’s a night pities neither wise men nor fools” (III.ii.12).

SOCO INSIGHTS FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy “locates” and recalibrates our genres. It is literally the business of reorganising generic frameworks. In therapy we co-create a story using generic cues interpreted by the therapist. The therapist thus must be highly competent in reading generic cues. They must respond emphatically to the patient’s non-verbal cues as well as the generic qualities of their narratives. To interpret these cues the therapist themselves must be able to categorise them implicitly. If the two individuals share a social culture then they are primed to do so. The therapist must interpret the conscious action of the individual in order to reveal the unconscious generic perspective. Generally, if an individual ends up in the therapeutic situation, they are using a tragic perspective. However, the fact that they are seeking help shows that they are willing to do the work. Of course, when we attempt this work in self-analysis we must perform both sides which is admittedly the more difficult task. The individual must become at once the playwright, the director, the actor, the editor, the audience, and the critic, which is great because one *is* or does these roles already, naturally.

As with art, Cozolino suggests that “*interpretations* are one of the psychodynamic therapist’s most important tools... interpretations attempt to make the unconscious conscious” (35). In fact, when we interpret a text we are making it conscious, so-to-speak, and this is also what we do when we try to imagine what someone else is thinking. We try on a different type of perspective – we make conscious a different type of experience. Consciousness is *required* for interpretation. Shakespeare’s characters seem real and unique because they are interpretative. The audience’s interpretation of his work is a requirement for the transmission of Shakespeare’s plays: we are forced to make the overall decisions about the arguments that he puts forwards, to fill the “gaps” which Emma Smith says that he weaves throughout his stories. It’s all about rhetoric – genre! Shakespeare argues both sides and we must interpret the whole situations and come to our answer – like we “come to” consciousness; like Damasio says “self comes to mind” (2010).

“The upside” according to Cozolino, “is that difficult or confusing memories can be restructured”. Once we view the self as a structure – a genre – the prospect of change becomes viable. “Revisiting and revising the past (and related thoughts and beliefs) are central components of dynamic, cognitive, and systems therapies”, Cozolino states, and he draws an analogy between such work in therapy and the natural editing which we do whenever we tell stories over time, “I’m sure that as tribal elders tell the stories that they heard as children in ... small circles” he ponders, “they intentionally or even unwittingly make them more relevant to the current life of their tribe” (418). The key ingredient with any creative development is time. Insight often accompanies hindsight. Change takes time and experience and effort. I can look back retrospectively now after working at it for years and I can see the trajectory of creative development of my self, the incremental change; I have changed the genre of my life, my perspective. Our unique experience creates our perspective but we *can* change it. Genre is about creative potential, not just stories from the past. Our goal should be to achieve a balanced engagement with life.

Achieving balance requires *integration*. In fact, Cozolino explains that “the focus on integration exists at each level of nature’s complexity from neurons to narratives

to nations. As systems become more complex, it takes more sophisticated mechanisms and increasing amounts of energy to support their continuing interconnection and homeostatic balance” (2010, 174). To achieve *psychological* balance requires, as Cozolino points out, sophisticated mechanisms, high levels of energy, and continued work to “keep it all together”. Furthermore, balance requires a system which regulates and monitors levels of processing. The system, or *genre*, which we use to do this work, is the self-genre. And, once we have built some kind of foundation for the self-genre, or in Cozolino’s words “as the language of self-awareness is expanded and reinforced, we learn we are capable of evaluating and choosing whether to follow the expectations of others and the mandates of our childhoods” (171). So, put another way, once we have constructed a system for maintaining and monitoring balance – a genre – but only after we recognise, become aware, or attend to that system and its engagement with the larger social system, we can use it to inform our decisions about the genres of the SoCo which shaped our self-genre initially. In the process, we risk only the discovery of more rich information to add to our self-genre. To simplify even further, *we get to know our self*. When we engage with Genre, we achieve “the feeling of knowing”, the integration of experience and awareness; consciousness.

The emphasis on balance does suggest that individuals need to accrue their “fair share” of tragic experience. It must be accrued in a safe environment or recouped later with greater effort required as time passes. Fortunately, the world tends to dole out enough tragic experience for everyone to get adequate generic competence under their belt. The process continues for a life-time. The more that we are able to “deal” with, the more that we are able to “deal” with, it seems. It explains why those individuals who have been able to transform their tragic experience to a comic narrative are told frequently that they are “strong”.

A first step can be extremely simple. We can ask ourselves: “am I in control?” Or, “do I *feel* in control?” Our answer will guide us forward. Once it is identified, our response – comic or tragic, yes or no – can be brought to the table for creative work and development. Recognising this fact empowers us to take creative control. These ideas are not new: self-analysis, stories, and so on. But, paired with the new conceptualisation of Genre are rendered more accessible. Once we begin to increase our generic competence, we can take control of re-writing our stories.

Another way to identify your perspective – and to implement change – is through your *rhetoric*, or your “generic scripts”. I noticed that one of my most-used scripts was “I can’t”. What a destructive “affirmation”. What we need to realise is that each time we repeat such a statement to ourselves – a statement which to the speaker seems unequivocal – we reinforce its message and we act accordingly (i.e., we become incapable of change). “I can’t” is a self-fulfilling prophecy, if you will. It is a response typical from individuals with Eating Disorders, or in fact any compulsive disorder, to others’ attempts to help them change their behaviour. “I can’t” or “I *just* can’t”: this script is extremely damaging to self-esteem and destroys any potential attempts at facing and changing whatever it is that challenges the individual. The words that we use and think and repeat to ourselves and others shape our experience. Instead of using limiting vocabulary and de-affirmations or condemnations, we must repeat constructive affirmations.

So, if we identify the “I can’t” script within our own repertoire, what can we do about it? Well, if we accept that “I can’t” is just a script which we repeat to ourselves, having learned it throughout difficult past experience, we can accept that we could just as plausibly utilise an alternative script. Perhaps, whenever we feel like saying “I can’t”, instead we try to say “I can”. This translation may feel silly or insignificant but when we acknowledge rhetoric’s power on emotions and behaviour, it seems more reasonable to accept that such a seemingly-trivial alteration could have an important effect on our perspective. The script doesn’t have to be “I can”. We can use any variation which seems relevant to our own circumstance and we should, so long as we aim for a constructive perspective. What sounds simple and insignificant is not in actuality all that easy to do. From my personal experience, I can recall that I spent a long time putting too much emphasis on my “sunk costs” – my long-term commitment to the tragic perspective – which only increased the longer I perpetuated them, obviously. It was like I felt that I had committed too much of my life already to being unable to cope and miserable that I didn’t want to or think that I could give it up. I hope that my experience helps the reader to think that they *can*. Changing scripts can be arduous and requires sustained effort and practice, much like one would engage in when rehearsing for a play. It is not an easy task, and it requires “insight, motivation and readiness for change” (Freeman et al) as key variables. Say: “I can.”

We can *try on* different ways of acting whenever we want. We can act like the person that we want to be. We can try acting one way instead of acting another because it’s just a generic response anyway and why not experiment. If your current responses aren’t really working out for you then you have nothing to lose. Life becomes a living experiment and we can make choices about whether to conform with or subvert generic conventions from our newly secure vantage point. In other words, *try something new*. I turned my perspective from tragedy to comedy by taking an objective and sometimes absurdist perspective on life’s often hilarious and stranger-than-fiction happenings. Life is what you expect or perceive it to be. Your personal and unique engagement with Genre (expectations about life) shape how you perceive and achieve meaning in life. If you perceive everything as tragic then the action will follow generic suit. Or, it will seem so to you. But, we *can* see it differently; we can *act* differently. We can change perspective by identifying and reaching some kind of understanding of our self-genre and by adapting it creatively in ways which affect our subsequent behaviour and in turn our emotions. We need to choose to change our way of seeing if doing so is advantageous to us and is prosocial, too. Part of understanding our own perspective requires that we understand the perspectives of others who are different from us – in fact, our perspective is built by our perception of the perspectives of others. By gaining experience with different perspectives, learning about different life-experiences, we expand our generic repertoire, gain generic competence, and over time become adept at experimenting and *controlling* Genre in a creative and constructive way.

SoCo provides a useful and neutral vocabulary with which to discuss otherwise highly emotional issues, a vocabulary with which to tackle material often difficult to conceptualise. Conceptualising the self as a genre, for example, addresses several problems which occur in psychotherapy – continuity, frequency of work, labelling, interpretation, classification, and so on. Genre is a concept of which most individuals have at least some basic understanding, as opposed to “neurotic

trend” or “attachment pattern” or other such term. Using the conceptual framework provided by a broader understanding of Genre enables us to achieve a sort of objectivity about our lives and the feelings and actions and stories which we create and experience. From the perspective of the new SoCo theory, our engagement with “storytelling” can be extended in ways that are crucial and exciting for psychotherapy and also “DIY” self-development.

According to Cozolino, psychotherapists attempt to create for their patients “a metacognitive vantage point from which the shifting states of mind that emerge during day-to-day life can be thought about”. He suggests that such a vantage point is accomplished by *interpersonal storytelling*. This process seeks to integrate the narratives of therapist and patient, encouraging the patient to re-learn the socio; to reconstruct their generic framework based on what is learned in therapy. By bringing Genre into the therapeutic discussion and conceptualisation, we find a tangible approach to dealing with the “stories” that come up in therapy. It is strange, actually, that the vocabulary of Genre makes difficult emotional issues seem tangible and objective, because Genre itself is so intangible and implicit. Cozolino acknowledges the positive effects of labelling but of course genres are much more than labels. The information which genres infer is more than is summed up by their label, and their function is to facilitate inference – to communicate. Genre offers a practical vocabulary with which to analyse and assess stories, to interpret their meaning, and most importantly, to make changes. Once again, before we learn how to subvert – to change – we must understand convention.

By applying the new idea of Genre, in fact, change is redefined as a plausible option, and those things which seem unchangeable to us like the self, a world-view, or a mood are reconsidered. A therapist can guide the creative development of our generic repertoire and in many cases provide invaluable support, guidance, and emotional regulation but I believe that we can construct this sort of process for ourselves, too. Once we start using the SoCo perspective and vocabulary, we can begin to ask our own questions – questions which guide the creative development of our conceptual competence. One of the most important drivers for SoCo is to offer a new way of dealing with life and to aid the creative development of the self-genre. Basically, therapy is an invaluable service which is concerned largely with development of the self-genre in relation to the SoCo. But, creative writing is a unique tool with which we can create and capture truly experimental instantiations of our self-genre with a sort of “no risk” policy. The creative process of experimenting with Genre in writing can be applied when we come to think about our ways of perceiving the world and perhaps to challenge our existing conceptual frameworks. Active and curious story drafting can be used to experiment with different ways of seeing. Perhaps some other way of seeing might make “more sense”. Perhaps by questioning our different generic conceptualisations we might realise that they *don't* make sense, or that we didn't realise what conceptual logic we were using at all.

It is a worthwhile endeavour, then, to interrogate the stories and metaphors by which we live and address the prospect of changing them. Often, the narratives will be a mixture of useful and damaging, perhaps presenting different effects in different arenas such as intellectual versus emotional, for example. The idea of generic investigation is to weigh up the odds and make positive change. This goal is, in fact, the goal of consciousness. Both Cozolino and Horney specify the necessity for

repeated performance and acknowledge the reconstructive work that it constitutes, with the expectation that with time both perspective and the very architecture of the brain will be developed creatively. “In essence”, Cozolino explains, “therapists hope to teach their clients that they are more than their present story but can also be editors and authors of new stories” (171).

Studies and treatment of mental disorders such as personality disorders could be helped through closer inspection of Genre. A sweeping consequence of the SoCo framework, I hope, will result from the opportunity it presents for the psychotherapeutic treatment of *children*, specifically. The main idea that I want to communicate about this approach to psychology is that it doesn't matter how your life starts but *how you choose to respond to it*. The concept of changing the genre of your life-story from tragedy to comedy is so wonderfully simple that it can be taught to children and implemented in their psychotherapeutic treatment. We need to tell and edit and write and rewrite and *perform the way we want our life to be*.

This thesis does not attempt undermine the vast complexity and nuance of mental health, illness, and neurodiversity. Instead, this chapter has presented an overview of the SoCo psychological model and its interdisciplinary theoretical underpinnings. The two general perspectives offer the general, not the specific. As demonstrated through his plays, Shakespeare recognised that a play in one form – comedy or tragedy – emerges as a unique instance of the genre. No two of Shakespeare's comedies can be said to be “the same”, and similarly his tragedies are intricately nuanced. The genre can guide us but the specific details emerge from the “actual” experience. All sorts of different interpretations can emerge from the same type of perspective. The purpose of this chapter has not been to survey the history of psychology nor to account for the presentation of the wide spectrum of different mental health disorders. For instance, perspective does not seem to hold the same centrality in complex conditions like schizophrenia, nor does it offer insights particularly about neurological presentations such found as in autism or Alzheimer's. There is much to be acknowledged in terms of these kinds of presentations and what has been said in the previous chapter about Genre and its potential biological underpinnings. For instance, neurotypical individuals utilising the comic perspective would be expected to have fewer but more robust dendritic connections. The tragic perspective then, we would expect to have lots of vague connections. Essentially, it takes the tragic longer and more work to achieve the same journey as the comic. But, in various presentations we see a variety of pruning and branching activity. As expected, schizophrenia presents with under-pruning, a mass of connections. In autism, it has been suggested by Michael S C Thomas (2016) and others that there is an over-pruning. But, it has been demonstrated too, by Soyon Hong et al (2016) and others, that Alzheimer's involves over-pruning, as well. Surely, it must be of a different *kind*. It is hoped that SoCo can provide some theoretical direction for these types of investigations in the future. SoCo does propose generally that many psychological disorders generate and operate from the tragic perspective, including compulsive disorders, personality disorders, depression, and anxiety. Furthermore, in line with the earlier discussion about body memory, it is proposed that the perspective or genre, be it comic or tragic (principally), founds not only conscious-regulation, experience, and behaviour but in fact it founds the physiological response of the organism, too. The perspective underlies all process, all response, all interaction. If such a claim bears fruit, the future of psychological

and biological study will be altered, indisputably. It is hoped that SoCo can prove useful for investigating chronic conditions such as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. If there is a singularly appealing feature of the current model it is the emphasis our capacity to change our perspective. There is much, much more to say in terms of SoCo's implications for psychology. Yet, it is not within the scope of the current thesis to go beyond these central conceptualisations about perspective, however reductive they may appear at this preliminary stage. Rather than reductive, they are general, and in order to achieve development we must attend first to the general, we must adopt a general approach. We cannot create outside of Genre.

If the genre (the perspective, the tendency, the frequency, or whatever we might call it) is changed, the output and eventually input will change, too. The change will emerge naturally as a product of the change of perspective. If an individual is willing to put in the effort to change perspective, to learn and develop, a "sense" or "feeling" of self should develop, too (in the case that its lack was felt). Of course, development is a process which we must attend to constantly and not a "thing" which can be successfully obtained. Stoicism does not mean suppressing emotions but being more aware and choiceful about our responses to emotional feelings. Choicefulness is a lifelong generic process which demands that our development and generic competence are always works in progress. "In cognitive therapy," Cozolino explains "the patient is educated about ... common distortions and encouraged to engage in reality testing and self-talk design to counteract negative reflexive statements" (39). Even with an adequately developed generic repertoire, a sense of self must be nourished over a lifetime of experience. Once we are able to gain experience and can build up adequacy – so long as we strive for coherence – we will feel better equipped to cope and furthermore to flourish in the social world. We will have improved our generic competence and when we progress in competence we can take real control over our lives. Like in literature, once we learn the conventions of Genre, we can utilise and change them. Once we have properly organised and richly-filled categories, we can begin to improvise. Life won't seem so tough.

11. CREATING CONSCIOUSNESS: THE *GENRE* PROBLEM

The title of this chapter cues what is known in scientific and philosophical circles as "the hard problem" of consciousness; the problem of defining how subjective conscious experience – and individual conscious minds – can emerge from physiological processes. With the hard problem in mind, I want to put forward my new theory of creativity which functions reciprocally to set up a theory of consciousness. Before presenting the material that informed the theory, I will offer a brief overview of its central ideas.

I define the process of consciousness and the process of creativity as homogeneous processes and, thus, conscious minds as analogous with creative products. I posit that both creativity and consciousness are methods of communication as a means of control. Both processes are inherently social and at the same time unique to the individual. Creativity affects control over the development of the SoCo and social behaviour. Conscious minds affect control over the development of the individual and individual behaviour. Both can be used interchangeably, too, to affect both social and also individual control. Both do the same work together interactively enhancing each other. In order to affect the emergence of consciousness and thus creativity we appropriate the function of Genre, turning back upon our own organism in a strange loop which flips and converges cause and effect, and repurposing our natural functional categorisation capacity to construct the self-genre.

By doing so, in effect, we create a metaverse; *a dialogue between a self-category and a body within that body which constantly monitors the interaction between Genre and lived experience and adapts in response*. In this respect, the relationship between organism and self-genre is the same as any other social relationships. Consciousness imitates the social process. We are imitators. This is the skill, imitation; *Imitatio*, that prized rhetorical skill Shakespeare had drilled into him in school. All the world – including body – is a stage. We use Genre in order to control and affect change in social and personal behaviour

One could be excused for believing that creativity does not function to control people. But, control as understood by SoCo is not *always* tragic. As explained earlier, the comic perspective seeks *creative control, conscious control*. Creativity constitutes choiceful, novel, competent, playful, effective control. In literature, the generic choices of the writer assert control over the reader's conscious experience. If a writer chooses to lampoon social conventions, which a *creative* writer does invariably, then they too affect control over the SoCo – they affect change in its interpretation, its line of generic influence. I accept Oakley and Halligan's theory of consciousness serving the purpose of communication. Or at least, I think that is a principal element of its purpose – a stepping stone. Communication serves the purpose of affecting control in behaviour. Thus, communication is a method of achieving control, not the end goal in and of itself. Creativity and consciousness serve the goal to control *through* communication. This goal is made explicit in literature or, more specifically, *rhetoric*. Rhetoric functions to *persuade; to influence the behaviour (and, later, thought) of others (and, later, our "self")*. We use different genres to influence different types of response. The process can be seen clearly through the trajectories of different literary genres and their conventions where we see extremely early influence affect control over centuries and millennia of creativity. We can draw parallels, too, with processes like *gene expression*. Genre remembers the trajectory of influence, or at least the *gist* of the trajectory. Among other insights, this recognition supports the rationale against perfectionism. We *ought to see* a creative genius' creative development over the trajectory of their life. There is only trial-and-error.

SoCo defines individual, subjective consciousness or a "conscious mind" as a continuously emerging and co-constructed creative product, imbued with social meaning and personal feeling, more than the sum of its parts, and, until death, a

work-in-progress. As readers, we submit willingly to generic cues in the same way that we do in our conscious lives, elaborating them and bringing them to life. If a writer has engaged actively and innovatively with Genre, *we cannot help ourselves*. We will be cued by Genre accordingly. When the writer upends generic convention, our attention will be upended simultaneously.

Now, I will present a discussion of the research and critical thinking which has informed the SoCo definition of creativity, grounding it within the existing body of work in the field and fleshing out the propositions above. To do so, I will turn to four experts from the field: Dean Keith Simonton, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Edward O. Wilson, and Arthur Koestler, along with their respective works, *Origins of Genius: Darwinian Perspectives on Creativity* (1999); *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1996); *The Origins of Creativity* (2017); and *The Act of Creation* (1964). They all ask the same question about creativity which can be paraphrased as follows: *what is it?* Some of the most significant implications of SoCo are the insights it provides towards mounting a broad definition of creativity. Creativity demands a broad definition, of course, because the concept of definition itself is in many ways incompatible with the aims and manoeuvres of creative development – and of the development of *consciousness*.

In many respects, the theories laid out by the theorists above complement each other and make for a smooth and pleasurable synthesis with the new SoCo conceptualisation of Genre. They all utilise the evolutionary model or are at least informed by it and acknowledge it. Simonton's work is the most-obviously Darwinian theory of creativity. He argues that Darwinism "can enhance our appreciation of the creative genius" (244) and that Darwinian theory "provides the basis for describing analogous processes that operate outside the sphere of biological evolution proper" (9). Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that "creativity is the cultural equivalent of the process of genetic changes that result in biological evolution, where random variations take place" (7) and Koestler recognises, too, that "mental evolution is a continuation of biological evolution, and in various respects resembles its crooked ways" (226). According to Wilson, Creativity is the "unique and defining trait of our species" (3), and he recognises communicative or creative acts as "Darwinian phenomena" (191). Another interesting correspondence between the respective theories is that they all discuss literature or literary geniuses to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, the literary medium produces some of our finest evidences of creativity. Finally, they all cherish creativity as the source of life's wonder and value. Csikszentmihalyi explains that

Creativity is a central source of meaning in our lives...most of the things that are interesting, important, and *human* are the results of creativity...What makes us different – our language, values, artistic expression, scientific understanding, and technology – is the result of individual ingenuity that was recognized, rewarded, and transmitted through learning. Without creativity, it would be difficult indeed to distinguish humans from apes.

(2)

Csikszentmihalyi's theory of creativity proposes a tri-fold systematic process, composed of the following elements: "a culture that contains *symbolic rules*, a *person* who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a *field* of experts who recognize and validate the innovation" (my italics). According to his conceptualisation, all three components of this process are necessary for creativity to "take place", or in other words, "for a creative idea, product, or discovery" (6) to emerge. More succinctly, these components are "domain", "field", and "individual". Wilson suggests that creativity is "the innate quest for originality" and that the force which drives creativity is "humanity's instinctive love of novelty". Furthermore, he suggests that the "ultimate goal" of creativity is self-understanding. Koestler's theory is summed up concisely on the back page of *The Act of Creation*:

In this major study Arthur Koestler advances the theory that all creative activities – the conscious and unconscious processes underlying artistic originality, scientific discovery, and comic inspiration – have a basic pattern in common, which he attempts to define. He calls it 'bisociative' thinking – a word he coined to distinguish the various routines of associative thinking from the creative leap which connects previously unconnected frames of reference and makes us experience reality on several planes at once.

In order to construct his Darwinian theory of creativity, Simonton provides the psychological definition of creativity:

Psychologists have reached the conclusion that creativity must entail the following two separate components ... First, a creative idea or product must be original ... However, to provide a meaningful criterion, originality must be defined with respect to a particular sociocultural group. What may be original with respect to one culture may be old news to the members of some other culture ... Second, the original idea or product must prove adaptive in some sense. The exact nature of this criterion depends on the type of creativity being displayed. In terms of technology, for example, an invention must not only be new, but it must also work ... A scientific theory, in contrast, must be logically coherent and factually correct to count as adaptive ... In the arts, finally, adaptiveness often entails the capacity to maintain interest through novel expression as well as through powerful emotional appeal ... Clearly, an original idea or product is judged as adaptive not by the originator but rather by the recipients. Accordingly, we have another reason for maintaining that creativity entails an interpersonal or sociocultural evaluation.

(5-6)

So, Simonton conceives of creativity as Darwinian, and he observes that creative products must be interpreted (*socially*) as both *original* and also *adaptive* in some way.

I agree with each theory to varying degrees. I will try to point out where our understanding seems to differ. For instance, I don't think that creativity's ultimate goal is self-understanding, or that its driving force is our love of novelty, like Wilson. But mainly, for the sake of brevity, I will concentrate on the ways in which these theories converge with the SoCo conceptualisation of creativity.

Unsurprisingly, these investigations of creativity are paralleled by similarly curious investigations of consciousness. In fact, the consciousness investigators recognise the mutual exchange that I propose in this chapter. Edelman suggests that “a brain-based theory might contribute to our notions of creativity” (2006, 10) and account for “coherent brain action in the absence of computation” (24). Indeed, the two issues are inherently linked. We are conscious because we are creative; we *create consciousness*. Once we accept the function of Genre as a way of “sorting” and thus “communicating” and “interpreting” and “controlling” experience, discussions about both creativity and also consciousness become more fluid and productive. What my thesis offers is a novel generic lens affording new insights into the creative process. We need to know the genre, its form, what it is *like*, to understand the creative product.

Nicholas Humphrey suggests that the word “theatre” is used inaccurately in the philosophical and scientific literature on consciousness and I would agree that its connection with dualism and the homunculus has degraded its reputation. Theatre is not a thing; a mirror or a space. Theatre is a process, much like the processes which we have discussed so far; not a space but a crafting. “*Replication* is not what theatres are about”, Humphrey explains, “Instead, theatres are places where events are staged in order to *comment* in one way or another on the world – to educate, persuade, entertain”. But, here I suggest that theatre is not a place where events are staged but instead theatre is the process of performance or reading. Humphrey himself implies this logic when he says that “in this sense, the idea that one part of your brain might stage a theatrical show in order to influence the judgement of another part of your brain is perfectly reasonable – indeed, biologically reasonable” (2011, 50). The two parts of the brain in Humphrey’s example would both require theatres: for where else would the audience sit? There is no theatre space but instead *generic processes*, of staging, and of performance: communicating, interpreting, and the relationships between self and other; individual and social; actor and audience; and between all things. The theatre is an *emergent* space. The audience is the social world, from which the internal audience/conductor emerges: the self.

I define the process of “reading” as stable at its various levels; reading social cues; interpreting behaviour; watching a play; reading a book; creating a conscious experience. By “stable” I mean that the basic principles of the reading process remain recognisable and demonstrable. We can bring both novels and plays and also imagined scenarios to life because the underlying mechanism is the same. It has to do with memory and tradition, and making syntheses between experiences. By repeatedly showing through his characters that performance can seem very real or that life is similar to a play, Shakespeare is not prompting us to question reality but instead saying that performance is very real, is all that *is* real, in fact, and that creative production both facilitates and also depends upon a social consciousness. We can try to predict, try to stage, life but our experience rarely fits form. The world-as-stage has an infinite variety of characters who are constantly trying to predict the future, to set up events and meetings and situations which they believe will determine certain outcomes. However, these unique individuals will each emerge from engagement with *type*.

According to Damasio, if “the hard problem” of science “is about the fact that if minds emerge from organic tissue” then “it may be hard or impossible to explain how mental experiences, in effect, *felt* mental states, are produced”. To put it more plainly, how *is* consciousness created by our brains? Damasio suggests that “the interweaving of perspectival stance and feelings provides a plausible explanation for how mental experiences arise” (2018, 161). Edelman states that “consciousness emerges from brain dynamics” (2006, 13). In other words, consciousness is a social process and Genre is a dynamic, plastic process which plays a central role in creative development. What we find is that by doing “as-if” work with Genre, we create novel instances, and, more importantly, any instance of Genre (a play; or conscious moment) will communicate inevitably more than the sum of the genres which enable it to be created and transmitted. With consciousness, Damasio explains, “something emerges that is not specified in any of the parts” (88). Creativity has the same effect. In other words, the creative product or conscious experience entails inevitably more than the sum of its parts or the processes which create it. Or, indeed, it *feels like* more – we get *more* out of it. But, we need to know the genre, its form, what it is *like*, to understand the experience.

According to SoCo, creativity is the process of *generic development achieved through interactive experimental performance*. Creativity is the process of generic development incurred by the unique perspective of the individual engaging with the genres of the SoCo. Creative geniuses are those who reconceptualise the genres in which they are working and affect that change or creative development at the level of the SoCo at large. Such achievements require competence, effort, learning, experimentation, risk-taking, playing, and so on. The development of Genre is accumulative and its legacy can be seen throughout evolution. Or perhaps what I mean to say is that evolution is the legacy behind the conceptualisation of literary genre. Literary genre reproduces the biological process in an explicit way. Generic development, evolution – whatever you call it – requires creativity. But, of course, creativity requires Genre, too. It is a strange loop. A creative product is a novel expression of Genre, it is the result of an adaptive engagement with Genre. To be creative, then, is to extend or change in some constructive way the genres of the SoCo and thus change the SoCo itself. Once a creative development has been absorbed by the SoCo, it will “live on” in the memories, the creative materials, and the value structures of the society. The driving force of subjective consciousness must be similar – a constructive attempt to make change, or take control. I am keen to emphasise the term “constructive” as it is clear that we can make change or affect Genre for better or worse (thus, we use the term “evil genius”). We can go either way. Tragic or comic, antisocial or social, constructive or destructive. SoCo favours only constructive change as constitutive of creativity or true generic development. Destruction by its very naming alone cannot be considered creative. Tragic creativity is an oxymoron. As Shakespeare communicates through his tragedies, there is no such thing as tragic or evil transcendence.

Having considered in the indicative material various processes which come together to create conscious experience, we can comprehend fully SoCo’s conceptualisation of consciousness which defines consciousness itself as the creative product or emergent process resulting from the ensemble of physical and social processes and is dependent upon social cues and the *communication* of

information in order to achieve social and then individual *control*. But, we can extend this definition by comparing it with SoCo's definition of creativity above.

What facilitates consciousness' beginnings and most prominent function is, Bartlett explains, that an organism acquires somehow "the capacity to turn round upon its own 'schemata' and construct them afresh" (206). In fact, Bartlett defines "becoming conscious" as discovering how "to turn round upon its own 'schemata'" (208). Is this not what we find Shakespeare's characters doing with the roles allocated to them by Genre? The ability that so often Shakespeare's characters possess to question the world which they inhabit or the moral logic of social genres is what makes them seem conscious. We relate to Shakespeare's characters because they so much resemble the seemingly unique human tendency to question; to weigh up options; to compare; to contrast; to choose; and to perform. But, it is not simply that Shakespeare's characters seem "real" to us. The matter more relates to the analogical potential between the concept of consciousness and the concept of a play or creative product.

Subjective conscious experience is the emergent creative product of generic physiological processes in the same respect that a unique play is the emergent creative product of generic literary processes. Conscious experience equates to both processes of reading or watching. In other words, experiencing, doing, "as-if"-ing. In the former instance, the text as read, we take on the complex dual-role of both performer and audience member. We do the same when we imagine. When we think of consciousness in this way it is but a small leap to thinking about what role Genre might play in facilitating such a feat.

The play and with it the audience emerge from the interactive performance, the ensemble, the relationship-play of dramatic processes. Similarly, consciousness emerges from the interactive performance, the ensemble, the relationship-play of physical processes. In the same sense that a play is produced by actors walking around and speaking on a stage, performing a script crafted from exquisite rhetorical dexterity and generic prowess and employing figures, genres, schemes, themes, doxa, models, stock types, kinds, traditions, customs, conventions, expectations, manoeuvres, and strategies, the body produces consciousness with its neural circuits, its plastic synapses, its neurotransmitters, its glia, its functional categories, its patterns and its complexity. All processes coming together at once produces the consciousness: the play. The play *is* the thing. Well, actually, it's the *genre* of the play which stipulates behavioural influence. The play results from (and at the same time *is*) the combination or interaction, and with it the audience is created, too. The play is consciousness, the audience and the performer constitute the self; both are emergent.

"Consciousness begins" Damasio tells us, "when brains acquire the power, the simple power I must add, of telling a story without words" (2000, 30). How do we tell a wordless story, as such? We do so with Genre. Genres as emotional categories allow us to *feel* the story with regard to its *type* or *kind*. Damasio acknowledges in his later work that "there is merit to the idea that consciousness, in the broad sense of the term, is widely available in numerous living species. The issue, of course, is the 'kind' and amount of consciousness exhibited by other species" (2018, 156-157). The "kind", or genre, is always the issue, the basic

principle underlying the monitoring of change is generic sorting. Genre or kind or type; drama; play; reading (people or situations or books); performing; and more general still, creativity; synchronised movement; these concepts have a sort of timeless quality, unlike the computer analogy.

We do not process like a computer; we create, and we create utilising Genre but what emerges from the construction is different every time. It is more like when we use the term process to refer to the emotional processing of a loss or a hardship. Such processing requires practice, convention, expectation, memory, attention, inference, and maintenance. The goals of processing are to bind and distinguish (synthesise and categorise). By achieving these goals, consciousness is created with increasingly complexity, centralisation, and specification as experience is accrued or processed and thus maintenance of the processing-process itself. In trying to find the “best fit” for binding and distinguishing, Genre allows us to recognise novelty in shape or form or performance or technique and so on and so forth. As Edelman notes, “subsequent exposures ... result in speedy binding” (2006, 27). In other words, every repeat performance becomes more and more “of habit” or “automatic” or “implicit”, as such. The potential of such binding and distinguishing is seemingly limitless because of the generic mechanism: new perspectives and combinations and instances are always possible.

Creativity and consciousness emerge from *social interaction*, and social interaction is facilitated by *Genre*. Genre facilitates the convergence of cause and effect. I formulate this process of creative development as follows:

$$\text{Experience (E) + Experience (E) = New Experience (Ne)}$$

This formula can be elaborated by conceptualising the first set of experience as *social* – the generic experience remembered by the SoCo – and the second set of experience as *personal* – the unique experience remembered by the individual organism. Of course, the two sets of experience interact and develop each other in a strange loop. The loop is strange because instead of, as we tend to perceive, creativity being founded by the personal, it in fact emerges because of the social – convention, type, tradition. Because Genre emerges from lived social experience – including the self-genre. We find out about the Genre of a situation by asking “how much?” and “what kind?” with regard to experience and once we have this generic information, we can begin to investigate what the individual is *doing* with it, how they *use* it – the generic function in action. How we utilise and interact with the genres of the SoCo.

Csikszentmihalyi’s formulation of creativity recognises the process but using different terminology. The three components of the creative process outlined by Csikszentmihalyi, which he terms “Domain”, “Field”, and “Individual”, are roughly interchangeable/ synonymous with the following terms used in SoCo: “Genre”; “Social Consciousness”; and “Individual.” Creativity or creative development can be achieved only through engagement with all of these three elements. Experimental interaction of the unique individual perspective with the social consciousness results in the emergence of creative products. Genre conditions or influences the type of response. By manipulating Genre, we therefore manipulate or *affect* a change in

emotion, too. In this way, Genre works to control social response. In essence, Genre makes us *respond in a type of way*.

Damasio calls feelings “hybrid” processes which are performed both implicitly and explicitly. In other words, feelings are both conscious and also unconscious. He says that “feeling is, literally speaking, a stepping-stone for consciousness” (2021, 132). Damasio says that feelings are “displayed”. But, feelings are not displayed they are *created* – they are *performed*. Subsequently, we craft our conscious conceptual version and call them “emotions”. It seems obvious that if during early development a child does not receive adequate support or engagement from others in their task of crafting emotional concepts for their feelings, getting to “know” them, and “sort them out”, then the child will grow into an adult who runs into some kind of emotional difficulty such as emotional dysregulation, intensity, dulling, detachment, or poor conceptualisation. Thus, we can observe the affective function of Genre. Behaviour is controlled by Genre.

Due to the lack of understanding about the crucial creation of emotions, many adult humans remain on many levels “unacquainted” with their feelings, the meanings attached to them, and the stimuli which trigger them. In terms of emotions, a lot of us are generically incompetent, and yet we still manage okay in daily life. Interesting. It seems that creative geniuses are very in tune with their emotions or at least spend their whole lives trying to “figure them out” – a process which creates both pleasure and pain. It can be predicted that the development of the creative genius can happen *only* in the context of emotional investigation. Humans who are happy with “going through the motions”, so to speak, will not reach the heights of creativity and it is likely that they are fine with that. This necessary element of the creative process explains, also, why “the personal” is not a quality we should want or try to extinguish from our creative work; personal interpretation is a defining feature of any creative product, interacting always with generic or social convention. Shakespeare’s characters speak about their emotions and deal with emotional issues, and because of this emotional engagement, they *seem conscious*. At the same time by making us feel emotions Shakespeare is shaping our conscious experience to attend to the issues which he deals with in his plays. “Emotional feelings” are conscious elaborations of homeostatic processes as they are performed *in situ, live, or ad hoc*. We’re all performers in our conscious minds and our bodies and in the social world.

Consciousness is contingent. As opposed to “you see what you want to see”, a more accurate saying might be “you see what you *expect* to see”. This issue is related directly to attention and inference and memory. There have been many clever studies which reveal the selective nature of our conscious activity or experience, including the flummoxing experiment laid out by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons in their book *The Invisible Gorilla* (2011). Chabris and Simons describe the experiment on their website as follows: “Imagine you are asked to watch a short video (above) in which six people – three in white shirts and three in black shirts – pass basketballs around. While you watch, you must keep a silent count of the number of passes made by the people in white shirts. At some point, a gorilla strolls into the middle of the action, faces the camera and thumbs its chest, and then leaves, spending nine seconds on screen”. The question that they want to know the answer to is “would you see the gorilla?” and they explain that half of

people who watch the video miss the gorilla entirely, “it was as though the gorilla was invisible”. What they say that the experiment reveals is two things: “that we are missing a lot of what goes on around us” and also “that we have no idea that we are missing so much” (2010).

Our consciousness is shaped by our past experience. We look for coincidences, possibilities, likelihoods, instances, strategies, contingencies. We do this work because it is the only way that we can know or interpret or understand experience. Our future is shaped by our past but we do have the option to change our genres with effort and attention. Chabris and Simons observe that “we all believe that we are capable of seeing what’s in front of us, of accurately remembering important events from our past, of understanding the limits of our knowledge, of properly determining cause and effect. But these intuitive beliefs are often mistaken ones that mask critically important limitations on our cognitive abilities” (2011, ix-x). We don’t often tend to question our conscious experience in the way that we should. It is not simply the case that we all think that we are unquestionably right in our beliefs (although this delusion is problematic) but instead the basic fact that our perspective can often be flawed, confused, or based on corrupt premises. It is often hard for us even to be aware that our perspective *can* be called into question. Chabris and Simons posit “the idea that we can look but not see” (13). They demonstrate numerous tricks and tests that challenge our conscious experience and suggest that we can be fooled easily: “what we intuitively accept and believe is derived from what we collectively assume and understand, and intuition influences our decisions automatically and without reflection” (231). In other words, our conscious experience is created by social assumptions and shared understanding. Thus, conscious experience is contingent on generic tradition. Damasio supports this argument in *The Strange Order of Things* (2018) when he explains that “the process related to the integration of experiences” – put simply, consciousness – “requires the narrative-like ordering of images and the coordination of those images with the subjectivity process” (155). In other words, consciousness requires Genre + individual performance.

Chabris and Simons stress that “even after we know how our beliefs and intuitions are flawed, they remain stubbornly resistant to change” (x). This advice suggests not that we are incapable of change but instead that change can only occur if we can tackle that stubbornness. The fundamental issue, then, is whether or not we can accept change and all that it implies for the quality of our lives. It makes good neuroscientific sense to believe in change as essential to being human.

How the “gaps” are filled is not writ. It is the result or form that defines the function or Genre. In basic levels of consciousness, we are able to use what Damasio calls “knowledge of the item as a member of a conceptual category” and also, interestingly enough, he refers to this knowledge as “generics” (2000, 116). The individual consciousness is always created “appropriate to the overall context of a situation” (118), to use Damasio’s words. Consciousness emerges contingent on past experience. We create our individual consciousness based on generic information.

Damasio explains that the problem of how *subjectivity* is created is “the essence of the mysteries behind consciousness” (2018, 159). It is only when the

mind “acquires a point of view” he claims that “consciousness proper may begin” (157). The subjective is good, then. A point of view is “good”. But when investigated, the idea of a “point” of view implies more. When one acquires a point of view, they obscure all other points of view, presumably. Any point of view is limited, as such. However, we don’t see our subjectivity as limiting, surely. What this unpicking suggests is that limits are *good*; they are necessary, in fact. But really, the limits don’t exist, or they exist in the same way that consciousness “exists”. Limits are “*as-if*”. Limits, like consciousness, emerge from relationships or interaction. Of course, whenever we find limits or boundaries they must always separate at least two different forms thus creating genres. According to Damasio, the subjective perspective or “point of view” which is created “is so critical to the overall process of consciousness that it is tempting to simply talk about “subjectivity” and leave behind the term “consciousness” (143-144). Humphrey agrees that our “special position” (2006) allows us to create phenomenal properties. Subjectivity is limited as discussed already, but it is also unique. Like all of the other processes that we have discussed so far – and subjectivity is a process – it is limited but also useful. And in the case of subjectivity, it is *specifically* useful to us. Your “point of view” is the world viewed from the perspective of your personal experience, your “world-view”, your “perspective”, how you “see things”, what matters *to you*. Of course, when we see things one way, we may miss other, better, ways of seeing. But, there is also the possibility that we will see things that no one has picked up on before. Reader may say “well, I want to see the truth of things” to which I would reply, “well, there are no truths, only *perspectives*”.

However, “we should resist the temptation” to talk simply of “subjectivity” rather than “consciousness”, Damasio warns, “because only the term ‘consciousness’ conveys an additional and important component of conscious states: integrated experience, which consists of placing mental contents into a more or less unified multidimensional panorama” (2018, 144). What is the missing ingredient, then, which integrates experience? Which places mental contents into a contextual scene? Genre! Genre integrates experience, which must come before subjectivity, and subjectivity must be created by replicating the Genre process to make a category about your “point of view” or “perspective”.

The reason that Shakespeare’s characters seem conscious is because of the generic conflicts at play within their inner worlds and because they refuse to fit neatly into generic stock-character types – much like real people, who do not fit into one-dimensional roles. We see Shakespeare’s characters as “conscious” because they present to us *inner* conflicts. Not just conflicts between themselves and others but *within* themselves. The very human quality of feeling many ways at once...of not knowing how to feel or what is being felt. Of questioning. Of attending. This stuff is what consciousness is “about”. Shakespeare’s characters remember things, they go over decisions “in their heads” or “to themselves”, they infer meaning – just like we do.

Shakespeare’s characters are capable of what Humphrey calls “*intellectual reflection* on the effects of consciousness”, by which he means “*puzzling over these effects, meditating on them, experimenting with them, discussing them with friends*” (153). The “effects” of consciousness which Humphrey speaks about are “how it makes you care about pure being” and “how it makes you attribute *value and*

meaning to things in the external world” (152). We find all types of characters performing this kind of work in Shakespeare. All kinds of peoples in Shakespeare’s plays seem to have values (even if we do not agree with them) and to care about their lives.

But, what we find is that any discussion about consciousness requires *generic* analysis. The characters in Shakespeare’s plays seem conscious because they play *against* type. Or, because they are complex in their emotions and do not fall neatly underneath generic stipulations *or* social custom. Shakespeare creates “realistic” characters by showing us the SoCo from a unique perspective. Creating unique perspectives within his characters. He shows how characters, people, are shaped by doxa, genres, customs, tradition, experience. And what unique individual roads might be carved from such material. What might it be like? Shakespeare asks “what if?” and then he “as-if”s the story into being. His characters do the same. *We* do the same.

According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare had built up to his achievement of Hamlet “in such plays as *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, and *Julius Caesar*. King Richard, Prince Hal, and Brutus all have intimate moments in which they seem to disclose the troubled faces that are normally hidden behind expressionless social masks” (Norton, p.1661). Shakespeare was clearly interested in power and ambition and kingdom, and all that “the hollow crown” (*Richard II*, III.ii.156) came with. Including, apparently, a lot of time to think about life’s complexity. Richard II performs a wonderful soliloquy, locked up in Pomfret Castle, which synthesises perfectly in fact all that we have thought about so far in terms of unconscious and conscious processes, about Genre and sociality, and so on:

I have been studying how I may compare
This prison where I live unto the world;
And for because the world is populous,
and here is not a creature but myself,
I cannot do it. Yet I’ll hammer it out.
My brain I’ll prove the female to my soul,
My soul the father, and these two beget
A generation of still-breeding thoughts;
And these same thoughts people this little world
In humours like the people of this world. (V.v.1-10)

He elucidates the idea that our consciousness is made up by characters and relationships. When he says “Yet I’ll hammer it out” he evokes the construction of consciousness – the ways in which we “make things work” or “figure things out”; the generative power of genres and stories.

But what Richard’s character offers us is a *king-type made conscious*. Shakespeare uses Richard to bring life to the role of “king” and thus investigate the history genre, furthermore the history *of* Genre, and the social doxa related to the generic type. In all of Shakespeare’s plays, he uses characters’ interplay with Genre to reveal struggles within their social identity; their *conscious* identity. Identity in Shakespeare is explored most skilfully through his generic experimentation and

constant questioning of convention and tradition. In the same soliloquy, Richard goes on to say:

Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented: sometimes am I king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am: then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then am I king'd again: and by and by
Thinking that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing: but whate'er I be,
Nor I nor any many that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing. (V.v.31-41)

What Richard illuminates is that our position in society – our social role – denotes our experience. So, our relationships create our consciousness and shape our identity. But more importantly we see that when our social roles come under question our identity comes under question, too. And, we see a dramatic shift in Richard's character as the play moves forward. Critics point out regularly that Richard is a "narcissist". But what we actually find is that at the beginning of the play we have a character who has been shaped by their generic type: *king*. Once this frame is removed, or the role has been questioned, Richard's identity comes under question, too.

Throughout history kings and monarchs have been thought of as figureheads of God, as Richard says "the deputy elected by the Lord" (III.ii.53). Evidently, Shakespeare is questioning such a view as dangerous, or at least as at risk of ill-shaping a conscious mind. Once again, Shakespeare is questioning social doxa, and the role that it plays in our lives. In *Richard II*, Shakespeare sets up certain expectations about Richard and his role as king and then questions those expectations and that generic type. It makes sense for Richard to be narcissistic and delusional in a world where kings are likened to vessels of God. Our expectations are called into question and we are required, like Richard, to weigh up the options – the different sides of the story. As Emma Smith notes, Shakespeare is renowned for arguing in *utramque partem*, or "both sides of the question" which was a central part of his schooling. We must do the same. It is what we do in life. We use Genre to create and then improve our rhetoric (the art of effective communication and control). We articulate our response. Obviously, different functions require different genres of rhetoric.

Ultimately, we perceive consciousness in any and all of Shakespeare's characters who question and weigh up the options presented to them and the generic expectations of their character and social role. *These characters seem "as-if" they are consciousness because they engage and experiment with Genre*. Individual responses are determined or controlled not only by the social genre of genres that is the social consciousness, but also their own, personalised genre of genres based on the social consciousness but as pertains to their specific organism from their unique perspective, and "attached" to their own lived emotional experience. Consciousness emerges from a constant weighing up between what you are conditioned to do by

your experience versus what you “should do” or what you *know* to be conducive to survival of the group or the continuation of the accepted or at least dominant SoCo. I suspect that the degree to which these two sets of expectations are removed from each other for any individual offers a reliable measure of experience. Such a remove could present in inappropriate behaviours and even tragic behaviours. Further still, the remove could present the ineffectiveness of the SoCo. In most cases, a remove or disconnection between self-genre and SoCo would point to *both*. For instance, we commonly accept that “monsters” such as serial killers behave extremely inappropriately and tragically but at the same time we see them as “a product of their society”. In Shakespeare’s plays, we see the same scenario again and again. Edmund, Richard III, Iago; they are all products of the social doxa their play worlds and they are tragic because they cannot overcome the doxa. Our human skill is to use Genre to our advantage, not have it control our every move using rigid definitions.

The self is a wonderful creative product of our evolutionary *generic* imperative; to control the behaviour of the group in a way which is conducive to survival. Our conscious efforts are simply mirroring the admirable communication and control systems that exist within our bodies and which are highly creative in their processes with the goal of organising the action of the body. Genre fulfils this function in what Csikszentmihalyi calls the “extra-somatic” realm.

My formula accounts for not only the important function of Genre but also for the important function of *the individual*. It has prompted, in fact, the following related formulations for conceiving creative development in literature specifically: Critical + Creative = Creative Writing; Public + Private = Creative. The field reminds us of the socially-contracted and constructed nature of Genre. In a sense, communication – *sociation* – is creativity, and it works from the cellular level to the macro world of social and artistic genres. Communication is the integral part of all functional organisation and integrated response. The field – the social environment – must accept the individual development in order for that development to join the social consciousness, but at the same time the individual’s unique perspective of life is absolutely requisite for creative development.

We make characters conscious. We make them consciousness by acting them out “in our heads”. We create them by interacting with the social consciousness and its categories, and we fill or complete them using our past and emergent subjective experience, our experience and theirs emerging simultaneously. This act of creation depends on Genre – SoCo or shared knowledge about conditioned or accepted or expected responses. But, each interpretation (SoCo + Self) is entirely unique. We “people” characters. We anthropomorphise them. Because it’s the only way that we know, our experience is the only kind of experience that we have conscious access to - that we “know” or, to use another word, “feel” ... or “know we feel”, perhaps. We act “as-if” we know. We imbue things with our own consciousness, we “bring to life” or “make real”. And, it is proposed by SoCo that, we do so by interpreting and imitating others. Essentially, we imbued ourselves with the consciousness that we perceived in others – with much help and co-construction from others in the process, too.

Damasio clarifies that the neural patterns and images necessary for subjective consciousness to occur “are those which constitute proxies for the organism, for the object, and for the relationship between the two” and that “placed in this framework, understanding the biology of consciousness becomes a matter of discovering how the brain can map *both* the two players *and* the relationships they hold” (2000, 20). But, in order to understand the mechanism which facilitated the emergence of consciousness, we need to focus on the concepts of *mapping* and *relationships*, as opposed to the specific players. This mechanism underlies not only subjective consciousness but all of our communicative, regulatory, and thus creative capacity. According to SoCo, this mechanism can be conceptualised accessibly as being much like the accepted generic mechanism in the cultural communication, regulation and creation process.

SoCo and subsequently individual consciousness are strange loops which emerge at the point of social interaction and then communicate and regulate in a multidirectional manner, starting from cell to cell, and reaching their highest heights in conceptualisation and conversation and creative control. We adapt to the social environment through synthesis and synchronisation in order to communicate and control; we *are conscious*. Koestler’s conceptualisation of “partness and wholeness” is relevant particularly for SoCo and the idea that the creative product or “whole” is more than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, his suggestion that “certain basic principles operate throughout the whole organic hierarchy – from the fertilised egg to the fertile brain of the creative individual: and that phenomena analogous to creative originality can be found on all levels” (xxi) is the foundational understanding on which SoCo has been based. I believe that the basic principle which operates throughout the creative process is Genre. The breadth of the SoCo lens is one of its most exciting and crucial features because it helps us to understand the entire spectrum of creative development from SCOs sensing and responding to conscious creative geniuses experimenting with Genre.

A wealth of comparisons can be drawn between Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “domain” and all of its lexical variants. I take a more generalized view of the concept, than perhaps some scientists and the theorists in discussion would approve of. For instance, where Koestler uses the terms “matrix” and “code” to refer to discreet phenomena, I prefer to assimilate the two. Or at least I suggest that the two are interwoven to such an extent that it seems pedantic to separate them. I feel similarly towards the common distinction between “genres” and “modes”. The reader could choose to use the separate terms “genre” and “generic code” to refer to Koestler’s respective concepts. But, genres function by the social contracts of their codes and so to speak of codes without genres or genres without codes would be relatively difficult. In fact, I interpret an even wider selection of Koestler’s terms as conveying the work of Genre. Koestler refers variously to “matrices of thought”; “codes of behavior”; “frames of reference”; “associative contexts”; “types of logic”; “code of rules”; “pre-set routines”; “coded signals”; “sets of rules”; “special codes”; “types of operations”; “secret language”; “ordered schemata”; “stable patterns of unity in variety”; and “universes of discourse” which all are generic phenomena, in my estimation. The umbrella term *Genre* affects a broader understanding of the process as a whole and makes for easier conceptual access.

Despite the more general approach of SoCo, Koestler's definitions for the terms "matrix" and "code" are extremely helpful to aid our understanding of the new definition of the term "Genre" and its role in creativity and consciousness. He chooses the term "code" because of "precisely its nice ambiguity":

It signifies on the one hand a set of rules which must be obeyed...; and it indicates at the same time that it operates in the nervous system through 'coded signals' ...which transmit orders in a kind of compressed 'secret language'. We know that not only the nervous system but all controls in the organism operate in this fashion (starting with the fertilised egg, whose 'genetic code' contains the blue-print of the future individual).

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That blue-print, he explains, does not show "the microscopic image of a little man", instead "it is "coded"; a set of rules or instructions for creating or recreating. Koestler describes furthermore the various functions and benefits of codes. "All coherent thinking and behaviour is subject to some specifiable code of rules to which its character of coherence is due – even though the code functions partly or entirely on unconscious levels of the mind, as it generally does". I would suggest that for any code or organization to be highly-successful or powerful, the code must operate largely unconsciously. Accordingly, Koestler calls the code "a hidden persuader". He understands that coding operates at all levels, "applies not only to our visceral activities and muscular skills, but also to the skill of perceiving the world around us in a coherent and meaningful manner" (42). One of the many benefits of our coding tendencies, Koestler notes, is that "they enable us to cope with events and situations by applying the rules of the game appropriate to them" (44). Of course, different types of events and situations require different *types of rules*; different *types of codes*. We use different genres for different purposes.

Correspondingly, Koestler's definition of the term "matrix" provides us with an excellent definition of Genre. He notes that this definition is "less easy to explain" but offers the following discussion:

In an earlier version I used 'field' and 'framework', but 'field' is too vague, and 'frame' too rigid. 'Matrix' is derived from the Latin for womb and is figuratively used for any pattern or mould in which things are shaped and developed, or type is cast. ... In mathematics, matrices are rectangular arrays of numbers capable of all sorts of magic; they can be subjected to various transformations without losing their identity – i.e. they are both 'flexible' and 'stable'. 50 (notes to p.40)

And he continues his definition later in the book, describing a more concrete connection between the concepts of "matrix" and "code":

The term 'matrix' was introduced to refer to any skill or ability, to any pattern of activity governed by a set of rules – its 'code'. All ordered behaviour, from embryonic development to verbal thinking, is controlled by 'rules of the game', which lend it coherence and stability, but leave it sufficient degrees of freedom

for flexible strategies adapted to environmental conditions. The ambiguity of the term 'code' ('code of laws' – 'coded message') is deliberate, and reflects a characteristic property of the nervous system: to control all bodily activities by means of coded signals.

The concept of matrices with fixed codes and adaptable strategies, proposed as a unifying formula, appears to be equally applicable to perceptual, cognitive, and motor skills and to the psychological structures variously called 'frames of reference', 'associative contexts', 'universes of discourse', mental 'sets', or 'schemata', etc.

(96)

So, a matrix is a lot like a genre, then. A matrix is a pattern of activity governed by a set of rules – "its code"; a matrix infers a type of behaviour or organised response "controlled by rules of the game". Koestler comments that matrices lend *coherence* and *stability* to social engagement but at the same time they also allow for sufficient plasticity and *freedom* in terms of how we utilise them to create strategies or specific responses or instantiations. In this sense matrices allow for predictability and nuance simultaneously – each to various degrees along a spectrum of sociation. Codes are ambiguous, Koestler reminds us, and furthermore they reflect a characteristic property of the nervous system. This property is characteristic of both Genre and also the social consciousness, too; the system operates around *control*. Codes make possible communication and control. The more adept is the generic competence, the higher the level of creative – *conscious* – control. If our genres are limited, rigid, or narrow-minded, paradoxical in terms of our goal, we will at the very least *perceive* ourselves to have little control. The property is the goal to control all activity by means of coded signals. *Genre directs action*; it cues response. Koestler compares various analogous processes which operate at different levels with his concept of "matrices with fixed codes and adaptable strategies". He recommends that we understand his bi-fold or two-piece conceptualisation as a "unifying formula". But, this conceptualisation complicates matters where instead they can be simplified, condensed into a truly unifying and unified formula: *Genre*. Genres operate based upon a shared understanding and inference of generic codes, which are in turn created and shaped and refer to genres: it is a strange loop. Genre is both a process and also a "thing". Genre is more than the sum of its parts. It is almost as if Koestler's approach is *too* precise. The SoCo lens provides a wider, more inclusive, and more fruitful focus. It is unusual in academic scholarship to make a claim for the benefits of less precision/more generality but, in light of the current theory, it makes perfect sense.

We "notice" or "recognise" deviations from norm, *even when we are not exactly sure what the norm is*. This quality explains why experimental literature is particularly effective because it makes conscious our unconscious Genre-ing and also it helps to explain why failure and disorder actually instigate the creative process. Koestler conveys the difficulty of defining Genre – which is owed in large part to its unconscious operation. But, by combining Koestler's concepts of matrices and codes with the concept of literary genre – about which most people have at least a basic understanding, we can use what we know about literary genre to understand

the creative pursuits of the brain and the extra-somatic world, as well as linking it back to evolutionarily much older processes.

Csikszentmihalyi's formula for creativity and Simonton's Darwinian approach both require Genre-type processes, too. Csikszentmihalyi explains that the symbolic knowledge created by domains is "extrasomatic"; "it is not transmitted through the chemical codes inscribed in our chromosomes but must be intentionally passed on and learned" (37). But, extrasomatic symbolic communication is in fact an external, social application of the physiological coding processes. It is precisely because these codes are "made up" that the extrasomatic process is so flexible. Genre is a symbolic social system but also analogous if more plastic than earlier grouping, variant-detection, communication, coding, and control processes. According to Csikszentmihalyi, it is the extrasomatic symbolic knowledge which creates what we call "culture" and that this knowledge "is bundled up in discrete domains – geometry, music, religion, legal systems, and so on. Each domain is made up of its own symbolic elements, its own rules, and generally has its own system of notation. In many ways, each domain describes an isolated little world in which a person can think and act with clarity and concentration" (37). The way that Csikszentmihalyi describes domains is a completely fitting means of defining Genre. The necessary elements that he states for the production of creativity – domain, individual, and field – are the same elements suggested by SoCo. The individual mind, memory and experience; the social field, memory and experience; and the stabilizing, contractual, symbolic understanding between individual and social made up of the genres of the SoCo.

Under Simontonian theory, a genre would constitute a *range of variation* (75) or a *set of behavioural laws* (189). Genre as a process thus would be about variation detection/regulation and response control. Genre accounts for individual difference *and* response type – both important for mounting a theory of the creative "personality". "To note that chance participates so conspicuously in the making of the creative product is not tantamount to asserting that genius is random", Simonton points out, suggesting instead that "the effects of chance are constrained by certain behavioral laws that impose order on what would otherwise be chaos" (189). I believe that the function of Genre is to organise experience in just this way. Notice how Genre's organisation is not mere sorting but it *cues response, therefore directing behaviour and shaping experience*.

Each of these creativity experts recognises Genre-type-processes as *essential* to creativity. Csikszentmihalyi writes that "the existence of domains is perhaps the best evidence of human creativity" and he suggests that genres exist as entities themselves, and as such they exist as parts of the social consciousness whole which they create. We understand the world through these generic lenses; committing to the rules of specific genres provides us with the opportunity for creativity. In order to enhance, extend, or subvert, it is necessary to learn convention. Without some sense of unity, there would be no possibility of creating anything meaningfully new (*there would be no meaning*). Genre proves vital for creative development. According to SoCo, creative development *is* generic development.

Simonton notes towards the end of his Darwinian interrogation that “it is highly unlikely that high-caliber genius can emerge as a mere ‘voice crying out in the wilderness’” (209). I would extend Simonton’s sentiment by stating that creativity without or outside of sociality is *impossible*, in much the same ways and for much the same reasons that it is impossible to create without or outside of Genre. Genre is inherently social, as is creativity. Creativity is a social process. Consciousness is a social process. While we can make creative products *alone*, in order to create we must engage with the genres of SoCo and ultimately the *field* or *audience* in order for creativity to emerge – to be possible. Without the social, there would be no subjective consciousness. Both creativity and consciousness are intersubjective, interactive experiences which require the dyadic relationship of the social and the individual in a continuous cycle.

Accordingly, SoCo works on the assumption that the social and the individual are inextricably linked. Social genres shape individuals. Individual creativity, in turn, shapes social process. When a unique, combinatorial, self-genre interacts with the “common”, “remembered”, or social combinatorial genres of the SoCo, what is produced is not simply the sum of the interactive parts but, instead, an entirely new combinatorial model of experience is created. Generic evolution depends on the consistent cooperation and competition between socially accepted genres and the individual experience. Israel Rosenfield offers a valuable summary of the process: “Whenever we suddenly achieve an understanding – as for example, in reading a murder mystery, when a vital clue that we have overlooked takes on a new and compelling importance . . . what we suddenly ‘see’ or ‘understand’ is a new thing, neither . . . as it was a few moments earlier, nor the change in either, but a fusion of the two” (34). Thus, the combination of social and individual persists at the very core of who we are, of how we understand and create new understanding. Genre entails the inner process of negotiation between social and individual, both of great importance, and enables human creativity. And the result of combining these two sets of experience produces *new experience* (Ne).

SoCo understands domains as genres and the collective domains as what constitutes our social consciousness. It is our own unique and personal engagement with the social consciousness that allows us to be creative. Creativity requires meaning and development. All Genre is “bent” in this respect - all instances of Genre that are unique or creative, all “major” works, “bend”, and therefore develop, the generic tradition. This bending and thus creative development happens in exactly the same way with our social genres. Without the creative individual and their unique experience, our genres would not grow or change. My research is leading me to believe that in order to produce truly “creative” work, we must inject as much of our self-genre and subjectivity into our writing as is possible but the creative product cannot be judged as such without engaging with the SoCo and its generic traditions, as well as being received by the field or an audience. Like Csikszentmihalyi says, “creative ideas vanish unless there is a receptive audience to record and implement” (6). In order to communicate our unique perspective to an audience, we need to employ Genre so that they are able to interpret the meaning which we are attempting to convey.

Simonton refers to the psychoanalytic concept of “primary-process thought”

which he suggests “was taken as an index of prelogical or dedifferentiated thought” (226). In fact, most theorists refer to some kind of concept which implies thought *sans* Genre. However, I would say that “prelogical or dedifferentiated thought” *doesn't exist*. Consciousness emerges from organised performance. And organisation emerges from sociality. Simonton recognises this phenomenon, noting that “research on implicit learning and memory suggests that the human mind can acquire a vast set of expectations in the absence of any awareness of the basis for those expectations” (47). Our senses and perceptions are linked with concepts from the moment that we are born – and research goes to show that this process begins even before we are born when we are still in our mother’s womb. It is from the moment of conception which the life-long creative and social process of Genre-ing begins. From then onwards, we begin to construct conscious experience by combining our physical, concrete experience and existence with social interaction and learning. Some rules are “built-in” because they have been expressed through genes by proving useful over our evolution. When we create or learn concepts, we are mirroring the physiological functional categorisation process and imitating it while interacting with the social world. In other words, *the limit does not exist but we act “as-if” it does*. The extra-somatic boundaries or parameters that we create, the containers that we put things like “our all” “in to” are, put simply, *creations*, and they are creations which emerge from social interactions based on generic types of response.

Increased sociality is creative of new genres as well as new roles, settings, and conventions. “Obviously, one of the central means of adapting to the environment is to respond to it – to search for food, locate shelter, flee from predators, find mates, and so forth” (17-18), Simonton reminds us, and these different functions require different *types of response* or genres. From these genres emerge social roles, such as hunter, gatherer, carer, sexual partner, and so on. With ever-increasing sociality comes ever-increasingly complex generic frameworks and the various roles and features which correspond with the functions of the responses. Simonton notes that in modern society, “for most of the world’s cultures, the number of available roles has become very large indeed” and he explains that “this means that human beings must often find their distinctive niche in their social world” and that the “process of niche finding begins in the family, as each successive child must carve out its own identity vis-à-vis its siblings. The process then continues in school, and later in the larger competitive world of young adulthood” (233-234). Therefore, as our socialization expands so does our conceptualisation of social genres and the roles which emerge from them. Genre is our social currency; it provides the parts which have been passed down to us through our social development and later the ones we choose and with which we construct our identity. That social communication itself depends on genres of shared understanding makes the process highly recursive. We create our commodified identity; it emerges from our engagement with the genres of the SoCo.

One of Simonton’s main hypotheses is that population growth constitutes “the single most critical factor separating the creativity of preliterate cultures from that of the so-called civilized societies” (240), and he suggests that by increasing “the total number of individuals in a particular generation who are struggling to make it big”, “the odds are increased that one of the genuine giants will emerge” (208). Also, Simonton posits life-time productivity (the number of creative products produced by

an individual over their career) as a corresponding factor in determining the creative genius. I agree that increased socialization equals increased creativity, and, while I do agree with the productivity factor, I believe that an extra caveat is called for. Yes, an individual would be more likely to achieve generic development if they produce a higher volume of works. However, when we interpret creativity we ask not just “*how much?*” but “*what kind?*” Shakespeare is not renowned purely because he created a lot of plays but because of the *way* that he created them.

Generic development emerges from the interaction of a unique individual perspective with the generic perspectives of the SoCo, and this dyadic interaction of social and individual creates a constantly updated social contract. Whenever an individual creates a type of response to the social world, that response will conform to the social contract in some ways, and will subvert the social contract in other ways. Wilson explains that “In as much as the individual knows each of its group-mates as individuals, and can understand and predict their behavior and further understands what the consequences will likely be, it can use this knowledge to its own personal advantage”. However, the key function of this generic knowledge or shared understanding is not personal advantage, but instead group advantage. *Group control*. “Most importantly for the group,” Wilson says, “the observing animal knows *how, when, and whether to compete or cooperate*”. So, in order to achieve successful sociation we need to learn the genres of the SoCo of our group – be this a small tribe or a large country. We need to learn the shared meanings for different roles, responsibilities, methods, timings, values, and styles within the group. In this same way, we come to exist as identities in the conscious experiences of others through our performed responses and the generic messages which can be inferred from those actions. This shared generic understanding enables creativity. Wilson calls the social-individual loop the “informed interplay between competition and cooperation” and suggests that it is “the flywheel of a successful social organization” (13).

Genre is a socially-constructed extension of natural selection, in this respect. Genre allows us to test and revise: to remember useful information in order that we can make such adaptations. “Wrong” genre selection can lead to grave errors of understanding or the temporary inertia of a literary genre, where Natural Selection failure can lead to extinction. Genre selection that is flawed results in the extinction of understanding and control. Like Natural Selection, Genre is a constant and accumulative process. Natural Selection is the trajectory, memory and framework for the development of physiology, of different species. Genre fulfils the same function but in the social realm, for our understanding of our world, those around us, and our “selves”. The processes mirror each other. But, generic frameworks are based on constructed hierarchies of value, biased from the perspective of their creator, as opposed to those which emerge naturally from performance.

In any case, a society or culture (or genre) requires a balance between creative geniuses and non-creative-geniuses in order to function, and the balance is not equally-weighted. We need the non-creators and the creators equally, but actually we need a lot more of the non-creators to be a successfully functioning society and their roles are usually more in higher demand, more practical and urgent. *For a society to function, the majority of people need to behave in the same way.* It is

only the same as the body which must perform within a relatively limited range of variation in order to function. To unfold this idea a little more we can turn to literary genre. Think of a genre – perhaps the novel, or the tragedy genre: for the genre to function successfully it needs lots of instances of *generic* works which conform to generic tradition. These works we would call, in other words, “not creative”, “stereotypical”, or “formulaic”, or so on. A genre is constructed as such that it is made up largely of these stereotypical works. These works are what enable the regulatory function of Genre, and are what make genres familiar to us and therefore useful. So, creative geniuses have to be “rare” in that if everyone was a creative genius then we would have no baseline from which to communicate, make judgment, and control. In essence, there could never be a society made up solely of creative geniuses. It wouldn’t *work* even if it was possible, and it is not possible because creative geniuses emerge from interaction with the SoCo. In any successful society, we need people who stick to the status quo – and lots of them – in order to act upon and therefore uphold and perpetuate the genres of the SoCo. But, we need the occasional highly creative individual who interrogates and attempts to change the status quo, particularly when it is perceived as inadequate to contemporary social needs and attitudes.

In order for creativity to emerge, two fundamental requirements must be met: (1) *generic competence*; and (2); *generic experimentation*. The creative individual must have learned a considerable repertoire of knowledge from at least the domain in which they are acting. However, it is usually required that they have gained competence across the domains of the SoCo, too, and each domain will have its own sub-domains. Accordingly, Csikszentmihalyi defines creativity as “a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed”, and he explains that because such changes “do not happen automatically as in biological evolution, it is necessary to consider the price we must pay for creativity to occur” (8). That price is generic competence; *experience*. Likewise, Koestler tells us that “the creative act is not an act of creation in the sense of the *Old Testament*. It does not create something out of nothing;” but instead “it uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, synthesises already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills” and, in fact, the more familiar the parts, the more striking the new whole” (120). In other words, the familiarity of Genre allows us to understand different meanings and contexts, to focus and concentrate on specific codes but also it allows us to associate and make creative links and leaps. In order to experiment with Genre and thus create “new wholes”, we must first become generically competent and learn the conventions and expectations of the SoCo.

“From a Darwinian perspective,” Simonton explains,

this complex linkage should not be all that surprising. Intelligence involves the capacity for acquiring and applying knowledge. To generate ideational variations, a person must have a sufficient repertoire of ideas that can be subjected to some combinatorial procedure. The more powerful the intellect, the larger the potential size of that repertoire.

(79)

Not only does Simonton highlight a helpful comparison between SoCo's concept of generic competence and the concept of intelligence but also he suggests that learning a large repertoire of genres is a pivotal part of the creative process; it makes creativity possible. Essentially, when we create we are elaborating on or changing the existing genres of the SoCo or making up new ones. To do so requires a relatively extensive knowledge of the genres already available and also a spirited engagement with those genres. The higher the generic competence, the higher the potential for elaboration – the higher the *level* of elaboration. Take Shakespeare, for example. He had an extensive knowledge of the rhetorical figures, literary devices, generic traditions, and dramatic rules which preceded his works. His generic competence enabled him to produce plays which appeal to all levels of generic conceptualisation. For instance, the play-goer with a sparse generic knowledge will be able to enjoy a Shakespeare play just as will the highly-competent Genre-genius, but they will be able to engage with the play on different levels. This broad-appeal is made possible by Shakespeare's utilisation and reference to a broad range of generic types, stock roles, tropes, social conventions, and so on. The Genre-phile will "get" much more "out" of his plays, of course, but Shakespeare's singular achievement is engaging with Genre extensively enough to make sure that there is "something for everyone". If he did not engage with traditions and conventions, his plays would be completely unfamiliar and thus inaccessible to audiences with a smaller generic repertoire or those who engage with Genre minimally (which due to Genre's central function in our lives is still pretty constantly but perhaps at a more basic level of conceptualisation or "unconsciously"). The record shows that there must be at least some generic resonance for most people who come to a Shakespearean stage, otherwise time would have forgotten his contributions. Because when we watch a play, or indeed receive and interpret any creative product we are constructing and creating ourselves, our generic repertoire indicates the level of abstraction which will emerge; our capacity to create. Our generic repertoire indicates the likelihood that we will make successful or useful responses during social interaction. As Wilson suggests, "a member of ...a well-organized society knows its place and responds accordingly and accurately from one exchange to the next" (14). The extent to which we engage with Genre – the organisation of the SoCo – shapes the success of our social – and thus creative – performance.

It is surprising, then, that many of us are happy enough to go about life without doing much interrogation of Genre or self-directed learning to enhance and build our generic competence. It seems like an unfortunate scenario in which many of us prefer to blindly follow the status quo. But, as discussed earlier, we do actually need lots of people like this in order for Genre to serve its purpose. Still, Csikszentmihalyi laments "how few of us bother to invest enough mental energy to learn the rules of even one of these domains, and live instead exclusively within the constraints of biological existence" (37). It is no wonder that we have very few creative geniuses. Creativity is, according to Csikszentmihalyi, "to become involved in a domain deeply enough to reach its boundaries and then push them farther" (53). Furthermore, he makes an important point about domains or genres which points to their plasticity and potentiality. He implies that though we may not be able to build competence in *all* domains, still we can achieve creativity by learning the rules of one genre comprehensively. "Narrowing attention to a single domain does not mean

limiting the novelty one is able to process;” he explains, “on the contrary, complex domains like poetry, history, physics, or politics reveal constantly expanding perspectives to those who venture to explore them” (346).

But, in order to achieve generic development it is not sufficient to be well-versed in the rules of a domain or the genres of the SoCo. Also, we must be willing to experiment, take risks, play, translate, combine, try on different perspectives, and ask questions. Essentially, what is required for generic development and thus creativity is a unique combination of tradition and innovation. Csikszentmihalyi calls this balance a “combination of playfulness and discipline or responsibility and irresponsibility”. Creative individuals alternate these two poles, he explains, and both are necessary requisites for creativity to emerge. The individual must “break away from the present without losing touch with the past”, “to go beyond what we now consider real, and create a new reality” (63). The individual must achieve generic competence *and also* engage in generic experimentation.

Experimentation alone will fail to produce creative outcomes and, at fundamental levels, experimentation is not possible, even, without generic competence. “Generally, creative people are thought to be rebellious and independent”, Csikszentmihalyi observes, “yet”, he clarifies, “it is impossible to be creative without having first internalised a domain of culture” (71). Thus, unless the individual is to some extent conventional and traditional – enough so to commit to engaging with the rules of a genre – they cannot hope to be creative. This state of affairs reveals itself when we consider works produced in a literary genre: “being only traditional leaves the domain unchanged;” whereas “constantly taking chances without regard to what has been valued in the past rarely leads to novelty that is accepted as an improvement” (71). A work which simply repeats a formulaic response cannot be considered creative – in fact, it is usually considered *generic* – because it does not *change or develop* the generic frameworks which it employs. However, a work which is “too experimental”, a work which does not engage frequently enough with accepted genres will likely be uninterpretable and thus poorly received. Tradition must be utilised but as Csikszentmihalyi notes, “the willingness to take risks, to break with the safety of tradition, is also necessary” (72). The goal of creativity, then, should be to engage with Genre from our unique subjective perspective and try to convey both the general and the specific, both conformity and subversion, and both the social and the individual dialectic tensions which emerge from that engagement. A creative product is an artefact, an instantiation, an act of the unique individual engaging with the SoCo.

Generic experimentation can be defined as crossing, combining, or changing genres. Happily, most of our theorists define creativity with similar classifications. “Creativity generally involves crossing the boundaries of domains” (9), Csikszentmihalyi tells us. Koestler describes the process according to his own terminology when he speaks of the interaction or fusion of “independent matrices of perception or reasoning”, the results of which are creative of “new wholes”. Simonton explains the procedure as follows: “evolution takes place when the frequencies of various genes change over time in a manner that departs from the laws of heredity” (13). Evolution offers the principal example of generic development – or “creativity”, of course. Simonton points out the similarity of the creative process and the evolutionary process, stating that in both “variations must be created by the

recombination of ideas” (28). We can infer from Simonton’s estimation that in order to change a domain, in order to achieve generic development and thus creativity, we must combine and recombine generic conventions in novel combinations.

The individual must engage regularly and innovatively with Genre. In order to generate ideas in the first place, the individual must engage with Genre, and once those ideas have been generated the individual must again engage with Genre in order for those ideas to be communicated and interpreted by the field. The bigger the variety of ideas, perspectives, levels of understanding, engagements with concepts, the more creative the individual is in their behaviour and the more creative we seem to deem them within the SoCo. Take the musical icons of the 20th century whom we deem highly creative, for example. Such individuals might include the following: David Bowie, Michael Jackson, and Madonna. These individuals all share the same thing in common: they constantly *reinvented themselves*. Self-Reinvention is an unambiguously generic behaviour. Bowie’s engagement with Genre was clear from the start when he released “Space Oddity” to a contemporary audience obsessed with moon-landings. He moved from Major Tom to Ziggy Stardust and *Glam Rock* to The Thin White Duke and *Plastic Soul* to the minimalist, drug-fuelled Berlin Era, and he continued to experiment wildly but skilfully with Genre throughout his entire career. His constant reinventions were not just about changing his look, which is generic in itself, but with the change of character which he constructed through his changing appearance, also he was experimenting with different genres of music. The very process is a perfect example of the generic process. First, he would become interested in a particular kind of music and he would listen to it frequently. He was building his generic competence. Then he could go on to create his own instantiations of the genre and in doing so he extends the genre with his innovation. The engagement with Genre is a necessary, central, and often unconscious part of the creative process.

There seems to be a disparity, too, between the creative potential of different domains. An individual might be creative in a domain which receives little social attention or feedback, such as a talented and passionate gardener who has designed a beautiful back garden for their own home. The creative product of the garden might be assessed positively by others and so it is in a sense received and interpreted by a field, but it is probable that the field will be small, perhaps including other individuals who live at the home, visitors to the home such as relatives, friends, professional or public service persons, and so on. This field is unlikely to affect the status quo in any way it because it is too limited. Furthermore, all creative products need to be different and new and so repeatedly tending to the same garden becomes routine; merely the maintenance of one creative product. If the gardener designed multiple beautiful gardens but which all were identical, still it would not be creativity but instead mass-production, as mentioned earlier. Only if the gardener were to design many very beautiful gardens, all unique in their designs, perhaps across the nation or across an elite group, say, celebrities, or if they were to perform stunt style garden-jobs or gardens on a mass scale with some incredible design element for which he could become “known”, would this individual be “creative”. You

need to be productive, but you also need to engage with a genre and change it in some novel way that is accepted by the masses.

This endeavour is achievable or at least maintainable, it seems, only from a comic perspective. It's highly likely that if the individual does not bear these traits or perform these behaviours then they have actually transferred to a tragic perspective. The efforts do not need to be highly creative and highly performed. They can be nourished in more subtle conditions and less-recognised fields which lead to the individual feeling they have fulfilled a successful or happy life. Not everyone can be a Shakespeare. Winnicott opines that "we find either that individuals live creatively and feel that life is worth living or else that they cannot live creatively and are doubtful about the value of living" (95-96). Yet, there may be some hope for the tragic perspective.

It may seem that the tragic perspective is a write-off when it comes to experimentation, play, and creativity. But, perhaps not. Most of the research shows that the tragic or insecure perspective shuts down communication and completely hinders creativity. It is simply not conducive to creative behaviour. The problem is that it's *hard* to be creative when you're under stress or perceiving the world through the tragic perspective. Experience cannot be regulated and the stress affects our performance. The tragic perspective is less creative, more rigid and antisocial. It is *negatively* motivated – *tragically* motivated. Thus, there is a focus but it is extremely limited. Creativity requires a risk-taking, expansive perspective, curiosity, open-mindedness, and relaxed, fun, play. We are not likely to feel very fun or playful or relaxed if we perceive through the tragic lens. But, while it may seem that the tragic individual has little hope for creativity, there are a few quirks that I'd like to consider.

Simonton devotes special consideration to the links between the tragic perspective and creative genius. "There is, in fact, empirical reason for believing that the development of genius may sometimes be enhanced by traumatic or adverse experiences in childhood and adolescence" (114-115), he explains. Simonton outlines the supporting evidence for this hypothesis and considers the following premises:

- ◇ Traumatic experience leads to *weakened inhibition*, which can be conducive to creativity.
- ◇ One type of adversity has attracted the most scientific research: *early parental loss or orphanhood*. "This literature has found a tendency for geniuses of all kinds to have experienced the death of one or both parents at an early age" Simonton explains, noting that there are various explanations for how parental loss can contribute to the development of creativity, the most prominent of which include first, that the loss "produces a so-called bereavement syndrome, in which acts of achievement serve as emotional compensation", second that "such adverse events nurture the development of a personality robust enough to overcome the many obstacles and frustrations standing in the path of achievement", and third, that "parental loss and other forms of extreme adversity may set a young talent along a developmental trajectory that diverges from the conventional" (115-116).

- ◇ “Creative genius is more likely to appear in unstable and diversified home environments” Simonton observes, “and creative genius is more likely to emerge in a sociocultural milieu that is culturally and intellectually heterogeneous, as well as politically unstable or fragmented. In short, the genius grows up in ambiguous surroundings” (232).
- ◇ The tragic individual often exhibits “several cognitive quirks”, according to Simonton’s observations, which make their thought processes “depart from the norm”. He lists the following quirks: “‘allusive’ or ‘overinclusive’ thinking, in which the sharp distinctions between separate ideas are loosened, yielding overgeneralized concepts”; such individuals “lack the strong ‘filter mechanism’ that keeps ideas within their conceptual boundaries”; they generate “incongruous associations”. Simonton acknowledges that “taken to the extreme” these cognitive attributes “produce the kinds of symptoms that make life so difficult for the psychotic”, but he suggests that “at less conspicuous levels, these same proclivities... permit the production of numerous ideas that are highly unexpected” (101).

But, these individuals can achieve the potentially positive creative effects of their experience only if they perceive at least on some basic level that they are *safe* and in *control*, that they understand and can be understood. Essentially, these individuals must create their own secure base, *overcome* their trauma, or utilise it to construct a creative and comic perspective.

It makes considerable sense that traumatic experience is conducive to creativity. Attachment Theory and its implications were discussed above. The insecure or tragic individual emerges from an insecure environment, the same kind of environment which prompts the qualities required of creative genius: hypervigilance, hyper-curiosity, hyper-sensitivity, a unique perspective, and so on. Again, this observation does not suggest that *all* – or even many – individuals utilising the tragic perspective or living with psychological disorder will evolve into creative geniuses. Like any individual, creative geniuses are constructed by their unique circumstance and thus their unique perspective. Creativity emerges when a unique individual engages with the SoCo in a constructive way, be it self-construction – which is achieved through sociation, anyway – or with time, social-construction and thus generic development proper. The tragic individual must construct a robust-enough self to begin to put it to use in creatively developing the genres of the SoCo and, in essence, helping to change the world. In particular, such change requires the strength and competence and desire to overcome the psychological dysfunction and to redirect and recontextualise – to reassign the genre – of the learned behaviours. The individual must redirect their narrative to a useful purpose, and must do so by addressing the perspective, the genre, at the root of the narrative, its behaviours, and consequences. The task is to change the function, the goal, the genre of the behaviours. Simply focusing on behaviour is not enough. First, the genre must be identified, and only then can the individual hope to make positive changes to their approach to life. If you change the *genre of doing*, the actual doing will follow. You must make your experience work to your advantage – it is a creative endeavour in itself. It is no wonder that the tragic perspective is linked to creativity. But, in no certain terms is creativity a given. That these individuals have managed to

overcome their tragedy is evidence enough of creativity. But, many individuals do not overcome their tragedy.

An interesting question which arises from this discussion regards those who have been regarded as highly creative but also highly tragic. I would say that the intensity of the experience of a tragic individual who achieves creativity without forming a secure self means that they will “burn out” rather quickly or come to find their tragic infliction unbearable to cope with. In both cases, their creative output will be limited seemingly to tragic themes and self-focus. The tragic perspective is not a viable or sustainable route for creativity. The stories that we tell about such individuals are tragedies and tend to end tragically. While it may be common for creative individuals to have experienced trauma and the various psychological and social implications of traumatic experience, Simonton observes that “these levels are seldom so high as to translate into mental and emotional deterioration. Indeed, if they do suffer from such extreme degrees of disturbances, their creative careers terminate, whether by suicide or by complete intellectual or emotional incapacitation” (99). The singer-songwriter Morrissey provides an interesting case study. When he was a young man singing sad songs for The Smiths, we could laud his wonderful creativity and skill in putting feelings into words, twisting the conventions of pop and masculinity, and transforming common idioms into high melancholic poetry. Yet, with time, we wonder why, if he is still so depressed, has he not killed himself? What could be considered creative before is now hammed. And, we have since learned more about how the tragic perspective dictates the man’s logic and social beliefs. It is a tragedy. He will not be remembered as a creative hero but as an old, tired, xenophobe. It is a shame. The individuals who we remember as tragic creative geniuses mostly killed themselves or died in some unintended suicide. Their tragic experience was too much to cope with or to deal with in full consciousness, their pain inescapable. They could not translate the pain into something comic.

Tragic experience makes the individual’s perspective more unique in several ways. The individual’s perspective will be removed from the SoCo to a higher or lesser degree and the extent to which it is removed affects creative potential. The perspective will be informed more richly in some ways, usually in terms of emotional experience and reading emotions though they may tend to read them through an overly-cautious or negative lens, and it is likely that the perspective will generate novel combinations. If they are not completely or too-draastically removed from the SoCo then it could be argued that they understand the SoCo more objectively; they understand both sides of the story. But, in order to be creatively effective the perspective must still be moored within the SoCo to a considerable extent. Creativity requires a level of generic coherence, consistency, and competence, an interactive engagement with the SoCo, which is simply not achievable for some individuals. If an individual’s foundational expectations are so distorted that they cannot engage with the SoCo, they will never be able to achieve creativity; their attempts at creativity would have no communicable meaning, and thus no meaning at all.

In order to make use of their unique perspective, creative geniuses usually enjoy an arsenal of additional skills and qualities and competencies which support their creative endeavours. While they may have experienced trauma, Simonton explains that “creative geniuses tend to possess other cognitive and emotional resources that help to channel and contain any potential psychopathology. Besides

superior intelligence, eminent creators will possess considerable “ego-strength” and other traits of personal fortitude and self-discipline” (99-100). The tragic individual will not necessarily possess such resources. The moderation which these resources provide “enable creators to exploit the strange ideas that fill their heads without allowing those ideas to take over the organization of their personality” (100) Simonton explains, but he adds that “the effects of early adversity might be too extreme, nipping the talent in the bud” (117).

The comic perspective demands a certain inferred naivete. If the individual becomes too assured and rigid in their perspective they risk entering tragic territory. As Shakespeare tells us in one of his finest comedies, *AYLI*, “the fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool” (V.i.29-30). Accordingly, wisdom is often spoken by Shakespeare’s fools. It is interesting, furthermore, that the fools tend to be removed from the social order and societal expectations. This strange position which fools inhabit reveals, then, an important feature of the comic perspective and the creative, playful genius: they sing to the beat of their own drum because they *see through* the social genres.

Creativity is the behavioural replicate of the emergence of consciousness, along with its principal activity, *play* (creation, construction, doing). There are lots of potential “benefits” of adverse experience for the creative process: hyper-vigilance; hyper-curiosity; hyper-sensitivity. Conflict provokes the construction of genres. It is reasonable to suspect that all creativity emerged initially from conflict. Perhaps humans have had to face more conflicts (and more failures) than other species because we lack in physical prowess where other animals succeed (in behaviours such as flight and high-speed movement; qualities such as large teeth, heightened sense of smell or sight or hearing, the ability to change the colour of their skin to adapt to their surroundings, and so on). We don’t really have the physical endowments necessary to survive in the menacing animal world. So, how did we? We had to fail and fail, and perform trial and error over and over again until we somehow began to create concepts for dealing creatively with situations in which previously we might have been killed. We had to come up with creative – *conceptual, conscious* – strategies for survival. We had to *get organised, get in formation*; we had to get *creative*. Creativity has been necessary for our survival and the emergence of subjective consciousness, as a mode of shrewd and literally life-saving social communication and control.

Naturally, individuals who have experienced more than their “fair share” of adverse events or circumstances would be more equipped to solve problems because of their more varied social experience which would increase their creative potential. To use Simonton’s words, creative geniuses seem to require “just the right amount of psychoticism” in order to reap the benefits but avoid its potentially destructive trajectory. They can realise their creative potential only if they are able to change their perspective. Creativity is change. And thus, their experience will develop in them a disposition prone to “have all sorts of seemingly irrelevant ideas pop into their heads almost randomly, and without control”, which “even if not meaningful in themselves” may “prime new chains of associations that lead to insights otherwise missed” (101). But, actually, it fails most of the time. The risk is

that people cannot cope with their experience, they cannot interpret it in an adaptive and original way, and they are limited by their perspective and try to fit with existing types with little success or harmony. The main link between mental illness and creativity is the emergence of a particularly unique perspective (the generic engagement parts which make up the self-genre whole).

As long as we have abuse and neglect – trauma, broadly, which can involve just about anything – we'll have creativity and genius (but also severely mentally ill people and serial killers, rapists, racists, misogynists, and so on and so forth). The question which comes to mind is as follows: Yes, trauma can make us creative but, at what cost? There is a fine line, apparently, between creativity and destruction. A fine line between the intent to interpret and communicate – to impose our perspective – creatively or destructively. While Shakespeare's villains may make destruction seem alluring, true creativity emerges from beating the odds, turning a tragedy into a comedy. Changing your "fate" from failure to success represents the very height of creative skill.

SoCo prioritises the potential of literature and its associated outputs as highly-conducive for creativity. At this stage of the current work, SoCo's assessment of the value of Literature as a creative pursuit need hardly be stated. But, to emphasise the sentiment, SoCo locates literature as the quintessential activity for generic development and thus creativity. Certainly, writing things down was a big moment in our evolution as an enhanced method of remembering genres, previously achieved by oral storytelling, figures of speech, gestures, facial expressions, and so on. The point is that the most successful way of communicating or making tangible experience is through literature.

First of all, it is important to note that SoCo includes under this umbrella rhetoric, metaphor, and conceptualisation. Wilson calls symbolic language "the one capacity that distinguishes *Homo Sapiens* absolutely from other creatures" and suggests that it enables us to "summon memories that help form future scenarios in the conscious mind" and results in the emergence of what we call "thinking" (114). Of course, conceptual metaphor precedes language. But, metaphor and symbolic language construction require and utilise Genre. "Metaphors set the imagination free to search for vivifying images!" Wilson continues, "they allow us to cross boundaries. Deliver little shocks of aesthetic surprise and humour, and thereby achieve nuance and novel perspective. They permit and infinite expansion of language, and ideas identified by them" (163). The boundaries Wilson speaks of are *generic* boundaries. The "little shocks" Wilson speaks of are enabled by the utilisation of generic expectation, convention, and subversion. And, the conceptual and linguistic expansion Wilson speaks of is constructed and "remembered" by Genre. So, when we create a metaphor we are crossing or infusing two or more *genres* and furthermore we are usually utilising more specific generic parameters to judge the "rules" of the metaphorical comparison or infusion; the creative product. We *create* metaphors by *playing* with Genre.

Koestler observes that "the metaphors we commonly use reflect an intuitive awareness that the pairs of opposites on various levels form a continuous series" (290) and that the metaphor infers dependent parts of a whole which is at the same

time more than the sum of those parts. Because we are *playing* when we do metaphor, both play and metaphor share the same principal activity: changing an object's *functional context*. We do this activity to some extent whenever we use most rhetorical figures. Of course, *function* is coded and remembered by Genre. One of the most fascinating elements of conceptual metaphorical play is that, as Koestler notes, "when two matrices [(genres)] have become integrated they cannot again be torn asunder" (105). So, when we cross two genres, and the creative product which emerges is socially accepted, we infuse them permanently in conceptualisation which will be remembered within their generic trajectories. "This is why the discoveries of yesterday are the commonplaces of today, and why we always marvel how stupid we were not to see what *post factum* appears to be so obvious", Koestler explains. His observation captures the very phenomenon of Genre and creativity! Once the concept is infused and accepted by the SoCo, it becomes *generic*; a new genre emerges from the combination of "old" genres. Furthermore, Koestler conveys not only the understanding that our metaphorical play can have serious and lasting consequence and influence but also he provokes a sense that integrating genres may be harder than it seems or needs to be. Creation is the association of that which no one else has connected before. Depending on your approach, and the genres at play, this task might be simple or complex.

Metaphors are a particularly fruitful means of creative play for several reasons:

- ◇ What Koestler calls the "bisociative shock" which emerges from interpretation of a new metaphor tends to render previously unconscious, implicit, and "invisible" generic rules conscious, explicit, and "visible". Koestler suggests that this shock to our generic expectations has the effect of "suddenly focusing awareness on aspects of experience which had been unverballed, unconsciously implied, taken for granted; so that a familiar and unnoticed aspect of a phenomenon ... is suddenly perceived at an unfamiliar and significant angle. Discovery often means simply the uncovering of something which has always been there but was hidden from the eye by the blinkers of habit. (108). Metaphor renders the generic process conscious. Creativity lies in the combination of different frames of reference. In order to combine frames of reference, we must first fully grasp the rules of those frames, and then proceed to find links between them to construct metaphors.
- ◇ Metaphors are *physical*, and *emotional*, but they also exist in the so-called "potential-space", in the SoCo, they inform our subjective experience, and they are "extra-somatic". A key contribution to the power of metaphor is its physical and somatic connections. "Words may be arbitrary in origin," Koestler suggests, "but metaphors are not. Rather, they tend to fall into categories of innate human emotional response" (163). Because emotions are genres of social and physiological response processes, they are the foundational genres which have informed our construction of conceptual metaphor, initially through the conceptualisation of different emotional feelings as different "emotions". Using emotional genres to construct metaphors enabled us to reach beyond the physical into the conscious, conceptual realm. Koestler notes that other animals "do not bisociate to give rise to new synthesis" and that, instead, the evolution of conceptual metaphors "is a tale of ever-repeated differentiation, specialisation and reintegrations on a higher level; a

progression from primordial unity through variety to more complex patterns of unity-in-variety” (226). So, Genre is an imitation of the evolutionary process but wherein the imitation actually improves and in fact perfects the process. Certainly, it speeds the process up and makes it more fluid. These improvements are only possible because social genres are “made up” of course but this quality does not hinder Genre from serving a vital, creative, and infinite potential in our lives and does not negate its biological and evolutionary origins. We improved the system by using metaphor. By creating concepts based on “*as-if*” and “is like”. “The highest emotive potential is found in images which evoke archetypal symbols and arouse unconscious resonances”, Koestler acknowledges. Thus, our metaphors engage emotion when they engage generic tradition.

- ◇ Metaphors are *not accurate* but *useful*. In consideration of the above point, metaphors are nuanced, flexible, but often can be very general, too. Metaphors require a level of familiarity which is provided by the genres that they utilise. “Metaphors are not intended to express the true nature of the entities that inspired them” Koestler explains, “their meaning comes from the way a few of their traits affect our idiosyncratic human senses and emotion. In this perception, they are part instinctual and part learned, part genetic and part cultural. Predictable metaphors are woven together to create the archetypes of the creative arts. They are easily detected as stereotypical plots and characters in stories. They may be imprecise and even trite, but they are the bread and butter of literature and drama” (164). Obviously, Shakespeare’s engagement with these generic elements is the “bread and butter” of the social acceptance of his plays. The plays “work” because the tropes and metaphors are familiar. Once Shakespeare has a set of limitations or a structure for his characters and their worlds – their genre – he can make whatever changes and add whatever quirks he desires. But, the play will then appeal to a broad range of generic competencies. Audience members who are highly generically competent will understand the nuances of Shakespeare’s interpretation and metaphorical use of Genre. At the same time, even low-level generic competence will pick up on the stereotypical cues for which metaphor is vehicle.

In the end it feels like very little if any of our experience escapes metaphor. Life is structured on our capacity to see one “thing” in terms of another. Often it is our only option for “understanding”.

Next, literature deals in the *communication and control of experience*. Literary works are artefacts of the communicative – the *persuasive* – endeavour. Essentially, we judge the value of literature based on our assessment of how “well” its author has communicated experience to a social audience and the control they achieve over the emotions and behaviours of that audience. In other words, who says it best? But, in order to “say it best” or to achieve this aim of communicating experience in a skilful and interpretable way, Koestler explains that the author “must provide patterns of stimuli as substitutes for the original stimuli which caused the experience to occur” which is, as he recognises, no easy task. The author must use tricks to “set up” or assist the “*as-if*” communication process and Koestler describes “the sum of these tricks” as what we understand to be “the art of literature”.

Thus, literature is a social experience which depends on an interaction between text and audience, which is facilitated by an interaction between writer and the SoCo. That we do this “naturally” or unconsciously is incredible, as Koestler notes. The emotions which we experience during a literary experience are not *created* by the author or performers and replayed to the audience. Instead, the emotional and social experience must be *co-constructed*, it must be “worked up” by the audience, to use Koestler’s words. In order for the socially co-constructed literary experience to emerge, the author must engage with Genre, they must infer the relevant elements of their generic repertoire in order to “fill in the gaps”. Note that the social nature of the literary experience does not change simply because we miss the performance and read the text alone at home instead. The engagement with and construction of the literary experience in reading still utilises social genres, “bisociation”, and communicative tricks – rhetorical devices – in order to generate a social experience. During the reading experience, we achieve the same effects but through the “*as-if*”.

Earlier, I stated that our capacity to “as-if” was one of the key mechanisms of consciousness. I said that we do “as-if” in order to create, communicate, and interpret. Damasio tells us that consciousness is “the feeling of knowing” and I believe that this *knowing* phenomenon is produced by the “as-if”. We are conscious when *we feel “as-if” we know*, it is essentially a sense of *security*. Humphrey alludes to the same idea when he explains that “a subject is... conscious... when and if there is something *it’s like to be him* at this moment” (2006, 8). He captures the ineffability which arises from discussions about consciousness. It’s just so hard to talk about. And it’s because consciousness is only ever “*as-if*” or “*it’s like*”.

Each moment of consciousness is an instance which emerges from *kind* rather than an exact copy. We compare things by kind, by their sameness and difference, in a metaphorical comparison process. This process is that which we call thinking, or *knowing*. We make comparisons between all of the things we experience. It’s not is, it’s “as-if”. Humphrey notes that “we would never say ‘X is like Y’ when we know that X actually is Y. So, when we say ‘X is like Y,’ we mean X shares some particular property with Y, but – so far as we know at this time – *it does not share all its other properties*” (35). It seems the case that with consciousness we can never say what it “is” only what it “is like”. Consciousness emerges from the combination of domains or genres in concerted, combinatorial use in the same way that meaning emerges from a metaphor. We can see how incomplete our conceptual metaphors are quite easily. For example, the metaphor LOVE IS WAR provides us with useful comparisons and ways of communicating about different elements of the two domains, but it certainly is not complete; love is not war, it is *like* war. How do we come to know this information? Through experience. So, it should pass the test of logic to believe that the emergence of consciousness could be produced by an incomplete or “gappy” but general and useful ensemble of processes which respond to experience. “As-if” makes perfect sense here because although it cannot reveal all features it will reveal some and they will be *useful*. “As-if” is “is like” is “of kind”; *generic*.

Shakespeare seemed to have an intense awareness of the theatricality of life, and of the generic workings of conscious experience, long before any scientist broached the subjects. Consciousness is about weighing up options, creating

characters, playing out scenarios, performing emotions and their thoughts and feelings, it is about “as-if-ing”. “It is no wonder,” then, as Budra and Werier point out, “that when ... Shakespeare characters discuss the nature of humanity, they fall into metatheatrical language” (9). The dramatic experience offers an excellent analogy for explaining how consciousness might emerge from purely physical processes. It’s about communicating concepts between characters.

The rhetorical devices used by writers are not simply decorative, then. They correspond with our deeply interwoven generic expectations; they indicate the rules of the game. *All* language is symbolic and depends therefore on Genre and its use in conceptual metaphor. “Rhythm and assonance, pun and rhyme are not artificially created ornaments of speech;” Koestler confirms, “the whole evidence indicates that their origins go back to primitive – and infantile – forms of thought and utterance, in which sound and meaning are magically interwoven, and association by sound-affinities is as legitimate as association based on other similarities” (315). We have considered how such processes might extend even further back evolutionarily in the forms of functional categorisation and sense-and-respond mechanisms. Any such process must correspond with generic “expectations” or rules, as such. So, the rhetorical devices which we usually associate with literature operate actually at much *deeper*, more implicit, and more-widely utilised levels of creative cognition. Their function is so crucial to our lives that it becomes *invisible, unconscious*. But, in any case they rely on a creative-social-generic process of *expectation and change*. Koestler aptly quotes I. A. Richards who explains that “evidently there can be no surprise and no disappointment unless there is expectation” (340-341). Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi observes that “poetry and literature do not achieve their effect by simply presenting information”, but instead “their effectiveness rests on formal properties” (239). According to Csikszentmihalyi, the craft of the writer is to be able to draw on a “huge repertoire of words, expressions, and images used by previous writers”, to select “the ones most fitting to the present task” and to understand “how to make up new ones when needed”. In order to achieve these skills, the writer must be *generically competent*. To use Csikszentmihalyi’s words, the writer needs “to have a broad base of knowledge that extends beyond the boundaries of literature” (262-63).

But in order for a writer to achieve generic change and thus creativity, they need to go beyond generic competence and employ generic experimentation. “Being able to braid together ideas and emotions from disparate domains is one way writers express their creativity” Csikszentmihalyi explains, noting that “love and death may not have changed for thousands of years; but the way we understand them changes each generation, in part as a result of what we know about other facets of life” (263). And so *good* literature isn’t achieved through merely imitating Genre; an *active* engagement is required. The writer must be openminded as well as skilled in critical judgement, they must utilise but also depart from the laws of Genre in meaningful and accessible and novel ways. Creative works reflect a combination of genres and thus the multifaceted nature of life. The aesthetic experience itself depends on the combination of “matrices” according to Koestler, on “that delicate balance arising from the presence of *both* matrices in the mind; on perceiving the hero as Laurence Olivier and Prince Hamlet of Denmark at one and the same time; on the lightning oscillations of attention from one to the other, like sparks between charged electrodes” (306) but furthermore, when a writer engages with a combination of

genres, they create an interactive and multifaceted experience within the playworld which seems “real” to spectators. I think that all experience depends on the balance of real and imaginary which Koestler refers to, and this balance is disturbed in dreams because we cannot access a physical or external referential framework. So, too, it is disturbed when reading as opposed to viewing a literary text. Both of these activities require construction but in dreams it is more grotesque because its only referent is the self-genre unlike with a book where we are directed by the author’s words. Still, all of these creative activities require generic engagement and thus the writer must pay heed to tradition but they should also inject their unique perspective to create generic subversion. A unique combination of conformity and subversion is best (most “true to life”).

Our definition of what is “experimental” changes over time because Genre changes over time. “Experimental literature”, otherwise termed variously “creative”, “literary”, “difficult”, might be most accurately termed “generic” because of its engagement with Genre, though it does make sense to use “generic” to refer to types which uphold convention, too. In the current thesis, experimental literature refers to literature which actively engages with generic convention but simultaneously subverts it in nuanced and skilful ways. A piece of experimental literature is precisely an experiment in *Genre*. Shakespeare is a wonderful example in this respect, and it is in this respect that he was chosen to spearhead the current work. Koestler agrees that “the measure of an artist’s originality, put into the simplest terms, is the extent to which his selective emphasis deviates from the conventional norm and establishes new standards of relevance” (334).

Experimental literature is *good* for us. First, we get to join in with the experiment in a safe simulation with no social cost, and second, when a work subverts convention, it demands *co-construction*. It is only this kind of work which can be called creative, surely. To simply imitate a generic type is not creativity. “When the styles and techniques of an art have become conventionalised and stagnant, the audience is exempted from the necessity to exert its intelligence and imagination – and deprived of its reward” Koestler warns, and he explains that

the ‘consumer’ reads the conventional novel, looks at the conventional landscape, and watches the conventional play with perfect ease and self-assurance – and a complete absence of awe and wonder. He prefers the familiar to the unfamiliar, because it presents no challenge and demands no creative effort. Art becomes a mildly pleasant pastime and loses its emotive impact, its transcendental appeal and cathartic effect.

(336)

This lament is reminiscent of the work that we do in dreams when we decrease the emotional resonance of experience by performing it repeatedly. But also, Koestler conveys that if our literary experience is “too easy”, too familiar, or *generic*, it requires minimal effort to engage with it and in consequence offers little reward. From experimental literature, an alternative loop emerges: more effort is required on our part but in consequence we achieve a much fuller and more rewarding experience. “The trend from the explicit statement to the implicit hint, from the obvious to the allusive and oblique; it is as old as art itself. All mythology is studded

with symbols, veiled in allegory; the parables of Christ pose riddles which the audience must solve” Koestler observes, and he states that the intention of such work “is not to obscure the message, but to make it more luminous by compelling the recipient to work it out by himself – to re-create it. Hence the message must be handed to him in implied form... To make it unfold, he must fill in the gaps, complete the hint, see through the symbolic disguise” (337-338). The success of the gap-filling or co-construction which emerges from the literary experience depends on the writer’s as well as the reader’s generic competencies, of course. Experiment attempted sans Genre will be an interpretive and creative non-entity.

Because metacognition is cued by error, change, difference, unmet expectations, or failed predictions, a work which experiments with Genre will pique the cognition of the consumer as they tussle with unique interpretations, subversions, bisociations, conceits, and unknown generic territory. A work which simply fulfils generic conventions does not conflict with the reader’s expectations and thus no metacognitive function is required. Experiments in Genre make us attend to what is different and in so doing bring to conscious attention the generic traditions for questioning and reinterpreting.

Essentially, the writer must refer constantly to convention and expectation, but at the same time reflect the often-bizarre ideational variants which emerge constantly in the normal individual’s mind, as well as the nature of the real-world utilisation of genres which is regularly nuanced and nonconformist. Such an approach is representative of brain-function as well as the functioning of complex social life.

According to SoCo, the writer’s goal should be to communicate the interaction between their unique self-genre and the genres of the SoCo. This idea is presented in the form of a *prosaics* to be found as an appendix to the current work. Of course, if the individual is communicating their experience in order to “overcome the isolation of the self” as Koestler suggests is the fundamental activity of creating literature, then the individual will communicate their self-genre naturally or unconsciously. But, SoCo suggests a conscious attempt at such communication. In order to achieve this kind of feat, the individual must be generically competent, both competent in “knowing” and *utilising* the genres of the SoCo but also interrogative and insightful about their own perspective and its possible utility. The “limitations and peculiarities” of any medium “force the artist at each step to make choices, consciously or unconsciously;” Koestler observes,

to select for representation those features or aspects which he considers to be relevant, and to discard those which he considers irrelevant. Thus we meet again the trinity of *selection*, *exaggeration*, and *simplification* ...He must choose his genre.

(333)

Our self-genre is reflected naturally in our creative choices, with “even the most naturalistic” creative products containing an “unavoidable element of bias, of selective emphasis, according to Koestler, and he explains that the direction of these choices “depends on the distorting lenses in the artist’s mind – the perceptual and conceptual matrices which pattern his experience, and determine which aspects of it

should be regarded as relevant, which not". The sum of these self-biased-choices creates what Koestler says we call "an artist's individual style" (334). But, SoCo posits that a more active, interrogative, and conscious effort to communicate the peculiarities of the self-genre, of the unique perspective, enables the writer to create works which are both familiar and relevant and socially significant but which convey the true nuance of the creative individual. Such an emphasis would champion the relativism of significance, the deep-rooted and intertwined workings of Genre as well as the unique perspective of the individual, and truly "conscious" instantiation or work "of thought" which must be recreated in the audience's mind from their own unique perspective. There are many other ways to "be" creative; to communicate the self-genre through engagement with the SoCo. SoCo presents literature as the most relevant to its focus and most accessible to the widest audience.

We can now define the issue of creativity more coherently and in a more nuanced way. Creativity occurs through generic experimentation which requires generic competence and results in generic development. Creativity occurs when we create something that appears meaningfully (or generically) new from generic material. A world without Genre would be a world without creativity. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi says of such a world that "there would be no speech, no songs, no tools, no ideas such as love... It would be an existence so mechanical and impoverished that none of us would want any part of it" (317). Creativity requires Genre, and creativity enables the richness, meaning, advancement, and development in our lives. Contrary to the common denigration of Genre as mechanistic and limiting, it is clear that it makes possible the opposite kind of life for us. SoCo's basic definition of creativity aligns with Csikszentmihalyi's proposition: "Creativity – the attempt to expand the boundaries of a domain – makes a lifetime of enjoyment possible" (351).

We can use SoCo's conceptualisation of creativity (competence + experimentation) in our own daily lives in order to assert control and steer our life in useful and constructive directions. We can utilise a heightened awareness of Genre to rise above our instincts, to consider all of the various options before acting. The creative process demands an open mind, and the richer the input the more the brain has to play with in order to generate a creative outcome. Inputs are constantly combined in our environment, priming creativity, and reconfiguring the brain. If we pay more attention to these inputs and our interpretations of them, we can become more adept at recombining them in novel ways and also at gaining a better understanding of our *perspective as a whole*; our self-genre. SoCo sees the creative environment as invariably interdisciplinary. In the same way that creativity emerges not from one part of the brain but from a concerted interplay of different processes, the creative product emerges from the interplay of various "matrices of thought" or genres. New experience extends the generic repertoire available for creative play. Put simply, new experience creates new ideas.

Through experimentation we make new applications of old material – we use the old for a new function, or in a new combination or context. We change our perspective or translate Genre. In our personal lives, this can take the form of laughing at mishaps instead of crying. Thus, creativity can be utilised for great healing power. Creativity is about transformation, and we can use it to approach the transformation of the self-genre. It is doubtful that an individual can transform the

genres of the SoCo if they have not first tackled the transformation of the self – should it be required. And so, through creatively engaging with the self-genre, we can free ourselves from the prison of convention, we can fight the urge to take the path of least resistance and instead, perhaps, step into the unknown. Creativity emerges more and more as we dig deeper and make efforts to try new things, to take risks, to step out of our comfort zone. Creativity requires that we allow ourselves to feel confused and frustrated and uncertain. We must be willing to be wrong, willing to feel right when everyone else thinks that we are wrong, and finally to learn from our liberating errors. Creativity arises from failure, or at least it arises from act of *trial*. In this respect, the most effective creative products ask questions rather than attempt to provide answers. The job of creating answers is the audience's responsibility, and this co-constructive element is integral to creativity. As Simonton recognises, "creativity is responsive to experience" (78) but if we change our *perspective*, we can change our *type of response* and, ultimately, the co-constructed conceptualisation of our self-genre.

Consciousness facilitates the capacities to choose, to predict, and to question. Consciousness emerges from an individual organism interacting with the social consciousness. Feelings seem to be generic cues produced by emotion genres. Consciousness is created from the emotion genres, like a play might be crafted from the revenge tradition or the pastoral tradition. We learn our scripts and roles from the moment we are born, the early experience dictating the kind or flavour or genre of the life ahead. "As a conscious creature" Humphrey agrees, "consciousness changes your worldview, so as to change the direction of your life" (152). But as humans, we seem hell-bent on choosing the hard option, the less-trodden path, the high-way. It seems uniquely human to go off-course. Did we invent free will? We appear to be the only creatures who possess the striking capacity to consciously *choose*, and furthermore to choose the hard or complicated way. Because in reflection we can predict the future based upon the generic information we have accrued and of course our generic competence. Thus, Genre enables progression, creative development, learning, and innovation. By integrating experience Genre allows us to survey it with ease. Variation is not random, it is generic. Genres enable us to articulate the appropriate response to experience. Genres communicate a gist upon which we create afresh with every mental construction. We are inherently creative because we create consciousness. But, to be a creative genius requires conscious experimentation. Both consciousness and creativity serve the purpose of control via communication. The creative genius displays competence and thus control over both social and also emotional genre. The creative or conscious capacity is the capacity to choose. We should employ this capacity whenever possible, or have the competence to know when we can leave things up to "chance".

12. KINDS OF EXPERIENCE

Damasio describes the emergence of the conscious mind as the result of “life regulation” and productive of the capacity “to use a part of our mind’s operation to monitor the operation of other parts” (25) in his astonishing work *Self Comes to Mind* (2010). In this respect, Shakespeare’s rhetorical experimentation is, as investigated thoroughly by Lynn Enterline, a practice consumed with reproducing the mind’s natural monitoring activities to construct effective rhetorical performances. Furthermore, we are reminded of Damasio’s arguments for the experiential influence which shapes conscious experience. He suggests that by mirroring the biological balance-maintenance process of homeostasis,

the conscious minds of humans, armed with... complex selves and supported by even greater capabilities of memory, reasoning, and language, engender[ed] the instruments of culture and open[ed] the way into new means of homeostasis at the level of societies and culture. In an extraordinary leap, homeostasis acquire[d] an extension into the sociocultural space.

In other words, our monitoring capacity facilitated complex social communication.

“Justice systems, economic and political organisations, the arts, medicine, and technology are examples of the new devices of regulation” (26), Damasio explains but he warns that there are vulnerabilities in the meta-communicative process which we co-create and which produces the social consciousness and thus individual conscious experience. He notes that “while the basic variety of homeostasis is an established inheritance, provided by everyone’s genome,” instead “the sociocultural variety is a somewhat fragile work in progress, responsible for much of human drama, folly, and hope” (27).

Social hierarchy, social stratification, social discrimination, or whatever the process may be called in various contexts is a predictable product both of social interaction and also of consciousness; social creatures are predisposed to create systems of social value spontaneously and instinctively. In an attempt to explain the neural and psychological foundations of social hierarchies and thus status perception (2017), Jessica Koski, Hongling Xie, and Ingrid R. Olson demonstrated that “social groups across species rapidly self-organize into hierarchies, where members vary in their level of power, influence, skill, or dominance”. The function of social stratification is, according to the group, “to organize social groups in order to allocate limited resources, facilitate social learning, and maximize individual motivation”, as well as to “define social roles” and “to increase the survival of high-status members ...and provide them with greater influence over other members”. The similarities between this socio-cultural process and the processes at the heart of the SoCo theory cannot be understated, from humble bacterial conduct to complex and often combative human relationships. Koski, Xie, and Olson remark that “despite that fact that there are always losers in this scenario, social hierarchies are highly pervasive across human cultures and they appear to emerge naturally in social groups”, adding as well that “this group organization is not strictly a product of human cognition, as almost every group-living species demonstrates a natural tendency to organize into a social hierarchy”. Our position in the social stratosphere shapes our unique perspective.

We all view the world through a perspective which has been shaped by our engagement with the SoCo. This fact is not problematic in itself. What is problematic is *Genre-blindness*. We cannot ignore the fact that we have biases but we have used our biases historically for tragic – *selfish* – reasons, and so we try to hide them and furthermore they are made invisible by their utter pervasiveness and the way that they construct our very experience of life. But, our socially-constructed perspective is also the very tool which enables us to engage in creativity.

In her book *So You Want to Talk about Race?* (2019), Ijeoma Oluo explains that we each are “a collection of our lived experiences” and that these collections of experience “shape us, how we interact with the world, and how we live in the world” (16), that we “filter new information through our own experiences” (22). Similarly, in her work *White Fragility* (2019), Robin Diangelo refers to the way that we “make sense of perceptions and experiences through our particular cultural lens”. Our specific lens “is neither universal nor objective,” she explains, suggesting quite rightly that “without it, a person could not function in any human society” (9). Again, the fact that we have a perspective is not a negative thing – it is what makes our complicated and often wonderfully rich lives possible. But, when we are blind to the biases and privileges of our perspective – when we live in a social consciousness which

condemns and conceals this, the very function of our human structure – we deny the experience of those who have *other* perspectives and furthermore we distinguish, discriminate, utilise, oppress, and diminish the “*Other*” in order to construct, justify, protect, and maintain our own perspective.

For these reasons, approaching social categories and perspectives has been historically (and notoriously) fraught with difficulty. Part of the difficulty comes from discomfort. Oluo echoes a question asked probably by many individuals trying to approach racism: “What if I talk about race wrong?” (37). The same kind of fear of “getting it wrong” can be observed across the spectrum of what is referred to by Diangelo and others as *identity politics*. We don’t like these conversations because they make us feel uncomfortable and defensive. Our fear of “getting it wrong” and our discomfort with social conflict actually serve to remove our accountability for addressing the issues. Even worse, perhaps, are those who think that they do “get it” and so their learning and understanding is perceived as “complete” and thus is closed off and rigid. Oluo complains of “well-meaning white people” who attempt to show “how much they ‘get it’ by launching into racial dialogues filled with assumptions, stereotypes, and microaggressions that they are completely unaware of” (39). We see that this perspective in its rigidity fails to move past formulaic understanding of the issues at hand. Furthermore, we get a glimpse of how blind we can become to our perspective. Another major difficulty that we are faced with is the *emotional risk* which we incur when we do engage with such delicate matters. Social dissenters are punished, more often than not. If we are going to mount constructive conversations about social issues, Oluo says that the individuals involved must be “willing to take the emotional risk of investigating the role they play in upholding [prejudice]” (42). Of course, it is not surprising that many individuals are not willing to take the risk, particularly those who are served well by the dominant perspective of the SoCo.

What is required to tackle social issues such as racism, sexism, ableism, and all social doxa is a useful and objective (or more objective) conceptualisation which we can utilise in our discussions and explorations of social issues. We cannot approach the issues objectively without using an objective concept. Terms such as “man”; “woman”; “black”; “white”; and so on; are *not* objective. They are loaded with rhetoric and meanings and biases. But, when we look closer at the etymology of the language we use to describe these qualities, we learn that they began their generic lives much more objectively. *Race, gender, ability, sex, class*, and so on; all of these terms have evolved to their current definitions and conceptualisations from similar roots. Each term conveys a *kind, a type, a sort, a condition, a potential; a genre*. Social identity is shaped by Genre. These terms are all words which were originally used in a much more objective sense to determine and distinguish *kinds* of experience.

We detect and infer generic difference *implicitly*. “We know that to be a man as defined by the dominant culture is a different experience from being a woman. We know that to be viewed as old is different from being viewed as young, rich is different from poor, able-bodied different from having a disability, gay different from heterosexual, and so on” Diangelo explains, and she suggests, furthermore that while these categories “don’t matter naturally, as we are often taught to believe”, more crucially we are *taught* that they matter, “and the social meaning ascribed to

these groups creates a difference in lived experience. We are taught these social meanings in myriad ways, by a range of people, and through a variety of mediums. This training continues after childhood and throughout our lives. Much of it is nonverbal and is achieved through watching and comparing ourselves to others” (10). Moreover, we assign value to these categories implicitly and dependent on our own social experience and thus our perspective. Therefore, when we try to address social issues, Diangelo explains that “in addition to challenging our sense of ourselves as individuals, tackling group identity also challenges our belief in objectivity. If group membership is relevant, then we don’t see the world from the universal human perspective but from the perspective of a particular kind of human” (11). This recognition of perspective is a prerequisite of creative development and conceptualising different types of perspective or types of experience as genres helps us to both recognise our own self-genre and how it is shaped by the SoCo, as well as recognising and appreciating genres “other” from our own. The self-genre emerges from the specific engagement with the SoCo, we construct it by seeing where we fit in the social repertoire. Of course, “not fitting in” will be much more palpable and thus conscious, whereas “fitting in” is taken for granted, evidently.

It may seem reductive to categorise humans into types but hopefully what has been communicated throughout the current work is that our skills of categorisation are imperative to our creative prowess. Moreover, *we do it anyway*. Diangelo points out that, as a sociologist, she is “quite comfortable generalizing” because “social life is patterned and predictable in measurable ways”. While there are exceptions, “patterns are recognised as such precisely because they are recurring and predictable” (12), she suggests. Pattern-making and interpreting is so central to our lives that it is of some wonder why we have such trouble addressing it. But, then again, part of Genre’s function is its unconscious operating style. Now, that we have a broader conceptualisation of Genre, it is hoped that such terminology and conceptualisation does not seem reductive. No aspect of life is “outside” or “without” Genre. With each kind there is a dominant social interpretation but furthermore there is a perspective and a historical reality, too. Also, there are created infinite external perspectives which shape interpretation according to their viewpoint. All of these elements make up a social genre.

The Genre analogy does not mean to diminish the tragedy and pain that can result from categorisation, either. We can see reflected through extremely brave and creative responses to categories such as gender-reassignment just how powerfully categories can affect – enhance or make a misery of – people’s lives. We know how categorisation can be used to oppress. But what most people don’t seem to recognise is that it can be used for self- or social-reinvention, too. Creativity was the initial function; not oppression. The way that we *use* genre is what translates the goal. These two kinds of responses represent respectively the comic and the tragic modes. The Genre conceptualisation is accompanied, of course, by a whole arsenal of analogical concepts used widely already by specialists across the disparate fields engaging with the subjects of consciousness and the human condition. Such concepts include the following: perspective, stories, narratives, scripts, characters, roles, reading, interpretation, co-construction, rhetoric, settings, change, control, and performance.

How we define social types and issues determines our responses to them. For instance, Oluo suggests that “the commonly used and reductive ‘individual intent’ definition of racism fights ‘only the symptoms of the cancerous system, not the cancer itself’” and, additionally, that such a response “puts the onus on ... the person being discriminated against, to prove [their] humanity and worthiness of equality to those who think [their] less than” (29). Whereas, if we define social types as genres, from which emerge values, roles, expectations, understanding, perception, associations, behaviours, and so on, and we understand that generic interpretation depends on *perspective*, we can approach the engagement of different genres and perspectives from a relatively objective stance. Genre enables us to look at the bigger picture; we are prompted to consider the various social functions, perspectives, and identities facilitated by different *types of response*. The bigger picture brings to focus the central functions of social genres; to facilitate *social control* and also *social identity*. The two functions align well with all of the preceding propositions regarding the interactive nature of creative development, particularly its two requirements competence (control) and experimentation (identity). Thus, the way that we investigate creative development is by answering the questions “how much?” and “what kind?”

“We have to remember that racism was designed to support an economic and social system for those at the very top. This was never motivated by hatred of people of colour, and the goal was never in and of itself simply the subjugation of people of colour. The ultimate goal of racism was the profit and comfort of the white race, specifically, of rich white men” (32), Oluo explains. This utilisation of Genre as a sort of social currency is typical. It is driven by insecurity and the urge to assert control; tragic traits. But additionally, according to Diangelo, “all systems of oppression are adaptive” (40). In other words, these phenomena, these “systems” all achieve at once rigidity, generality, specificity, and adaptivity. These systems are much like genres, then, which achieve both sameness and also difference as part of their function. Genre’s purpose is social; it facilitates communication. To use Genre for individual gain goes against its very mechanism. Perhaps this *error* is what cued the strange loop of subjective consciousness. We utilised Genre in order to achieve complex symbolic communication; it is not meant to be used to *shut down* communication or at least it is meant to be used for such in a constructive manner, such as inhibiting perception of external stimuli, pruning arborisation patterns, unconscious rote performances and grammatical operations, and so on. We utilise Genre in our conceptualisation in a much more destructive sense than in our physiology (for most people). Clearly, at some point, certain groups realised that they could use Genre for antisocial purposes, too. Likely, these individuals were highly insecure. Furthermore, individuals may have very “rational” and palpable interests in adapting genres in ways which are beneficial to them. Genres don’t die, they only change. But, if the generic narratives are repeated and repeated and upheld by law and governments then they are unlikely to change. If we approach Genre creatively then we can change it if it is enforced by these same social powers. Without reconstructing an adequate generic framework from which to build upon, change cannot be achieved.

By understanding types of experience as genres, we can understand how prejudice emerges naturally as a result of social interaction and perceptual perspective. Genres are more than the sum of their parts in the same respect that an

individual (a self-genre no less) is more than the sum of the social genres which shape them. It is with the same spirit which Oluo suggests that “when we look at racism as a system, it becomes much larger and more complicated than it seemed before”. But also, Oluo recognises that, fortunately, conceptualising types of experiences or prejudices as “wholes” or “systems” in this way offers “more opportunity to address the various parts of it” (36), too. *Genre is a useful conceptualisation of the whole which is more than the sum of its parts.*

The new analogy shows the potentials and in many ways the directions for change, and lends itself with particular ease to recent work on social stratification. For instance, Koski, Xie, and Olson’s description of the “cues” that we utilise to perceive and interpret status. As we know, Genre functions based on the cueing of expectations. The group’s report supports SoCo’s proposition of Genre as preceding language, pointing out that “monkeys rapidly and automatically recognize and acknowledge status cues without the benefits of language or human-level reasoning, suggesting there is something reflexive and primitive about the perception of many status cues”. Furthermore, the proposed interactive nature of Genre construction and utilisation is supported by their explanation that “both individual characteristics and the outcomes of interactions among group members appear to influence hierarchy establishment”. When it comes to human social hierarchies – or the utilisation of Genre by humans – the group acknowledge that genres are much more complex and generic cues much more context-dependent, and many are “non-perceptual” or unlimited to “actual observation” of a valued trait but instead “often the product of group consensus, or reputation”. As a result,” Koski, Xie, and Olson conclude, “the structure of human hierarchies is multidimensional, largely context or group dependent, and self-reinforcing”. In other words, social genres are complex, experience- and thus perspective-dependent, and their structure constitutes, justifies, and maintains their function.

Genres and cues are important for helping us to understand where we “fit in” to the social world. Koski, Xie, and Olson observe that “the ease with which we perceive status cues and assign rank to others reflects a general preference for a hierarchical social organization”, and they propose several reasons why such a development was essential, including tasks such as defining roles, promoting successful social interaction, and maximisation of group cohesion and productivity. The capacity to perceive, interpret, and communicate generic cues is, then, a crucial social skill. It imitates the physiological communication processes. Social hierarchies are a natural and necessary part of social groups and it is posited by SoCo that social genres enabled the emergence of human consciousness. However, accepting that social genres are a necessary element of the conscious world does not mean that the hierarchies cannot be changed, modified, redefined. We have to accept that we do it naturally but it does not mean that we ought to stick with outdated conceptualisations of Genre. We must revitalise and develop social genres and thus the SoCo. We’re doing a good job at the minute. We have to keep going. These things take time. Education is key; perspective is key; experience is key; interaction is key. Koski et al point out that it is unclear, from a neurological perspective, exactly how “status information” becomes “embedded” in the conceptual representations about other individuals which we have access to in the brain and whether this consequently affects social perception and behaviour. SoCo suggests that the information is not embedded, nor are the representations. The representations are

constructed based on our structural memory of the genre, the gist, the general rules of the hierarchies, and then we interpret the social world through them. In other words, our perspective is created by the genres which we learn and are part of, and in turn our perspective comes to shape our perception and behaviours in response to engaging with those genres. We read each person in situ. We have more specific and rich repertoires for those that we know well, but it is still based on generic engagement and cues and still requires construction. Our interpretations depend on our experience. So, if our experience of high-status individuals has been negative or traumatic, we will not respond well to them or interpret them favourably or even as competent. This element is where the group get “status identification” wrong. The nuance of interpretation emerges from the nuance of experience. Unlike physical genres, social genres like race, gender, and class are not inherent, and have no referent. Our definition of such genres depends entirely on our experience and emergent perspective, or “self-genre”.

One of the most appealing qualities of the SoCo framework is that it offers a useful vocabulary with which to discuss social issues safely and objectively and creatively – we can talk about *Genre* and all that the new concept entails. Genre offers an accessible conceptualisation of types of experience, how they “work”, and perhaps most importantly shifts the focus to encourage an understanding of how *groups* functions rather than being concerned with individual intention – as is key to the arguments of the social reform theories across the social spectrum, and as SoCo suggests we approach genres and characters in works like Shakespeare’s. Our goal is to be capable of *arguing both sides*. This goal we share with Shakespeare who in his attempts and near-universally recognised successes to achieve *in ultramque partem* has rendered the concept commonplace. But, although at its core a simple idea, the goal encapsulates our entire process of social interaction and the foundations of the social consciousness, and it is much more difficult to achieve and control than it sounds.

Everybody has to learn and adapt to the dominant SoCo, regardless of whether or not it reflects all or any elements of their perspective. This means that those who are considered “*Other*” by the dominant perspective are responsible constantly and at the risk of huge social penalties and even death for learning and adapting to the SoCo, even as that same SoCo denies their existence, invalidates their experience, and diminishes their value. Of course, even if these individuals do learn and adapt “successfully”, they remain at risk to the same penalties simply for existing in a world which does not value their perspectives and consequently does not value their lives. In her book *Shakespeare & Outsiders* (2013), Marianne Novy proposes that Shakespeare was interested primarily in just such individuals. She reviews the range of representations of “outsiders” in Shakespeare and his deep interest in the outsider experience, “the question of how a character marked as different relates to society”, “their inclusion or expulsion, their resourcefulness, defensiveness, and overreaching,” and “the relation between individual and community” (8-9). Novy goes as far as to suggest that “every one of Shakespeare’s significant characters could be considered an outsider at some time in some way” (155).

As many social theorists intimate, the perspective needs to be *reversed*; it is not the job of the vulnerable and downtrodden to correct their behaviour but instead

the dominant SoCo which needs to be addressed and changed. It is not the problem of the oppressed but the oppressors. The dominant SoCo translates the tragedy of injustice into the comic success of *othered* individuals succeeding in a rigged social game. *Othello* is a tragedy for these very reasons, for instance. Iago very convincingly represents the defensiveness of the insecure identity and its attempts at control; his conceptualisation is rigid, sensitive, definitive, manipulative, and without foundation. Tragic conceptualisation stems from insecurity regarding social identity. But what does comic conceptualisation stem from?

Basically, we need to define comedy. It is the rarer and the harder form and we don't particularly have a map for it, we just know it when we experience it. Tragedy came with classical form. Comedy has been decidedly *undefined*. But until we define comedy or comic social genres (i.e., the genres which we have deemed successful, valuable, or ideal) we cannot properly define and identify tragedy. Both comedy and tragedy depend on perspective of course, but our mutilation of comedy has rendered tragedy invisible and furthermore it has inverted the very function of comedy specifically and Genre in general: *to bring people together rather than to divide*. By shutting down communication in this way – admittedly a hugely creative and almost maniacal utilisation of comedy which originally functions *to create communication* – change is rendered inconceivable, inconveniencing, even dangerous or life threatening. The definition of comedy offered in the previous chapter suggests the traits that we need to accrue and employ in order to achieve the creative development of social genres.

We make things unconscious or hide them when we want them to perpetuate uninterrupted, or I should say that this unconscious operation is generally how Genre works if it is successful. Just like our unconscious processes totter away unnoticed, so do we perform wilful ignorance of things like racism which would require us to act differently. This quality is reflected in the way that we make the animals that we eat look totally different from their source so that we don't have to deal with the uncomfortable feelings of knowing that something is wrong and continuing to do it anyway. It's all the same, and it all revolves around one concept: *accountability*. Out of sight is out of mind, or even more obviously out of mind is out of mind, and all the more easily we can focus on other things or not really focus on anything at all which is how society functions successfully. All the more easily we can keep going, keep coping, keep living. When we are confronted with the uncomfortable implications of our poor behaviour we respond very poorly, too. We don't want to acknowledge such implications because if we do then we have to make *changes*. If we ignore it then we can carry on as normal.

Because Genre functions to focus attention, our ignorance about our unconscious biases allows us to shift responsibility and accountability, and in essence it enables us to manipulate others based on our perspective. We need to create and communicate new responses in order for them to be absorbed into the SoCo. To use Reni Eddo-Lodge's words, "Who really wants to be alerted to a structural system that benefits them at the expense of others?" (x-xi). Admittedly, conversations about social issues are hard and take time but we should not simply shut them down. This is why denying people the opportunity to be heard because of their views is wrong but we need to then take action. We can't just talk. We need to take accountability and that requires that we address the Genre of "us" instead of

just the genres of “them”, whatever that means for us personally but primarily what that means in terms of the dominant perspective of the SoCo.

We all interpret the world from our unique and specific perspective. This perspective is influenced by the social genres which make up our self-genre, in other words it constitutes our *social identity*. Take for instance the audience of one of Shakespeare’s plays. *This audience will be made up of as many different perspectives as it is different individuals*. Because while a portion of the audience will share the genre “female”, and another portion “white”, and another portion “working class” and so on and so forth, each individual is uniquely positioned within that genre as well as an infinite and unique plethora of other genres, and the perspective of each individual is informed by their unique story of social experience. And so, when an individual goes to watch one of Shakespeare’s plays, they will co-construct with his and the production’s guidance their own unique interpretative creation. The fact that we tend to believe that we all interpret and perceive and think and feel *the same*, does not make it true. We sort of agree to generality, to Genre, instead. It’s how the SoCo works.

But, because we can only ever experience or perceive life from our own perspective, because we are primarily concerned with what enables our own comfortable navigation of the social world, and because over time we become blind to the fact that our interpretation of the world is simply *an interpretation*, it proves extremely difficult for people to try to see or understand *other* perspectives. Not only do other perspectives threaten the justification, authenticity, value, and power of our own perspective but also they threaten the very idea that we all interpret the world in the same way and thus the sense of any kind of social order. Not surprisingly, we become extremely defensive when other perspectives threaten to shake up our whole understanding of the world. It’s that serious. A different perspective *threatens our identity*. This interpretation of difference explains why we put so much effort into convincing people of our opinions, values, and point of view, on a daily if not moment-to-moment basis. Our very continued-existence evidences our belief in our perspective.

Unfortunately, the luxury of having one’s perspective reflected in the dominant SoCo is the experience only of a privileged few. People only change when they *have* to, i.e., when their experience – and thus perspective – changes. For instance, my mother has a neighbour who from the moment of moving in was always a rude and foolish man, which I can attest to from living there. However, a few years ago, his wife died. Suddenly, he was a new man. He became overly-chatty and overly-helpful and still pitiful but evidently changed by his new experience of the loss of his wife. *His genre changed and so his behaviour changed*. We can imagine other examples. Like, say an able-bodied individual had an accident which paralysed their body, they’d very quickly become much more interested in issues which before they might have ignored as “disability issues”. Say a *male* individual entered a society in which *women* dominated and acted as violent and sexual predators against men, he would quickly come to *feel* the experience which from his earlier perspective he may have denounced as a “women’s issue”. Obviously, it’s quite difficult to even imagine these scenarios when they are not part of our generic repertoire. We cannot see beyond ourselves, mostly, and our definition of genres depends on our engagement with those genres.

When we realise that the SoCo operates from a certain perspective, too – which is not the perspective of all or even of the majority of people – it becomes easier to accept that the perspective can (and should) be changed. The dominant perspective – and those individuals who are “comfortable” with the equation – is male, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, rich, neurotypical, attractive, healthy, sane, and so on and so forth. Wherever you fall along these spectrums will determine how and why the SoCo suits you in various ways or limits you in other various ways. But, we all must face discomfort if we want change. Many do not have the option to turn away.

This perspective dictated Shakespeare’s times, too, and in much stricter although arguably perhaps simply more explicit ways. And Shakespeare’s creative solution? To provide generic material which can be utilised by the audience interacting with the material in an act of conscious co-construction and thereby produce in them emotional responses unique to their personal experience but at the same time generically recognisable that they might be made conscious of these responses and inclined to change them. When our expectations do not meet with our experience we must question our values, and Shakespeare certainly makes us aware of the hypocrisy and inherent corruption of some “norms”. He makes us feel uncomfortable with elements of our identity. He conveys the socially-constructed nature of our identities but charges the task of change to us as potentially creative individuals. Identities *and* barriers both emerge from Genre. If the dominant perspective of the SoCo is a *limited* one (i.e., it only reflects one highly privileged type of subjective experience), we cannot hope to achieve generic development. But, in order to change perspective requires *the creative individual*.

As we know, the individual has no hope for creativity unless they are *generically competent*. This feat requires two steps: (1) identify and interrogate the self-genre; (2) expand your conceptualisation for *other* genres. What we need to do in order to make social change is to identify, first, our own perceptual structure and the social genres which inform its various parts. Our social identity is made up from genres which operate as more than simply classifications. Identity is inextricably connected to social status, and certain social genres carry more social weight or act as more valuable social currency than others dependent on the values communicated by the limited dominant perspective of the Western SoCo. Diangelo observes that “identity and perceptions of identity can grant or deny resources. These resources include self-worth, visibility, positive expectations, psychological freedom from the tether of race, freedom of movement, the sense of belonging, and a sense of entitlement to all the above” (25). Our social identity shapes our experience and thus our perspective must be the first point of interrogation and the first arena for change. It is only once we have identified our own perspective that we will be able to engage properly with similar work involving social genres. Of course, this requirement makes it easier to understand why the self emerged in the first place. It is meant to be a tool which we utilise to understand and communicate with others. We have gone off-path, for certain. We’ve strange-looped the process, turned back on ourselves, and tragedy has ensued.

I cannot make any significant contribution to the conceptual categories which I will discuss nor can I offer a comprehensive discussion of them but instead I hope to

convey a glimpse of the kind of engagement which could result from utilising the SoCo vocabulary and conceptualisation. I cannot cover the enormity of the scope required for true social change in the current thesis. But, let's consider briefly two very broad social genres and investigate their trajectories as well as potential responses.

Race means *kind*. *Race* denotes a social category or type. Categories of *race* are co-constructed through social interaction and based on outward appearances. They are performed but also and mainly they are *inferred*. Categories function as a means of *control*. Thus, when we make categories of *race* we are distinguishing different types of control. Why would this development happen? First, because Genre is based on *difference* we automatically categorise people who *look* different. Once again, our categorisation process is not inherently bad. But, why would we place a hierarchical value on these categories? The reason such value-based categorisation would occur is because of an *insecurity regarding social identity* which emerges from conflicting expectations. This insecurity is perpetuated subsequently by whichever genre emerges as "dominant" and thus has most control over the codes of the SoCo. Such insecurity results in and demands consistent maintenance of social control – just like we see the insecurely attached individual. But, because the focus is on this maintenance of categorising the *racial other*, the dominant racial genre of the SoCo of the Western world – the *White* genre – fails to categorise itself.

Understanding race as a genre (and different races as different genres) is a useful and accessible way to understand racism as a *system*. "We are taught to think about racism only as discrete acts committed by individual people, rather than as a complex, interconnected system", Diangelo suggests, adding that this definition of racism "makes it virtually impossible for white people to understand it". But, if we understand racism as a "system" into which we are socialised, she explains that we can "receive feedback" on "problematic racial patterns" as a helpful way to support learning and growth (3-4). SoCo posits Genre as a more accessible concept with more utility and potential for social understanding. If we think of genres and responses and expectations, we encapsulate the systemic nature of racism but also a genre is a type of system with which we are more familiar and which comes ready-packed with analogical components of further utility and contiguity. Oluo suggests that by understanding racism as *systemic*, we can focus on how our actions interact with this system and thus we can implement creative changes, instead of narrowing our attention to individual instantiations of racial categorisation.

In a 2017 article, Oluo gave the following advice: "White People: I Don't Want You To Understand Me Better, I Want You To Understand Yourself". "I know white culture better than most white people know white culture" she states, asking "Why do I know white culture so well?" "Because I'm a black woman" she answers, and suggests that "while I, and just about any person of color who has spent their lives in a white supremacist society, know enough about white culture to write a book or two on whiteness", white people "know almost nothing about us and even less about [them]selves". The reason, she explains, is because they don't have to, their

survival has never depended on [their] knowledge of white culture. In fact, it's required [their] ignorance. The dominant culture does not have to see itself to survive because culture will shift to fit its needs.

And she makes a plea for white people to recognise their own genre, admitting that “as much as I’d like you to see me — as much as I’d like systemic racism to simply be a problem of different groups not seeing each other”, the top priority is for white people to see themselves. Eddo-Lodge offers a similar commentary. She explains that she is “only acutely aware of race” because she has been always “rigorously marked out as different by the world” (Xvi) because of her race. She notes the communication gap which emerges in discussions about race with white people. The typical response which she receives from white people in such conversations is “to shift the focus away from their complicity and on to a conversation about what it means to be black, about ‘black identity’” (214). Of course, *Genre is all about focus*. When we shift the focus to “black identity” we shift the focus – the generic perspective – from white to black, and thus shift accountability. The dominant perspective of the SoCo performs an incredible amount of logistical, manipulative, and largely unconscious generic work to support the avoidance of accountability and thus responsibility. And by shifting of the focus of the discussion, social control is reasserted. The dominant perspective is wilfully ignorant or blind to the real issue which is their own genre. “Discussing racism is not the same thing as discussing ‘black identity’”, Eddo-Lodge explains, “discussing racism is about discussing white identity. It’s about white anxiety. It’s about asking why whiteness has this reflexive need to define itself against immigrant bogey monsters in order to feel comfortable, safe and secure” (215).

In order to properly tackle racism and change conceptual genres, then, first we need to *define* the dominant genre; the *White* genre. Once again, generic development requires generic competence. While white people are incompetent in their conceptualisation of other genres of experience, their most striking incompetence regards their own racial category, as Oluo and Eddo-Lodge observe. We need to really think about what it means to be white before we even attempt to expand our conceptualisation of what it means to be racially *Othered*. As, Eddo-Lodge remarks, “you can only do so much from the outside” (219).

SoCo has noted the following properties of the *white* genre which might be altered:

- ◇ ***White (Good) = Not Black (Bad)***: In order to understand this principle element of the *White* rhetoric, it helps to formulate the precarious syllogism which underpins it. The syllogism goes as follows:

White is the opposite of black
White is good
Therefore, Black is bad

- ◇ ***White = Insecure and thus Controlling***: The white genre is inherently insecure because of its false logic but furthermore because being faced with evidence that there were different types of racial categories based on actual difference in skin colour and features, the identity of the *White* genre was *threatened*. If there were different racial categories, which was best? In order to rectify this insecurity, the *White* genre had to assert control over the *Other* racial categories. At the same time, this

social control enabled them to infer that they were in fact at the top of the value hierarchy. And the value hierarchy perpetuates the ability for the *White* genre to assert dominance. Ironically – but perfectly logically – *White* is seemingly a very vulnerable and precious category – one so precious that its members choose to avoid even discussing it should it break.

- ◇ ***White = Delusional, Dumb, Duplicitous, and Defensive:*** Okay so, I'm not trying to be just offensive, here. The *White* genre depends on these qualities for successful operation. "Most white people move through the world blissfully unaware of their own race until its dominance is called into question" Oluo explains, "when white people pick up a magazine, scroll through the internet, read a newspaper or switch on the TV, it is never rare or odd to see people who look like them in positions of power or exerting authority... the positive affirmations of whiteness are so widespread that the average white person doesn't even notice them... To be white is to be human; to be white is universal. I only know this because I am not" (Xvii). To the *White* genre, whiteness is considered "normal" and thus it is rendered invisible. A principal tool and also product of the *White* genre is *silence*. "We are taught implicitly not to talk openly about race", Diangelo notes. Talking about race is accompanied by great anxiety and discomfort. The *White* genre has to contain a high level of illusion or delusion in order for white people to be consciously unaware of its existence and also of the existence of other perspectives or of the implications of the *White* perspective causing an emotional disconnect between them and other races. Because the *White* genre is the dominant perspective of the Western SoCo, the SoCo supports the *White* delusion.
- ◇ ***White = Predictable but Adaptive:*** like all Genre. The *White* genre achieves *sameness in difference*, seamless and unconscious regulation, and the translation of perception, interpretation, and conceptualization.

Accommodatingly, the word *gender* means *kind*, too. Gender denotes a social category or type, too. Categories of gender are co-constructed through social interaction based on outward appearances, too. They are performed but also and mainly they are *inferred*, too. My discussion of the *race* genre above has demonstrated the ways in which dominant social categories work and I think that racial categorisation is the most complex, fragile, and dangerous of our social categories but I want to offer the application to another social genre just to illuminate the applicability of the Genre conceptualisation. I hope to demonstrate that the same *kind* of conceptualisation is involved and the same *kind* of action is required.

With scope in mind, I will provide Carol Cohn's definition of gender as a *symbolic system*; "a central organising discourse of culture, one that not only shapes how we experience and understand ourselves... but that also interweaves with other discourses and shapes them – and therefore shapes other aspects of our world". Cohn points out that "discourse" does not refer merely to language but to "a system of meanings, of ways of thinking, images and words" (228-229). What Cohn

describes is a genre, and all discourse engages with Genre. Shakespeare shows us repeatedly that individuals, male or female, rarely if ever fit into these categories neatly. A multifaceted and realistic person is made up of a combination of these qualities. But, as Cohn recognises, “the existence of this system of meaning affects all of us, nonetheless” (228). Accordingly, Shakespeare makes clear that despite the social construction and thus arbitrary nature of gender categories, they play large roles in our social world and cannot be simply ignored. These categories have a very real effect on interpretation and thus behaviour, as well as social value and thus social experience. With that said, at the heart of the genre of *gender*, as with the *race* genre, live the same qualities of *insecurity* and *Othering*. Like *race*, *gender* is defined by exclusion. The construction of the dominant *Male* category depends on the denigration of the *gendered other*. So, once again, categorisation is utilised to construct the dominant identity, rather than to reflect the natural qualities of the *Other*. The gender identity of the dominant perspective of the SoCo is *male* and all who are *not male* are defined by their perceived and constructed *Otherness*. *Male insecurity* provokes the attempt to control gendered *Others* and to maintain that control. The genre which must be interrogated is *male*, which defies definition in the same way as *White*. *Male* is the norm, all else is *other*.

The *Male* genre operates in many of the same ways that the *White* genre operates and of course there is plenty of intersectional overlap. The *Male* genre utilises the same methods of conceptualisation as the *White* genre, as follows:

- ***Male (Good) = Not Female (Bad)***
- ***Male = Delusional, Dumb, Duplicitous, and Defensive***
- ***Male = Predictable but Adaptive***

But, there are a couple of factors specific to the *Male* genre and which complicates its relations with gendered *Others*. Part of the conceptual narrative which emerges from the *Male* genre stipulates a dependency on another gender genre to function; the *Female* genre. This connection renders the relationship between the *Male* and *Female* genres at once more harmonious and simultaneously more dangerous or highly fraught. Dependency breeds destruction. Needless to say, there are many more genres of gendered *Others* beyond female which only adds to the rich complexity and insecurity of the *Male* genre – just as there are many genres which are racially *Othered* and just as racism is a highly complex and precarious system. One of the principal differences between the *Male* and *White* genres is essentially, then, that men need women, whereas, according to the *White* narrative, white people don't need racial *Others*. There is much to say, of course, with regard to the dependency engendered by scapegoating or diminishing the racial *Other*. But, the difference remains marked in the behaviours and interpretations which emerge from the two genres.

Genre is always predicated on difference. As a result of our natural associative and metacognitive processes, we attend to difference, it cues our attention and helps us to navigate the social world. But, because we assign value and this value comes to be socially shared, we must diminish some objects in order to emphasise others. In terms of social groups, this is achieved most prominently through *Othering*. All that which is not what we are is *Other*. However, when one

type of experience, perspective, and engagement with SoCo is dominant and in particular when the societal laws and “rules of the game” are cast through that perspective, many people are determined to be “*Other*”, their experience, perspective and engagement is denied, and the laws and rules do not reflect their perspective or protect their rights or value – in fact the rules are rigged against them. The dominant perspective of the Western SoCo is the white, male, rich, able-bodied, neurotypical, heterosexual man. These and other qualities are packaged as the “norm” but this packaging requires *Othering* and the norm comes to constitute in actuality “that which is other than the *Other*”; *we are what we are not*. If we attempt to define “normal”, we are like to lead back circuitously to “not ‘not normal’”.

And so, we find ourselves in a *Catch 22* situation. Our capacity to discriminate founds all of the incredible achievements that we have made as a species. But evidently, discrimination is the root of all of our despicable acts of oppression, too. What this multiplicity communicates is, according to SoCo, that because Genre enables us to “*as-if*”, or to change an object’s functional utility, we have ended up changing the very function of Genre for antisocial, insecure, and overall tragic goals. We are an inherently anxious species and because our co-construction is so socially-dependent, any number of “wrong turns” may be incurred. Furthermore, our understanding of Genre is entirely limited. We approach genres as if they are “set in stone”, rigid, and unchanging. But, we know now that in fact genres function in quite the opposite way. It is our rigid, uninformed, and formulaic – predictable, stale, and inadequate – responses to Genre which limits its potential. Social genres certainly do become very rigid and limited if we cannot approach them objectively or we do not develop them regularly.

Genres or categories depend on definition. For example, how might a “woman” be defined? By their reproductive organs? By the gender that they were prescribed at birth? By their sense of self and identity? Definition depends on an individual’s unique perspective which causes conflict because we need socially agreed upon definitions or “norms” which make up the SoCo in order to achieve successful social communication. But, in order to define the “norms”, all else must be defined as *other*. And of course, the “norms” are defined by the dominant perspective which is not reflective of all or even much of the wide variety of experiences which make up the actual social world. Additionally, definitions must be updated regularly, but they are not. Definitions do change and evolve, usually reaching a state of completely alternative socially understood meaning from those which they originated, but often they change very slowly, unconsciously, and insidiously.

When the SoCo is biased to reflect only one narrow and limited perspective, many, many different types of people are *Othured* and all in their own relational and nuanced ways. There is no “natural” *Other*. Everything that “is not” is *Other*, dependent on perspective. This skill must have been extremely useful if not crucial for survival in our early meanderings. But, again, because the SoCo is “ruled” by an intersectional dominant perspective which in fact represents and maintains the conceptualisation of only a limited number of individuals, those many individuals *othured* by this perspective must live in a world which was not designed for their comfort. If we can change the perspective, we can change the *other*. Admittedly, it is no easy feat. To do so would not be welcomed by those who feel comfortable with

the current set-up. But, as Dayna Tortorici asked in her 2017 article, “Reckoning with a Culture of Male Resentment”, “is it time to accept that some will find the world less comfortable in the process of making it habitable for others?” Of course, if the dominant perspective were to shift (and all that feat would actually entail), those who are comfortable currently would be *othered*, essentially. And because we all know how bad it feels to be *othered*, it is not hard to understand why many individuals resist change or why the prospect of change makes them extremely agitated.

“Must history have losers?” Tortorici asks, “the record suggests yes”. But, as she observes, “redistribution is a tricky process”. In other words, changing generic structure is difficult and I would add that it requires a high generic competence and creativity which not every individual possesses. “Even simple metaphors for making the world more equitable – levelling a playing field, shifting the balance – can correspond to complex or labour-intensive processes” Tortorici explains, and she wonders “what freedoms might one have to surrender in order for others to be free? And how to figure it when those freedoms are not symmetrical?”. “A little more power for you might mean a lot less power for me in practice – an exchange that will not feel fair in the short term, even if it is in the long term” she observes. She proposes that “changing the rules of the game might begin with revising what it means to win”. Obviously, her comment here is evocative of our new understanding of what “a” genre *is*, which we could define simplistically as a set of “rules for a game”. Personally, although I do consider much of social interaction to be sort of “playing”, I see it as more in the performance sense in which case the Genre concept is much more useful. Hopefully, it is safe to assume that my conceptual assimilation between the concepts of “game”, “performance” and “playing” throughout this work will be tolerable in terms of logic.

Shakespeare’s keenest sense was with regard to what it *feels* like and *means* to be *the other*. Perhaps because he did not have the education that his peers received, I don’t know. It may have been simply because he saw the unfairness of the social system or because his audiences liked figures to pity. Whatever the reason why he chose to focus on others, the more pertinent focus is *how* he constructs them and the *ways* in which he utilises the *other* as a theatrical/social device. Certainly, it is clear that he had a deft understanding of and a distinct empathy for the *Other*. Sure, the *Other* often meets with tragic ends in his plays. But, he shows too that we can make the most of our *otherness*; we can utilise Genre to our advantage.

With the other it is highly likely that Shakespeare in part was simply displaying his mastery over the *other* type, and by proxy, his mastery of *convention*. Taylor Flickinger explains that Shakespeare

wrote at a time of tacitly accepted hierarchy. Issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion were determined by the Crown, which claimed to be acting on God’s own authority. Assumptions about the Other, then, were considered absolute, rather than social, truth: women were objectively inferior to men, while Jews were objectively evil.

But, Shakespeare does not merely replicate the social order in his plays. Instead, as Flickinger observes, he “complicates issues of Elizabethan Otherness”,

presenting it as an arbitrary social construct used mostly to secure the dominant culture's identity. However, he argues that totally ignoring social conventions is radically dangerous, primarily because it would be another form of social absolutism.

(51)

Also, his plays convey an understanding of the differences between different types of *othered* experience. Flickinger suggests that "Shakespeare was aware that while Shylock and Portia were both oppressed, their 'otherness' was essentially different" (51).

Throughout his plays, Shakespeare creates what Flickinger calls "his social hermaphrodites"; individuals who adopt multiple genres throughout their performance or who blur the boundaries between genres. These individuals utilise Genre for transformation, power, or growth. These individuals recognise the limits and also the mutability of Genre. Through such characters, Flickinger explains that "Shakespeare explores the different ways each kind of Other subverts and embraces their culturally assigned roles" (53-54). At the same time, he questions these culturally assigned roles, the social structure and its genres. And also, in many ways it is through these individuals who surf the boundaries of Genre which Shakespeare simply illuminates our general human nature in a more extreme form. *We all break the rules, all the time*. We make *constant* errors, too. Actual human behaviour rarely if ever fits *exactly* to type. Our skill is our nuance detection. But, more important to Shakespeare was, or seems to have been, the task of revealing the inferred genres of the SoCo, constructing a conscious experience flouting social order, or proving it to be questionable at the very least. "Shakespeare is therefore arguing that any concept of the Other...is essentially a way for the dominant culture to assert their identity", says Flickinger, and thus that "all 'objective' facts about [all] types of Other... are simply untrue" (57).

Flickinger describes Shakespeare's "solution" to *Othering* as "grounded in empathy, art, and experiences that radically decenter us from our imaginary universes" (52) and she cites Greenblatts comment that Shakespeare's plays offer experiences which "begin an unsettling from within" (Flickinger, 59). Arguably, this affective phenomenon which emerges from what Flickinger calls Shakespeare's "solution" provides us with a reasonable definition of what any "good" or "major" creative product should achieve. This discomfort with, this unsettling or decentering of, or most accurately, this rendering *conscious* the order of the SoCo is precisely what is required for redefinition; for creative generic development. Once we are pushed off-centre, we can no longer define ourselves by exclusion, as is the wont of the SoCo and Genre more generally. Shakespeare shakes up the social order that we might be invigorated to do the same. But constantly, too, Shakespeare reminds us that we cannot operate outside of Genre.

There is much evidence to suggest, in fact, that individuals who have been *Othered* in some way accrue more potential for creativity. For starters, the SoCo *demand*s a more creative response from those *Othered* by it. Put simply, it is much harder to navigate the social world when your perspective is not reflected in the

SoCo. These individuals will have a more unique perspective of the world and thus are more suited to creativity, if they are capable of utilising Genre to their advantage and defeating the great obstacles that are like to stand in their way. Because our unique perspective emerges from our engagement with Genre and translates experience accordingly, as Koski et al point out, *our own status affects our perception of the status of others*. They explain that

the accuracy with which one perceives dominance and status cues appears to depend on one's own status. Men who score higher in self-reported dominance are worse at perceiving facial cues of dominance when looking at other men, compared to men who score lower in dominance. One explanation for this is that lower-status individuals have trained themselves – perhaps unconsciously - to perceive subtle dominance cues because they will incur greater costs than higher-status members if they perceive these cues incorrectly.

Of course, this suggests that *Others* are highly skilled in perceiving generic cues – *because they have to be*. We're all built to read and interpret the world. Individuals who are socially *Othered* have to accrue a rich and varied generic competence by necessity. Such competence can lead to great creativity. Generic privilege breeds naïveté and incompetence whereas generic discrimination can breed knowledge, skill, and creativity when compensated by considerable resilience.

Shakespeare showcases the interesting, alternative, and complex perspectives which being *Othered* constructs. In tragedies, we see *Others* who are overcome by Genre, are unable to adapt, and thus cannot take creative advantage of their often-avant-garde sensibilities. Look at Othello and Desdemona; the couple are striking in their disregard for social doxa which denounces interracial relations. Hamlet is unwilling to accept the stale doxa of manly honour and revenge. But, each of these characters succumbs to their society because they operate from a tragic perspective. Interestingly, Othello reveals that his progressive views about race are weighed in equal measure by his adopted doxa about gender. These *Others* have ample material, skill, and opportunity, usually, to transform their perspective and triumph, but their commitment to the tragic perspective writes their downfall. It is not a tragic flaw but *the* tragic flaw; the flawed, limited, and destructive tragic perspective.

Correspondingly, the comic perspective is the principal and perhaps singular element which writes its characters' stories, and Shakespeare fills his comedies with *Others*, showing the comic potential of their experience. His comic *women* are renowned for their creative skill. Rosalind manipulates the *Gender* genre comically for her own creative advantage and self-development; she experiments, plays, grows, and learns. A more complex case is presented through the character of Aaron. He may be in a tragedy and he may be a villain. But, it is worth remembering what perspective rules the SoCo of *Titus Andronicus*; a decidedly *white* and palpably *tragic* perspective. Thus, Aaron's values and behaviours are yet more impressive. Even without consideration of the playworld's views about race, Aaron's love and value of his blackness singles him out from the actual conceptualisation of Shakespeare's audience which was at once controversial but also generic. Shakespeare manages to make a huge statement about race and have a character

speak values completely against those of his society but all the while he is fulfilling the conventions of the genre and so can plot freely. Aaron is black like the devil who is a villain; according to Genre, it adds up. But, Shakespeare makes abundantly clear that Aaron is no run-of-the-mill stock villain. His control of language, his intellect, his passion, his understanding of his place in a world which despises him and any children he or his kind may bear. And yet, he is noble in his defence of his identity. The only way that he can take control is by becoming villain. There's no place for him in this SoCo to find a comic end. But, his performance and interpretation of his own identity are comic.

It's interesting to note that social *Others* have turned to comedy time and time again as a way to “break through” the social consciousness and often comedy and humour are employed in order to highlight in a creative way very important and socially controversial subjects. Women use humour in social situations a lot. It is a form of protection; a positive or “safe” way of dealing with negative situations. It's not simply positive but extremely strategic and clever. It's about choosing the best option and to do so requires the expansive and bird's eye view of the comic perspective as well as an adequate if not excellent generic competence. Shakespeare seems to feel that we can get by on the gist but it is worth taking the time to explore them further – this is the time that we spend in comedy, we are not “willingly wasting time”, we are taking the time to explore Genre in a creative, playful, safe, and hopeful way.

After considering the ways in which social genres function, using as example the genres of *race* and *gender*, it should have become clear that SoCo's conceptualisation of social categories as genres offers and demands an inherently *intersectional* approach to social creativity and generic development. Oluo offers a useful chapter on intersectionality in her book *So You Want to Talk about Race* (2019). She defines the term as conveying “the belief that our social justice movements must consider all of the intersections of identity, privilege, and oppression that people face in order to be just and effective” and that “each of us has a myriad of identities – our gender, class, race, sexuality, and so much more – that inform our experiences in life and our interactions with the world” (72).

There is never but one genre at play in any creative product. As we know, creativity infers as a basic element the utilisation of two or more genres. This element of creativity can explain Shakespeare's consistent “mingling” of forms. An individual is more than the sum of their generic structure, which itself is made up of all of the social genres which inform that individual's experience. We are all made up of *social stuff*. And our value is interpreted by the SoCo accordingly. The dominant SoCo orders social genres into a hierarchical system of value, as we have explored with just two genres. My self-genre interacts with and is shaped by the following intersectional genres: white; female; able-bodied; neurotypical; heterosexual; young(ish); economically stable; intelligent; independent; socially capable and part of a meaningful social network; sister; daughter; student; writer; academic; oddball; atheist; drinker; smoker; dark-haired; and so on and so forth. Oluo suggests that the reason why intersectionality has not been adopted more widely by social institutions and movements is because it “slows things down” and because “intersectionality decentralises people who are used to being the primary focus of the movements they are a part of” (76). I believe that SoCo's new conceptualisation of social *genres* not only “speeds things up” because it enables us to work with the short-form, rapid-

retrieval method of Genre but also it reconceptualises all individuals as being made up of genres, not only those *othered* from the dominant SoCo, and all individuals as navigating the world using the social scripts which are available to them.

SoCo supports the notion that creative social development is by necessity and its very nature intersectional. The tragedy we experience in *Othello* is the result of the failure to achieve *intersectionality*. I believe that *Othello* was Shakespeare's attempt at a sort of proto-intersectionality. Of course, the conceptualisation was at a much earlier stage. But, the same message which Shakespeare communicates to us through *Othello* is captured too in the following description which the late bell hooks included in her book, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*:

White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed... Both groups have led liberation movements that favour their interests and support the continued oppression of other groups. Black male sexism has undermined struggles to eradicate racism just as white female racism undermines feminist struggle. As long as these two groups or any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with ruling class white men, they have a vested interest in the continued exploitation and oppression of others.

(2000, 16)

Now, while both Shakespeare's and hooks's creative products are in many and respective ways limited, they do offer a "way in" to understanding how our attempts at social change must be intersectional. If social categories are assigned different levels of value according to the perspective of the dominant SoCo, then the different genres which make up our self-genre will come to, essentially, a kind of *amount* of social value as ranked by that SoCo. Those individuals who are *Othered* by the dominant perspective of multiple social genres will not only be valued less by that SoCo but furthermore they have to bend even more strenuously to fit the SoCo's expectations. We must address the "phantom" or "dominant" genre of all types of social experience; *the Genres which control the social consciousness*. For instance, with the two genres considered above we identify the *White* genre and the *Male* genre. We can add to this the following: for *class* we must identify the "high status" or "upper class" or "rich" or "posh" genre, whatever we might want to call it; for ability, the *able* genre; for sexuality, the *heterosexual* or "straight" genre; for neurological style, the "neurotypical" genre; the *young* genre; the *healthy* genre; the *sane* genre; the *attractive* genre; and so on and so forth. When we look at these genres, when we actually pay conscious attention to them, we realise that their definitions are actually not all that clear, forever changing, precarious, corrupt, or any of the above. We must understand how these dominant perspectives function intersectionally and control the SoCo and the social world. It is the robust symbioses between the genres of the SoCo which enable social ills to continue and if we want to change them we must form an approach just as robustly synthetic. I think that SoCo helps us as a foundational framework from which to mount such attempts.

By understanding what genres are and that we use them and *how* they operate, the basic formula can be applied then in any social context. Social performance is contingent upon the particular generic domain and the specific

conflicts which emerge from it. In her book, Eddo-Lodge explains that, for her, setting boundaries gave her “renewed permission to speak” (222) and she advocates the practice, which can be described otherwise as making conscious decisions about Genre and communicating those choices to others. What she grasps here is the power which adopting the *generic* lens can wield. Setting or rather identifying generic boundaries enables us to focus our conscious attention on those boundaries. Once we understand the pervasiveness of generic influence on creation and sociation, it becomes much easier to tackle abstract social issues from a more objective point of view. Once we understand Genre as a *process*, we can understand it as a social process which maintains and modifies social convention and organisation and also as amenable to change. Furthermore, when we compare social categories to generic categories, we can understand how generic features and conventions can be utilised in infinite ways and from different perspectives.

Our social genres act effectively as our *social currency*. Genres enable us to *trade* information, to assign value to objects in the social world, to make comparisons and predictions, to bargain and to wager, to learn the agreed upon rules for the social game, to learn the scripts and roles of the social performance. Genre operates as a conflict-resolution process, a social memory process, a conceptual grouping process. But, unfortunately, because social genres are “made up” as opposed to inherent, the process goes wrong or remembers error or oppression. In other words, Genre is a process which predates social conceptualisation. However, once we evolved somehow to replicate the generic process to our social interactions in the external world and created a social consciousness and language and so on, there emerged a sort of glitch in the process. Because social genres are made up, they will reflect the perspective of those individuals who hold – thus those who exert – most social control or power. According to SoCo theory, those who exert the most power will invariably be those who feel most insecure. The glitch is that biological Genre is not changeable and does not prejudice. Whereas once we imitated the process socially and consciously, those with the most power made up the rules.

All “isms” emerge from social genres and in particular as well from emotional genres regarding fear or insecurity about the generic experience which they infer. Any *other* is a threat to the “norm”. This destructive potential and history makes Genre seem like an inherently bad thing. But, hopefully this work has shown that it can in fact be extremely useful and provides infinite creative potential. Social prejudice is a glitch in our generic sense-and response mechanisms, an unfortunate consequence of what is, and has been evolutionarily, an extremely useful process. This is why people are so stubborn about this kind of view. It is inherently within them to fear the *other*. It *feels* right. All “isms” are the same, each stems from insecurity regarding social identity and results in attempts at social control. But, Genre’s main function is to *facilitate communication*, not shut it down. We learn social genres so that we can communicate within our SoCo. Social genres are the rules for the communication game. But, the dominant perspective puts *othered* genres at a disadvantage, by rigging the rules of the game so that they win. Genre’s integral quality is its *fluidity* and acceptance of this nature of social categories can be empowering. They’ve sold us a lie. These things change all the time. Genre dictates social value, the dominant perspective assigns the values. We each must take responsibility for developing them.

Eddo-Lodge suggests that “thinking of the big picture helps you see the structures” (64). Well, the current work has attempted to grasp the big picture and its structures by figuring out the *process of structuring*; the *generic* process. Recognising Genre is essential to changing it. Remember, generic competence before experiment. Denying genre is a fruitless ambition. We cannot act or create outside of Genre, we cannot “do consciousness” without Genre. What has been called *Experimental Literature* often claims to work outside genre. I would say that genuinely experimental literature, such as Shakespeare’s work, demands generic engagement. Instead of rejecting Genre, which is impossible, we need to use it to our advantage in order to be creative and effect creative development: change. Because if the experience is incomprehensible in generic terms it will never be accepted by the SoCo. Genres are hard to change if we tackle them from a tragic perspective, and even still requires repeated effort and time. If such change is not profitable for the dominant perspective it will cause conflict. Schlack notes “the tendency of those in power to create their own versions of the past, one that suits their current ideology, objectives, and actions” (217-218). We need to write new and creative responses which utilise tradition for constructive change instead of trying to ignore it. The modern utilisation of the term *queer* is a wonderful example of the kind of creative comic transformation that SoCo advocates. We must investigate our roles and genres and take the social and emotional risks of gaining generic competence and rejecting current norms which denigrate the other. We need to move beyond formulaic response. Unfortunately, because we all have an enormous desire to be socially accepted, defying generic conventions in any consistent and persistent way is just too hard for most individuals.

Flickinger observes that “Shakespeare always complicates social assumptions even while admitting their validity”. She suggests that his engagement with Genre is “paradoxical” because it upholds social customs “while simultaneously subverting them” (52). But, it’s not paradoxical at all. It captures accurately our dealings with Genre and Genre’s function. It is their failure to recognise *Genre* or their rigid use of *Genre* which determines the fate of his tragic characters. Genre is necessary, that’s it. But, our engagement with it can be either *tragic* or *comic*. Comic infers a naturally fluid, curious, and openminded approach. Which is of course, how Genre “works” and Shakespeare’s work offers experience of people bending rules and of nuanced interpretation constantly.

It is not genres which control or oppress but tragic – limited, rigid, anti-social – utilisation of them. Xenophobia emerges as a tragic response to uncertainty. It’s really the self-genre which is the object of hatred/fear. Both groups and also individuals project their own insecurities onto the “*Other*”. The self-structure is *insecure* and, thus threatened, must control or destroy conflicting structures. The most tragic element of the conceptualisation is the perception and insistence of a hereditary or innate basis to its devaluation of the “*Other*”. Such a conceptualisation fails to grasp key features of Genre’s function. Genres are not fixed, predictable, or simple. Instead, they provide parameters, *maps*, for the communication of experience. In order to affect social change, the proposed action is to reinterpret and thus redefine social value from a comic perspective with comic aims and ideologies. It’s about facilitating communication, not segregation. Such work is achieved,

unsurprisingly, by dialogue, and by an acceptance of both the nuance and also the likeness of human social experience.

The root of all social genres and *Othering* is insecurity followed by subsequent attempts at social control. Supremacy will always be a precarious and insecure position because it is based on faulty logic. The basic attachment insecurity is at the root of it all. Different insecurities or fragilities emerge from different genres or types of experience. SoCo recognises that social genres themselves are always precarious because they are made up in response to perceived social insecurity, and often in response to traumatic experience. There's nothing that we can do about that. But they are made up as a way of bringing things, people, together, as well. If we can just work creatively with them, there is no reason why we should not be able to redefine them with time and effort. It is the natural way of things. And in our personal and social lives we can adopt the generic lens to make more conscious our generic actions and choose to respond differently and engage creatively with the genres of the SoCo in the hope that we might effect positive social change. Recognising that insecurity plays a large role in the construction of genres is a different act entirely from seeking to punish those individuals who belong to the same groups from which the insecurities emerge. The second goal is irrelevant and unconnected to the first, though it is inferred repeatedly during social situations which broach social issues.

SoCo is purposely reductive, it could be remarked. I want to try to make it simple, or to show through the analogy of Genre that it can be both simple and also highly complex. We access Genre on different levels. The intention of SoCo theory is not to make people feel guilty or punish people. Instead, its intention is to offer a conceptual framework for understanding Genre so that we might utilise it creatively, constructively, and to inform prosocial action. Change requires engagement, interaction, and learning. But because change requires some level of *security*, too, the task of resolving individual insecurity is a crucial part of the process. The insecurity or false logic of our institutions must be changed, also, but generic development requires unique individuals who spearhead or provoke such change.

The fact is that after so much time of social stratification, we now depend on the social genres more than ever. We find in modern society not Genre's waning influence but instead its proliferation. Because we need to engage with them in order to modify them. And because these different genres really do constitute different ways of experiencing the social world. My social experience as a woman is markedly different from a man's social experience. My experience navigating the world as a white person makes my experience completely different from that of a black person trying to perform the same task.

SoCo offers a vocabulary and conceptual toolset which renders dialogue about social change accessible. Social change requires that we alter the mechanisms of social structures, organisation, symbols, rules, behaviours and value systems. Social change can be defined as *generic development*. To affect comic generic development we need to redefine social genres based on actual evidence, and based on different more prosocial and integrated values. We have to modify the genres and the responses, the interpretations and behaviours, will emerge accordingly. We have to change what we teach about genres, reconceptualise the genres and the beliefs that they engender about what we think is right, valid, true,

relevant, normal, expected, good, or appropriate. Genre is experience dependent and so we find it hard to see outside of our perspective but if we change it at an institutional level it should eek itself out. It's hard because people invest so much energy and emotion into trying to make others think what they think, feel what they feel, share their values. We need our identity and our existence to be confirmed, reflected back at us, otherwise we don't exist. So, it is the *values*, the genres, which need to be changed. We can achieve this through the generic institutions; education, government, law. The effect will not be immediate but it will follow with time.

Ultimately, social change demands a deeper acquaintance with Genre, a higher competence in both the self-genre and the genres of the SoCo. "As-if" experience can do much to support our endeavour. When we watch a play or read a book about a certain kind of social experience or about an *Other*, we can find ways to relate to their experience. We can come to care about the experience of *Others* by sharing that experience; by "as-ifying", by empathising, by reconstructing their experience in our conscious minds. This sharing of experience is how deeper connections are formed. Because we interpret based on Genre, on a gist, we are prone to reduce concepts to stereotype, particularly when we don't have access to or don't understand the full details. Thus, *Others* are stereotyped. Instead, Shakespeare tried to show their humanity because he understood the significance of representation. He is setting up the parameters for experiment and investigation. So that we can figure out our own answers to questions such as "How should a person be?", "What is right and wrong?", "Who is like me?", "What am I like?" and "What do others have to go through?" He prompts us to investigate the human condition. He presents *Others* as whole, nuanced individuals interacting with a world which doesn't often align with their experience. He tells the same stories but in different ways, from different perspectives. SoCo advocates this practice as a form of social change. By redefining, reconceptualising, experimenting with, developing the social genres, we are able to effect change at the level of social consciousness, social memory, future interpersonal learning, and as well plant the conceptual seeds for the co-construction of whole new generations of potential creative geniuses.

Commendable creative developments of late include changes to UK hairdressing standards in order to include Afro and textured hair types, addressing the fact that previously qualifications had "no compulsory requirement for students studying hairdressing to be educated on cutting and styling Afro and textured hair" which left "a significant gap in professional knowledge and hairdressing services, leaving this demographic largely uncatered for" (*The Metro*, 2021). Other changes such as gender-neutral toilets and clothing lines, movements towards equal pay and opportunities, and increasing representation and accessibility all reflect comic reinterpretations of Genre. All of these actions make the game of life fairer for "*Others*". It is unsurprising that people who are not affected by such things would not care to call for their modification. A lot of people served by the dominant perspective of the SoCo would rather deny such change to "*Others*", in fact, because it does not serve them, leaves them with fewer resources, or alters their experience. But, the whole idea behind making such changes is to try to meet the needs of social diversity, to try to cater to the whole, nuanced society and create an inclusive SoCo.

PART IV / CODA

13. MISE EN PLACE, SUI GENERIS

*The dealer wants you thinking
That it's either black or white
Thank God it's not that simple
In my secret life
– Leonard Cohen*

This thesis emerged because I sought a way to understand Genre which made sense to me and which enabled me to work with it creatively. Later, I tried to find any existing work which linked Genre with memory, or development, imagination, social interaction, and found very little. What I did find came from (primarily literary) Genre theorists. Next, I sought a way to connect my understanding of how Genre worked in literature and in social communication and thus social control with my understanding of how brain processes work. I found a wealth of material from experts in their fields who write about brain processes and describe concepts *like genres*, such as categories, maps, schemas, patterns, types, and kinds. Except, much to my continued disbelief, I have yet to find a theory which brings together all of these threads or a theorist who invokes Genre as the process *most like* the physiological, psychological, and social processes. When I read these

works the relevance of Genre seems glaringly obvious. The individual elements of SoCo were pre-existing. Yet, SoCo is, like all experience and all creative products, more than the sum of its parts. The additional element is the *perspective* which produces unique combinatorial instantiations through interaction with the social consciousness. In other words, by approaching topics such as consciousness, memory, and meaning from a position which prioritises Genre, I have been able to create a new combination of existing knowledge, to tell an old story in a novel way which facilitates exploration.

Like any good PhD thesis conclusion, this chapter offers the following *review* of the preceding contents of the thesis: First, I outlined some *Key Concepts* for understanding SoCo theory (Chapter 2), and then I presented the *The Social Consciousness Framework* (SoCo) (Chapter 3). Following the introductory material, in *Part III* I provided my interdisciplinary, comparative, and integrative investigations of biological, physiological, cognitive, and psychological processes, parts, tendencies, and theories with my new conceptualisation of Genre: *Sense and Respond*; (Chapter 4); *Categorisation* (Chapter 5); *Memory* (Chapter 6); *Attention, Inference, and Imagination* (Chapter 7); *Attachment, Conflict, and Control* (Chapter 8); and, finally, *Self* (Chapter 9). Chapter 9 straddled the border between indicative and implicatory and thus prepared the stage for *Part III*, in which I discussed at length three major implications of SoCo Theory: (1) That consciousness is analogous to the creative process, product, or *play*, and that consciousness emerges, and thus creativity is born, too, from generic competence and experimentation (Chapter 10); (2) That our self adopts and is shaped by a perspective early in childhood experience; that the perspective is, broadly speaking, tragic or comic; that our perspective shapes our behaviours and interpretations and social identity; and, finally, that with the new conceptual tools provided by SoCo, we can *change* that perspective (Chapter 11); and (3) That SoCo can be utilised to reconceptualise and start meaningful and affective dialogues about contentious social issues and to effect real change in the dominant social consciousness and its current codes about different genres of experience (Chapter 12). In Chapter 11, I put forward a theory of Comedy, too. What started as a theory of Genre has evolved over the course of the thesis into a theory of Genre, Consciousness, Creativity, and Comedy.

I have constructed through rigorous research the following new definition of Genre: The process of sensing and responding, and general types of response. By understanding Genre to be an extension of evolutionarily basic sense-and-respond mechanisms, I have backdated Genre's distinctive functional importance in evolution significantly and illuminated its analogical potential.

It goes almost without saying at this stage that I believe all of the topics covered in this thesis to be intimately connected and intertwined, in a strange loop, if you will. Hofstadter is right: he is a strange loop. We all are. Everything is. Consciousness is a spectrum, and it's social. Because consciousness is a spectrum, we have tended to create other spectrums, too, some of which include the following:

Comedy ~ Tragedy
Pleasure ~ Pain

Good ~ Bad
Coming ~ Going
In ~ Out
Up ~ Down
Excite ~ Inhibit
Expand ~ Contract
Branch ~ Prune
Life ~ Death

Usually, these scales are interpreted as binaries but actually if we see them as poles on a *spectrum*, they are more useful to us. They are spectrums of response; types of response. We make things more complicated by assigning value to social genres. As Fowler recognises, genres are functional rather than taxonomic – they shape experience. They are generative, creative, communicative. Genres are types of response which we use to facilitate consumption and production. They offer sets of instructions or directions for development, growth and reproduction, and thus they make communication possible through perception and interpretation. We use different directions to get to the same place. The goal is to achieve the most efficient way to get there, and the “best” map is remembered by Genre. We’ve just found better and better ways of organising, more and more specific codes. But, an apparent paradox occurs because often *we make things more complicated purposefully*. In certain situations, we *prefer* to take the long road. Both *play* and *literature* often *demand* such conceptualisation.

We need to understand the complex relationships between self-genres and social genres in order to understand the *type of response*. We all have our own unique biases which cannot be guessed merely by looking at social genres in isolation. We have to analyse the unique engagement of the individual with the SoCo as they have constructed and go on constructing and reconstructing their self-genre. The self-genre – subjective consciousness – emerges from this interactive, often complex, and always unique process. The singularity of Shakespeare’s characters emerges from a dual process: the character engaging with the SoCo of their world, and the reader or audience member engaging with the actor on stage. This duality, this extended metaphorical experience, is what makes “good” literature hard to beat. And it mirrors the duality of our own interactions – the organism with the self and the organism and self with the external world.

A work is “good” in that it achieves an experience which both corresponds to the audience’s expectations but at the same time surprises them – and thus extends their generic conceptualisation. “Good” literature depends on generic and rhetorical competence which enables the writer to create “familiar” and “realistic” characters but at the same time it depends on innovation and experimentation. Indeed, the latter requirement strengthens the efforts of the first. “Good” literature maintains a fine balance between tradition and rebellion. The combination, particularly when utilised to construct individual characters, conveys the trials and tribulations; the chops and changes; the biases and novelties; the uniqueness of a self-genre engaging with the SoCo. Shakespeare’s plays as creative “wholes” can be seen as an expression or an instantiation of his own self-genre engaging with the SoCo. His is more an interrogative stance which attempts to view social issues objectively or *in utramque partem*. But, his self-genre glimmers still through the codes and tropes which he

employs and the messages which he conveys. At the very least, we can infer self-codes from the multitude of generic choices which he makes in constructing his play-worlds: we know what genres he chooses, which stories, which tropes, which devices, what kind of language, what kind of characters and how he creates them, what kind of responses and choices his characters make, and the list goes on. Once we are generically competent, we can *understand how* Shakespeare uses Genre and, thus, interpret the *message* that he is communicating. Once we understand Genre and its various codes, we can understand *precisely which choices he has made*. Once we understand the generic information of the plays we can begin to see what personal touches he has affected. It is through understanding generic convention which we can come to understand Shakespeare's subversive engagement with it.

Creative development is a hierarchically dependent loop of attachment which changes constantly in scope, direction, specificity, and complexity. In short, life is a system of systems. What emerges from the generic process is more than the sum of its constituent parts: boundaries emerge from interaction. Boundaries denote connection but also separation. As boundaries increase, what is reflected is higher levels of integration across different types of experience and corresponding responses. It is proposed that this process operates at the level of single cell organisms and their interactions, in physiological "grouping" and functional specification, and that the process reached its highest order with the social and literary tool that we have developed and called "Genre". So, cognition is embodied, then. Consciousness is social because it is the emergent property of a hierarchical lineage of interaction and response. All creative development requires the interaction of the individual with the social environment. SoCo spreads in the same way as in physiological interaction. A virus spreads like an idea: it thrives on human contact.

Accordingly, in *The Strange, Familiar, and Forgotten* (1992) Israel Rosenfield recognised that consciousness is "the consequence of complex neurophysiological interactions; in it the person's past and present experiences are integrated, and the subjective, self-referential quality is of its very essence". More importantly, he recognised that what emerges from such interaction are "constantly evolving generalizations" which are "a fundamental characteristic of human psychology" (86). A constantly evolving generalisation is a genre. A genre is a concept. Our concepts develop over time. It is proposed that the physiology which preceded conscious experience and that performed by SCOs much further back in evolutionary history is based correspondingly on the same process of "constantly evolving generalisation". With every instance of experience, the generalisation is shaped and developed, increasing in specificity, scope, and complexity to a mind-boggling degree.

So, every "thing" is like some other "thing", then. The connections and distinctions made between "things" is our basis for meaning. To conceptualise is to bring different "things" together. Love is like war, we say. Well, "then what is war like?" one might ask. To which definitive replies could include the following: hard, brutal, painful, ruthless, all is fair, combative, violent, a battle(/field/ground), a conquest, a power play, an attack, two sides in conflict. Remember that war is a process itself – a process of processes. Thus, love must be a process, too. Our conceptualisation of love depends on our specific and constantly evolving experience of what can be generally classified as being like "love". We use one thing

in order to understand something else. We “as-if”. “War” is a guiding conception for understanding or communicating the meaning of the target “love”. Both are concepts: “things” *brought together*. A comparison can be seen in the workings of metaphor and the workings of arborisation and also functional categorisation. As discussed earlier, a guiding conception dramatically reduces the search for the target. In arborisation, patterns are influenced by experience and represent the source for the guiding conception. In this scenario, the target doesn’t exist. Love is a many splendid and terrible thing. Meaning emerges where before there was none. And of course, we use plenty of other guiding conceptions for love, too, such as love is a journey, love is like temperature, and love is death/illness. We “as-if” love into being. And perhaps our bodies are just “as-ifying” consciousness. The transitional space created by the “as-if”, which otherwise we might call “the imagination” or “the mind”, is the emergent product of doing Genre. Consciousness emerges “as-if”.

As demonstrated above, and throughout this thesis, making observations about literary composition can offer much transferable insight in to the ways that generic type mechanisms operate at preceding levels. Our creation and utilisation of literary genre mirrors our physiological communication and grouping processes. Genre exudes the same kind of intangibility. But, at the same time it is what enables tangibility. If our key skill is to use something for a purpose different from its original function – to “as-if” – then we must be capable of the following: we must be able to categorise – to perceive and interpret, and thus we must be well-versed in the patterns and rules appropriate to the different categories. In order to experiment by creating metaphors, for instance, first one must possess the ability to work confidently with the original, separate domains which are to be combined. Once we begin mixing types, we can achieve profound creative development, as did Shakespeare with the traditional genres. In fact, Shakespeare’s characters seem so real because he shows them doing what humans tend to do: experimenting; predicting; figuring out; trying on different roles; weighing up their options.

Because we deal in stories, Genre is the only fitting term to use and transmits the strangeness and the obviousness, as well as the dynamism, of the process. The findings presented in the indicative material and the syntheses constructed in the implications chapter have demonstrated the utility and potential value of my new Genre analogy. By reclaiming and recalibrating the concept of Genre as conceived by literary tradition, this thesis has reconceptualised Genre’s function in the creative process and in human life through a comprehensive interdisciplinary investigation. Synthesising knowledge from Biology, Sociology, and Psychology with Creative Writing theory, scholarship, and practice, SoCo proposes a comprehensive, critical and scientific theory of Genre which asserts its central function in the processes of creativity and consciousness. The thesis has demonstrated Genre’s potential as a heuristic or analogy for understanding how humans achieve creativity.

The thesis identified a significant gap in a variety of current biological and psychological theories which utilise an approach centralising the concept of *story*. I located the gap due to the failure of these theorists to recognise the pivotal function served by *Genre* in story-construction. I argued that by recognising Genre’s role in the creative process, profound interdisciplinary insights could be achieved with regard to two fundamental critical concepts; creativity and consciousness. The thesis proposed Genre as a heuristic with significant analogical reach which aids the

conceptualisation of *creative development* from biological evolution to the trajectories of literary genres. By doing so, the thesis has extended existing Genre theory and broadened the current conceptualisation of Genre significantly.

I found that there was plentiful evidence supporting the new Genre analogy as well as considerable opportunity for interdisciplinary synthesis and, as a result, I was able to formulate four major implications as follows: (1) That consciousness is analogous to the creative process, product, or *play*, and that consciousness emerges, and thus creativity is born, too, through *generic competence* and individual *experimentation*; (2) That our “self” can be defined as a genre and furthermore that the self-genre adopts and is shaped by a perspective early in childhood experience; that the perspective is, broadly speaking, tragic or comic; that this comic or tragic perspective shapes our behaviours, interpretations, and social identity; and, finally, that with the help of the new conceptual tools provided by SoCo, we can *change* that perspective; (3) That through utilising the new SoCo theory it is possible to assemble a new theory of Comedy; and (4) That SoCo can be utilised to reconceptualise and start meaningful and affective dialogues about contentious social issues and to effect real change in the dominant social consciousness and its current codes about different genres of experience. Not only does the current thesis constitute significant and innovative development of existing Creativity, Creative Writing, Consciousness, and Genre Theory, but each one of these implications has vast potential for a wide-range of contributions to multiple fields including creative practice; psychological and therapeutic practice; self-help; intersectionality, social justice and reform; and experimental scientific research.

In the field of psychology, I envisage the new SoCo concepts and terminology as valuable additions in particular to more specifically aligned theory and practice such as Drama Therapy, Schema Therapy, and Narrative Psychology but also to less specialised and more common practice and theory in terms of knowledge, access, and practice such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Attachment Theory. My plans for future activity in this field include the development of a digital resource called “WRITE:WELL” based on SoCo theory which supports users in producing their own creative writing which helps them to tackle self-analysis, self-support, and self-development. The SoCo theory itself could offer the basis for new psychological applications and interventions which can be targeted at a wide range of competencies and ages because of the simplicity of its core principles. Working with young children and SoCo, for instance, future research could develop a simple Genre-story format which could be offered as part of educational remits. At higher competency levels, more complex interventions could be devised, which involve investigations of the self-genre and childhood experience and action- and emotion-based “homework” similar to that offered during CBT but with a more accessible and coherent structure which appeals to the way that humans interpret experience – through Genre and story.

For scientific fields, in terms of experimental research and theoretical direction, I believe that SoCo makes possible interdisciplinary connections which could offer the basis for new lines of inquiry. The framework makes connections between various processes across evolution and thus calls for these connections to be recognised by future experimental research. It was not possible to present all of my findings from my research into brain processes, evolutionary development, and

physiology. I chose to focus on my current achievements and offerings. I hope to compose a stand-alone article, perhaps for a popular science publication in the first instance, which focuses on these observations. However, I want to offer a summary of the potential research trajectory in the scientific field. In light of SoCo, I believe that the following processes and “notable players” deserve concerted attention in future experimental investigations:

- ◇ **Glial cells** (glia) and **Myelination** (see R. Douglas Fields, 2009; Michihiro Toritsuka et al, 2015)
- ◇ **Arborisation** and **Instantiation** (see Cozolino, 2006, 2010; Yuh-Nung Jan and Lily Yeh Jan, 2010; Remus Osan et al, 2011)
- ◇ **The Enteric Nervous System** (ENS) and **Digestion** (see Damasio, 2017; Shadi S. Yarandi et al, 2016; Phillip Gorrindo et al, 2012)

While I was able to draw rich and fascinating parallels between these processes and Genre, these lines of inquiry were deprioritised. I also see potential for SoCo-based investigations of conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Alzheimer’s Disease, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Compulsive Disorders, including Eating Disorders. But, it was felt that my Genre analogy was already compellingly evidenced and that my research into the above was not crucial to the thesis. I did not want to risk the impression of abstract speculation which at the moment remains untested and provides no additional insight. Still, I believe that there is great potential for the application, utilisation, and extension of SoCo theory in these areas of research. It would be thrilling if I could be a part of that research and continue to build my scientific competence. This *kind* of material provides the basis for a future *popular science* title.

The thesis offers valuable direction for self-analysis. Using the conceptual framework provided by a broader understanding of Genre enables us to achieve a sort of objectivity about our lives and the feelings and actions and stories which we create and experience. From the perspective of the new SoCo theory, our engagement with “storytelling” can be extended in ways that are crucial and exciting not only for psychotherapy but also “DIY” self-development. The material presented in the chapters on self as genre and generic perspective provides the basis for a future monograph in the *self-help* genre.

The SoCo Framework illuminates multiple implications for creative practice in general and for the field of Creative Writing in particular. Primarily, SoCo prioritises generic engagement and seeks to put the record straight, so to speak, with regard to Genre’s significance. By doing so, SoCo calls into question theories and theorists which denounce Genre’s importance and makes us question what is meant by terms such as “experimental literature”, “generic”, “critical”, “creative”, “comic”, “tragic”, and a whole arsenal of concepts as viewed by current theory. SoCo specifies that a writer be *generically competent* if they intend to create “major” literature or literature which develops Genre in some way. Yes, this caveat infers that a good writer must *read* – a lot! Among other things. In the following *Appendices*, I demonstrate the immediate utility of the theory presented in the field of Creative Writing Theory and Practice-Based research: (1) *Towards a SoCo Prosaics* – a creative foray and critical apparatus for applying SoCo to literary practice; (2) *CANADA* – a novel informed by SoCo theory and the *prosaics*. The three elements

of the thesis come together to achieve a comprehensive and creative bid for a new way of understanding both literature and also life.

Apropos of Everything has generated a rich mutual exchange between the humanities and the sciences in order to investigate creativity which offers the basis for a wealth of future research in disparate fields. I have demonstrated that it is, indeed, a two-way street; science can help us to write stories and story can tell us more about science, too. As evidenced in the preceding chapters, story tells us the most when we recognise the functional power of its central regulation device: *Genre*. What this thesis offers is a framework for working with Genre *creatively*.

Genre is the only singular term which suggests both a process and a “thing”. Categorisation requires categories, classification requires classes, patterning and patterns, maps and mapping, and so forth. Genre evokes both the generic process and the individual genre. Genre exemplifies the priority of the type from which specific features emerge. The specific features of any text (or consciousness) emerge from the interaction between the individual and the SoCo – or shared repertoire of genres. Specific features are a variable consequence of the form, not the function of the general form. An individual person is as unique as an individual novel. When one appreciates the infinite and complex potential of literary genre, that, for example, there are so many of these things called “novels” but they are all so strikingly different, the task of understanding people and their differences and the uniqueness of the subjective experience seems less impossible. In recent times, Genre has reached impressive levels of specificity. Simply by jabbing their finger at a screen, the reader will be able to evidence this for themselves on any popular streaming platform. Based on your specific viewing tendencies you might be offered all sorts of micro-genres such as “British Crime Dramas”, “Screwball Comedies”, “Tearjerkers”, “Steamy Romantic Movies”, and “Critically-acclaimed Inspiring Biographical Movies”. Genre is the only term which fully captures the plasticity and interactive nature of the process.

In *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, Cozolino offers the following description of the interplay between neuroscience and psychotherapy:

Human experience is mediated via two interacting processes. The first is the **expression** of our evolutionary past via the **organisation, development, and functioning** of the nervous system... The second is the **contemporary shaping of our neural architecture within the context of relationships**. The human brain is a **“social organ of adaptation”** stimulated to grow through positive and negative interactions with others. The **quality** and **nature** of our **relationships** become encoded within the neural infrastructures of our brains it is through this **translation** of experience into neurobiological structures that nature and nurture become one.

(my emphases, 12-13)

It is SoCo’s proposition that its new conceptualisation of Genre encapsulates this tandem processing in one model. Because Genre shapes and is shaped, it evokes the dual processes of organisation and socially malleable construction.

Genre works at levels of production and consumption of action/behaviour from micro to macro, beginning with cellular interaction and ranging through organ construction, neural connectivity, social interaction, cultural production all the way to the creative arts. We see generic outcomes at their most complicated and exhilarating in literary processes such as storytelling and metaphor. Viewing Genre in this way liberates our understanding of many long-studied concepts such as the self, creativity, intelligence, and understanding. It opens up grand doors for literary theory, as well as ones which will clear the path for developing new ways of understanding and living our lives, of healthcare and social institutions. The new SoCo framework pulls all of its constituent theories together to construct a more coherent understanding of the whole process of consciousness and conceptualisation.

I believe that adopting the so-called theatrical habitus, or the generic lens, as I have asked you to do throughout this thesis offers real, tangible benefits while at the same time not causing any harm to the individual who adopts it. Simply put, there is no harm in trying out SoCo. In fact, I've found quite the opposite to be true. I have evidenced this proposition in my own self-analysis and my daily life over the several years. My theory is very much new and incomplete but also, I think, urgent, important, and useful. It is the beginning rather than an end, and all beginnings are hard. We learn genres first, then specifics. It's never too late to learn, to try things out, to figure things out, to sort things out; *to do Genre*.

Once we have built up our generic competence, once we have *everything in its place*, then we can do the work unconsciously. Genre enables the consistency which is required for communication yet also it enables us to experiment. Genre automates decisions for us so that we can focus on modifying and flourishing. We do quite happily use and stick to generic convention. It serves us well and does not seem like a problem or a cliché mostly. Most women still wear white wedding gowns, though they have lost most of their symbolism, for instance. It's about finding the *balance* with Genre. If we allow Genre to just run on autopilot we can end up being controlled and limited by it. Genre can be useful but only if we actually use it in a productive way. It's about finding a way to live your life and tell your life story in the *best way* – as in the way which enables you to live a productive life. I'd already done it before I knew what I'd done. It's about recognising and understanding the limits that generic expectations and patterns of behaviour impose upon people and working with them creatively. I still have days where I think that I'll die alone and never amount to anything but I mean, it's just *fine* now. Life is kind to those with good humour, with a comic perspective. And, to quote the mission statement of the Karen Horney Clinic,

There is no good reason why we should not develop and change until the last day we live.

Theoretically, I believe that the basic SoCo framework is legitimate. Theory is key. How did science begin? It began with humans theorising about things. And many of the theorists with whom I've engaged throughout this thesis have confirmed that new *theories* are required, as opposed to simply continuous experiments based on old theories. We can keep doing research and experiments but if we continue to work with the same theories we won't find new results. A new theory is all that I hope

to have achieved and conveyed in this thesis. SoCo has been a labour of love; an attempt to *figure out*. There are also many things which unambiguously SoCo is *not*: for one, it cannot be called a sterile theory; it is not neat or flawless; it is neither traditionally scientific nor traditionally “creative” – it does not fall neatly into a category, despite its central focus on categories. But, hopefully what has been conveyed is the scope and potential and unfinalisability of *Genre* and its utility for our lives.

Edelman uses a handy quote to explain the process of theoretical acceptance:

Theories have four stages of acceptance: i) this is worthless nonsense; ii) this is an interesting, but perverse point of view; iii) this is true, but quite unimportant; iv) I always said so.

J. B. S. Haldane (Edelman, 23).

And, Burr suggests that “the value of our theories and models is not based on how truly they reflect reality but how useful they are in allowing us to make predictions about phenomena” (93). I hope that SoCo will prove *useful*, and furthermore I hope that however long SoCo might have to float around in stages i, ii, or iii, that it reaches eventually the somewhat annoying but optimal stage, *I always said so*.

For those who don’t care much for talk of theory or theoretical acceptance, we can evaluate SoCo based on different generic codes, too. For instance, we might utilise the *legal* code. Now, in this instance it is perhaps not too presumptuous to imagine that judgement of SoCo would be tried in a *civil* case as opposed to *criminal*. For those readers who have reached this far in the thesis and yet feel that SoCo deserves the Criminal Court, you have my sincerest apologies. Nevertheless, if SoCo were to be tried in Civil Court, it would be liable for lesser potential penalties but furthermore it would be judged by the rhetoric of the *preponderance of evidence*, as opposed to the criminal requirement of *beyond a reasonable doubt*. So, there is a lower *burden of proof*. Of course, in my own view SoCo *is valid beyond a reasonable doubt*. But, in any case, I think that there can be at least no reasonable doubt that I have provided a *preponderance of evidence* to support the theory. Based on the evidence which I have presented in *Apropos of Everything*, I would in effect win a Civil Court case for SoCo.

I feel that I’ve “proven” SoCo according to the scientific method – if we consider the recent acceptance of anecdotal evidence. I have lived SoCo theory consciously for round-about the last three years and for even longer unconsciously. *It makes sense to me*. “Strictly speaking,” explains Wright, a “substantial corroboration” is all that any science can offer (269). I can only hope that throughout this work I have achieved the true functions of *Genre* (and furthermore consciousness): conveyance and control. I think that the SoCo framework is credible, and in terms of my prosaics, a strong feature of it is that it links SoCo, *Genre* processes, and creative practice. From my perspective, putting together an evidence-based theory about creativity which both establishes the primacy of agency and the primacy of social reality will do much to remove a great deal of cant and nonsense about art and artist. SoCo is far from establishing the exact neurobiology

of Genre but it does not profess to achieve such a task. What I hope that I have offered is food for critical thinking across various fields of research. If nothing else, I have gathered together considerable evidence for the idea of rhetorical cognition, and so if the current theory is only taken as a heuristic, a fanciful and helpful way of thinking about life – one which may offer tools with which we can improve our daily life, happiness, and relationships – or a deeper understanding of literature – then it has proved successful. SoCo offers a new heuristic or guiding conception – the new conceptualisation of Genre – for research in science and for structuring existing psychotherapeutic practice. Genre provides a neutral and useful terminology, objectivity, and a tangible conceptualization. The SoCo approach can be easily simplified or intensified depending on various factors (age, intelligence, and so on) but mainly on generic competence (i.e., For a child or a limited generic competence, we might ask them to tell a story about themselves and then ask, “so is this story happy or sad?” For a highly generically competent individual we might ask “how can you experiment with this genre in order to question it and change it?” – SoCo is applicable across the spectrum of competence. “Reading age” may be a good comparative measure in initial instances). Inevitably, the theory is generalised or broad. I believe that I have made the case for such an approach. A theory of Genre must be general – so must a theory of consciousness or creativity. I hope to have made some bold steps towards a “modern synthesis” which attempts to define creativity and consciousness as identical processes.

I have produced an interdisciplinary response to the questions which live obscured at the helm of the Creative Writing field which is both creative and critical and which investigates the creative and critical processes. By doing so I raise questions about the nature or expectations of Creative Writing PhDs of the future. I contradict traditional doxa regarding Genre or categorisation which deems the processes as hostile enemies to creativity. By necessity, I have taken some risks in performing these tasks. But, according to SoCo, risk is a necessary element of creativity. Interdisciplinarity fulfils another criterion.

I asked you at the beginning of the thesis to approach its ideas with an open-mind, to approach expectation differently, to imagine the world as a stage. I hope that these courtesies have proved worthwhile. I want to ask once again *what should a Creative Writing PhD do?* I hope that my thesis offers an exemplar of the *expectations* of the field. Admittedly, Creative Writing PhDs are relatively new conceptions. The standard has now been set.

What did I find? I found a new way of seeing. I opened up a whole new way to approach life. I can attest from my own lived experience the utility of the lens. I still engage in “figuring out” frequently and intend to continue with this activity for the foreseeable future. Hopefully, I have done enough to reclaim the word “generic”. To reinvoké Koestler, if my theory contains any “shadowy pattern of truth”, then I have succeeded in my task of reinstating the credit which Genre deserves in discussions of creativity. People like telling stories because we like sharing convention. We like to *share* stories – we like to speak about things that we have experienced with others, *experience* which we have *shared*. We enjoy being able to remember the same things, to make the same associations, *to co-construct and navigate shared experience using Genre*. Not only is Genre fundamental for social interaction and control but it actually *gives us pleasure*. Sharing conventions with others affirms our

existence. We don't just *like* stories, we don't just add Genre "after the fact". We *are* stories. We use Genre to perceive every single moment of any kind of experience. Genre is Apropos of Everything. According to SoCo, every one of us has the generic potential to be curious; creative; *comic*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

TOWARDS A SOCO PROSAICS

A DIALOGUE:

Persons: *Atticus* and *Cassandra*.

Scene: *The University*.

Atticus. [*Shouting at the door*] Come in!

Cassandra. [*Bursting through the door, with an exasperated tone*] Hello.

Atticus. [*Looking up from his desk*] *Cassandra*, what a wonderful treat.

Cassandra. [*Plonking herself on one of the many seats which surround the desk*] I fear not so much.

Atticus. Oh?

Cassandra. “Oh”, indeed.

Atticus. What is troubling you?

Cassandra. The impossibility of expression.

Atticus. A noble contemplation, at least.

Cassandra. And yet our very professional existence, if you could call it such, depends on our belief that all contemplation is noble, that contemplation is, in point of fact, the only noble endeavour.

Atticus. Yes, but contemplation is meaningless without our valuing of different kinds of contemplation.

Cassandra. Our contemplative genres.

Atticus. Good, Cassandra. Now, what irks you about expression?

Cassandra. Expression does not irk me, rather the multiplicity of avenues for effective expression, arm in arm with the stark recognition of the potentially infinite instantiations of interpretation, leaves one effectively stunned into silence.

Atticus. Silent, Cassandra? I do not mark it.

Cassandra. You get the gist.

Atticus. Cassandra, your conceptual skill is impressive. What I mean is that you are capable of synthesising otherwise disparate and conceited material and constructing a whole new combination of thought. This skill is not one to turn your nose at. The hard work comes in conveying your new combinations to the world, and without this step you have not created anything at all.

Cassandra. Yes. Conveyance! That’s it!

Atticus. You must become a conveyor.

Cassandra. Right. Yes. But, conveyance is unnecessary once the genre is already learned.

Atticus. Right.

Cassandra. Yes, but, because you are well-versed in these ideas already, you are no good for practicing conveyance with. With your depth of knowledge and your pledge to the generic cult, you cannot offer the questions of a novice, the questions of a world who needs to be convinced. You believe in genre. I have an idea. Let’s pretend. Let’s pretend that you don’t believe it, and that you don’t know it, and you can ask questions which I must then answer as means of defending my theory. As a means of conveying. As much a construction in itself as a justification.

Atticus. I do not think that I can perform this role.

Cassandra. Well, it is necessary.

Atticus. Fine. Give me a moment.

Cassandra. I've been thinking, by the way, that genre is the process of hemispheric integration through arborisation, creating neural networks that when properly balanced offer the inhibition, organisation, and classification required to mix emotional and linear processing (i.e. unconscious and conscious, primary and secondary, right and left, individual and social) in order to navigate and understand the world and practice it in our imagination. Literature offers the same kind of practice area as the imagination. Dreams offer a specific opportunity to practice or "enact" the genre of "self", otherwise known as the right, individual, or unconscious hemisphere. We practice left, social, conscious genre through our interactions with others and cultural products. Without adequate regulation genres can and do become distorted. We can present these unique frameworks in our work — and create new ones. The Cozolino book is excellent.

Atticus. The Cozolino work *is* excellent, and I am glad that you're finding it so interesting. As I said previously, he has another book focused on the social. I think that you're doing some excellent thinking and bringing together a good deal of your reading to a valuable focus on your prosaics. On that note, how is the prosaics going?

Cassandra. Ah, yes. The prosaics. *Shakespeare's Schoolroom* is very good.

Atticus. Yes, it is good. I suspected much the same based on my inferences about the type of educational programs typical of the times, especially the use of classical texts and rhetoric, but the discussions about the use of drama and putting on plays adds an important extra for understanding why Shakespeare possessed such great skills. It's excellent historical scholarship and will add to your growing knowledge. And, the prosaics?

Cassandra. A great title for S, "*Monitor monitorum*" – monitor of monitors! It is just great "evidence" that S would have been perfectly "capable" of authoring his work and also shows that if anything he was just very clever, a bit of a smart arse, and had a lot of his ideas drilled into him (all the worlds a stage et al) and spent his career dealing with the very concepts that they instilled in the school. His work shows that they held a tight grasp over him even while he tried to subvert them -- in fact, playing the devil's advocate in argumentation was one of the encouragements of the schoolmasters. It aligns very well with my ideas about genre and characterisation. It's crazy, in fact Theatricality was a part of their daily lives and learning which emphasised the real distance between their "selves" and their performances. But then that is true for everyone. I think that it made them realise this distance or discrepancy between the inner worlds of people and their social performances. Then they were able, like S, to create "real" and "subjective" characters. My theory is that when we begin to realise these discrepancies and ruling forces – genres – in our own characters, we will be better able to reshape them. Generic skill...By own characters I did mean our "selves", but of course it would work if I meant literary characters in our work, too. We gather evidence for our genres all the time without even realising. We log social experience subconsciously. But if you concentrate, if you transcend, you can feel it happening. Hear both sides, as it were. Like it's a constant implicit automatic process. And we have to employ great skill to manipulate it

Atticus. Yes, you're quite right. I read a couple of pieces in *New Scientist* recently which talk about those issues but, of course, never see that genre is key to how it all happens. Cassandra, what you said just now is impressive thinking. Your ability to analyse and synthesise is strong. And, you're developing your powers of inference. Please remember, Cassandra, that you have a lovely brain. We cannot really measure ourselves against others by how much we know -- we always meet people who will know more -- but the mark of intelligence is thinking about what you've learned and then applying it to your better understanding of your life. You've been doing precisely that thinking and applying, which to my mind puts you into the real category of the academic.

Cassandra. Thank you, A. One of my key desires is to write *well*.

Atticus. To set oneself the task of writing well is immediately to aim for the highest standards of thought and expression of which we are capable. What sets off Shakespeare from his contemporaries is that he aimed to write plays which read brilliantly.

Cassandra. Well, whether or not I am capable is a different conversation. Did you have any thoughts about what questions a less invested audience might have?

Atticus. I need more time to ponder potential questions.

Cassandra. Pretend that you have only been taught genre at a micro level and don't have extensive knowledge in psychology or neuroscience.

Atticus. I can only do that sort of identity change if I take a little time about the questions.

Cassandra. Fine. Do you think that at some point our circuitry will become so advanced that we will be able to generate function reports from our body and organs?

Atticus. We already do. It's called the nervous and visceral system.

Cassandra. No, you know what I meant. Like communicating verbally, almost. So, more bilateral connections.

Atticus. Hm. And then along comes a clever hacker who hacks into your circuits and steals all of your hard-earned ideas about genre.

Cassandra. Sure

Atticus. Well, hackers take control of people's cars now, and there's much excited talk about implanting chips into our brains, so I wouldn't rule out such theft. Now, enough of this chatter. While I find your enthusiasm charming, you must update me on your prosaics.

Cassandra. Right.

Atticus. So?

Cassandra. I am troubled by the impossibility of expression.

Atticus. Ah, yes, according to your earlier lament.

Cassandra. Well, what would you expect from a *prosaics*?

Atticus. Well, how are you defining *prosaics*?

Cassandra. Okay. *Prosaics*: evocative of poetics. Evocative of the prosaic, and prose, the “prosaics” introduced by Morson and Emerson and wrangled from Bakhtin. Evocative then further of Perec, B. S. Johnson...

Atticus. Yes, Cassandra, very good. But for the alien or social recluse whom you stipulate as your audience, you need to explain *what these things mean*.

Cassandra. Poetics: Poetics is to poetry as Prosaics is to Prose. And, poetics is bandied about more generally, too. Linda Hutcheon proposed what she called a “poetics of postmodernism”, in which she defines poetics as “a flexible conceptual structure which could at once constitute and contain postmodern culture and our discourses both about it and adjacent to it”. So, in other words, a poetics is a flexible conceptual structure which both constitutes and contains culture as well as its emergent discourse. It’s a genre, of course! As far as I am aware, the term *Prosaics* was coined by Morson and Emerson, based on Bakhtin’s obsession with the *prosaic*. They wanted to make a “prosaics” out of his ideas about prosaic experience. Bakhtin speaks repeatedly about “prosaic intelligence,” “prosaic vision,” and “prosaic wisdom”. Morson and Emerson say that “it is necessary to acknowledge the fundamental differences between poetry and prose and to approach prose with a theory adapted to its constitutive features. In addition to poetics, we need, but do not yet have, *prosaics*”. They lay out a definition which suits my purposes, which I won’t be able to remember properly. *Prosaics* encompasses two elements. First, *prosaics* is about prose, as opposed to poetry. Second, *Prosaics* has a much broader applied potential because it evokes the adoption of a particular perspective, one which emphasises the literary nature of the mundane, the boring, the taken for granted, Perec’s *infraordinary*, Bakhtin’s *prosaic*.

Atticus. Wonderful, Cassandra! In the diminished role that I have adopted at your bequest I now feel much more at ease with the term.

Cassandra. Yes, okay. We have an understanding of the term *prosaics*. But, what I need to convey in my *prosaics* is how SoCo theory can be utilised in creating and interpreting literature.

Atticus. A Herculean task. Cassandra, I think that the SoCo framework is credible, and in terms of your *prosaics*, I sense that a strong feature of it will be linking SoCo, genre processes, and creativity. From my perspective, putting together an evidence-based theory about creativity which both establishes the primacy of agency and the primacy of social reality will do much to remove a great deal of cant and nonsense about art and artist.

Cassandra. Yes! It is about the interaction of social and individual. But, it can be only ever *towards* a *SoCo Prosaics* because the SoCo theory is in its infancy and it is hoped that science and sociology and psychology can offer experimental evidence towards more technical and specific guidelines. Moreover, as we know, defining a genre can only ever be a “*towards*” because of its inherent unfinalisability and ambiguity. The *prosaics*, like any genre or generic code, provides “merely” a gist.

Atticus. And yet, we know that there is nothing “mere” about gist.

Cassandra. Exactly.

Atticus. Well, to whom will you address this *prosaics*?

Cassandra. Well, primarily it is for writers and readers.

Atticus. There, we have a start.

Cassandra. But it’s not for writers and readers only. Or, we all are writers and readers. It is for us all. The *prosaics* is for literature but also life. I’m writing not just for readers and writers, although it is proposed that these activities utilise genre to its finest potential. I am writing for all people. SoCo applies across the broad spectrum of life. But, the *prosaics* element is, as stipulated above, primarily a guidance for engaging with literature. It would seem with my focus on performance, action, roles, play and so on that I would be extolling only play writing. I do believe that watching a Shakespeare play is unlike most experiences in its enchantment. But, I think that we can use these lessons about genre more broadly and in fact my own practice is solely prose. I am setting out a *prosaics*.

Atticus. Okay, well, first of all, what would you say are the tenets of your SoCo *prosaics*?

Cassandra. Sapolsky calls the task of defining one’s terms “an unwelcome prospect”; a hilarious and painfully accurate assessment.

Atticus. Yes, indeed, the hardest part in all thinking because it forces us to consider whether or not we actually know a damn thing about anything.

Cassandra. He’s quite good. Not as good as Damasio, obviously. How is it that these people just know how to shove all of their information so easily into book-shape? This project is my biggest test as a writer thus yet, and probably will be for the rest of my “career”.

Atticus. Well, Cassandra, they probably wrote dozens of articles, attended dozens of conferences, and spent years writing a book.

Cassandra. Who has time for that?

Atticus. You might find it strange to hear, but it is normal practice.

Cassandra. I am impatient.

Atticus. I am aware.

Cassandra. My mother says it is because I was born *via* the *Caesar* method, and so I was born a week earlier than I should have been.

Atticus. An innate impatience, then. Now, I am becoming rather impatient myself; *the tenets*?

Cassandra. Well, literary genres in particular showcase genre’s features and functions in a way that is much more tangible than we can achieve at this stage in time with regard to the

brain. And thus, the writer should attempt to and in fact can only represent their *self-genre*, all be it through the guise of characters and tropes. Furthermore, the tenets of the socio prosaics are based on viewing the creative product as though it is like a genre, like a self-genre particularly, but like all genres in many ways.

Atticus. In which ways?

Cassandra. The main tenets of the SoCo prosaics are as follows: *freedom and constraint; the unique perspective of the self-genre and its implications; Bisociation; Conveyance...* I have some things to say about practice.

Atticus. But you must be much more specific, Cassandra, if you are to achieve *conveyor* status. What do you mean by “freedom and constraint”, by terms such as “bisociation” and “conveyance”. What do you have to say about practice?

Cassandra. I wish that people just knew what you meant.

Atticus. The curse of the conveyor.

Cassandra. I will have to explain the tenets individually.

Atticus. You have my permission.

Cassandra. Creatives should never ask for permission.

Atticus. Well, I have a clear schedule.

Cassandra. Okay. Well, let’s start with *freedom and constraint*.

Atticus. I can hardly contain my enthusiasm.

Cassandra. Perhaps after hearing my explanation you will feel more equipped to do so.

Atticus. But, isn’t *freedom and constraint* a *paradox*? An *oxymoron*?

Cassandra. No.

Atticus. Expand, Cassandra!

Cassandra. Very well. It’s all about genre. Genre as distinct from matter. Utilising genre to imitate form and thus achieve communication – expression and interpretation. The ever-changing river of *types of things* which emerges from social conceptualisation. Genres change, they are supposed to, it is their function. Furthermore, because genres are socially constructed they must and do change with time. And thus, freedom and constraint both constitute required forces. Their combination, their balance, their interaction, generates the *third realm, the third enlightenment, the emergent third place*, but at once it is one.

Atticus. Ah, wonderful. You have been reading Plato, I gather.

Cassandra. Who?

Atticus. Plato, Cassandra. He told that *forms* are responsible for all conceptualisation, and known by “pure reason”.

Cassandra. So, he’s talking about intuition and our access to the social consciousness, activities which genre facilitates and creates and is created by?

Atticus. Sort of. Of course, your modern conceptualisation swims depths uncharted. Your synthesis of modern science with genre theory is inspired. Indeed, Plato engaged with arguments about literature, but also other “anti-rational” activities such as filling his cup.

Cassandra. Yes, it’s no wonder they came up with π . But, when we are *too* drunk we cannot create. We need some constraint. Writing – even poetry – is not “anti-rational”. Writing emerges from genre and must engage with genre in order to be interpreted properly. The key is interpretation? And it involves and demands both freedom and constraint.

Atticus. Where Plato erred in his *forms* is in his conceptualisation of their immutability.

Cassandra. Of course, because genres change constantly.

Atticus. Right. But, Cassandra, how does this map to your prosaics?

Cassandra. Maps, by Gad! Maps, and maps, and models and models, and systems, and schemas; maps! I dream about maps. There is so much talk of maps but never a real sense of their functionality, never an acceptance of maps to be “what they are”, to function precisely in the way that they do. *We live in a world of wonderful make-believe*. This state of affairs can be interpreted as either comic or tragic or usually a bit of both, and can be utilised respectively according to the genre dominant to the particular perspective. The particular is just a particular perspective or instantiation of the general information and action of the world, of course, behaviours and concepts emerge from perspectives. It’s all a big unconscious conceptual system. Concepts enable communication. And so, consciousness is... conceptualisation?

Atticus. You could look to Plato’s successor, Aristotle. He believed in structure and imitation – he believed in genre. But, Aristotle was much too deterministic particularly of the tragic genre and its implications for the comic genre. He determined various elements regarding the class of characters and the techniques and concepts engaged with.

Cassandra. So, then, Shakespeare *shook up* Aristotle.

Atticus. Precisely.

Cassandra. Shakespeare exposed the contradictions and also the similarities of the different forms. But, he recognised their integral function – to facilitate interpretation... Imitation... communication. Hmm. He shines a light on the ridiculous implications of the implied corroboration between class and character, for instance, which he ridicules and satirises and upends constantly.

Atticus. Yes, critics run into conceptual struggles when they attempt to compare Shakespearean tragedy to Aristotle’s understanding of tragedy, because they exist worlds

apart, quite literally. The times they a-change. But, they also stay the same. How is this possible, Cassandra?

Cassandra. Genre.

Atticus. Go on.

Cassandra. We achieve both sameness and difference, constraint and freedom, through our shared conceptualisation, our social consciousness, which is made up of genres. We all infer generic concepts. These concepts which we all seem to intuitively understand – like revenge, comedy, tragedy, as well as emotional genres, the “essences” of “things”, and so on – they are all genres of course. And Shakespeare is unrivalled in his construction not just of these generic concepts but furthermore he constructed and managed to convey with a wick rhetorical skill and phenomenal congruency the idea of a self-genre in his strikingly individual and “conscious” characters as well as engaging with social genres such as “man”, “woman”, “rich”, “poor”, etc. and sort of value-genres, doxa, or social narratives about values or qualities – honour, ambition, pride, greed, - and so on. Again, these investigations are all to do with social identity, how a society shapes identity but from society emerges all different kinds of instantiations or identities depending on the unique perspective of the individual. A freedom within constraint.

Atticus. Very good, Cassandra.

Cassandra. Shakespeare utilised generic concepts and his interpretation of them – his way of expressing it (the best way). A rhetorical display based on generic concepts. That’s why his work has “stood the test of time”. Continued usage and memory of ancient, tried-and-tested conceptual metaphors has enabled infinitely broad potential for conveyance; audiences across centuries have found that they can “get something out of” Shakespeare’s plays. He knows that he must engage with genre but by doing so he is then free to do what he wants with it. This is real power, control, autonomy, you name it. That’s what it is. Creative freedom. And it requires constraint.

Atticus. Indeed, your logic is faultless.

Cassandra. As you learn more and more of the rules, the world becomes more and more delightful. Yes, it becomes more and more tragic but it becomes more impressive and more comprehensible. I smile a lot at my little generic glitches and responses, which observe almost constantly. It’s a lens. The generic lens. Once we know the rules we can take pleasure in the sheer craft and choice available to us and how genre makes it possible to do anything at all, really. That stuff which we consider human. And putting in the effort to learn genre results in a sort of liberating freedom. Your so-called paradox. It only seems like a paradox because of the strange loop, of course. Once we acknowledge that both freedom and constraint are required for successful creation and communication, we can *map* the term constraint to the term genre, and the term freedom to... well it can stay as freedom, but perhaps maps better to the term *individual*.

Atticus. I see. But does not defining genre as constraint merely regurgitate the conceptualisation of countless writers who denounce genre as merely a constraint on creativity – the word constraint itself negatively conceptualised?

Cassandra. Yes. The idea is that neither genre nor constraint are negative terms, as recognised by the *Oulipians*, the *Structuralists*, the *Formalists*, and... plenty of other ians and ists in their own ways, wittingly or else. Both terms describe a necessary part of the conceptual and in fact the whole creative process. Morson and Emerson wanted to make a prosaics out of Bakhtin's ideas about prosaic experience. I am now adding science and building upon.

Atticus. Yes, so what is *the science*?

Cassandra. It is not particularly new stuff, but the newest stuff attempts to test its most advanced implications. Well, the science which "goes" with the freedom and constraint tenet involves various analogies. We could look to the process of arborisation, which involves both branching and pruning. When we talk about brain activity we talk about excitation or arousal or transmission but also inhibition and inactivity and blocking and filtering. We can perceive the coexistence of individual nerve cells and also their interconnections, relationships, groups, circuits, networks, patterns, and so on and so forth. Cajal revealed the complexity of the gregarious nerve communities, and modern science has revealed for us, indubitably, that our brains, our bodies, everything, is organised into functional categories, and that the connections between things can filter and transform experience. In other words, genre is powerful, necessary, brilliant. And furthermore, without it we could not experience what we call "freedom". There cannot be branching but no pruning – such presentations can have disastrous effects. There cannot be excitation without inhibition. What comes up must come down. Freedom and constraint are two parts of the same process. The dyadic spectrum if you will. Once we apply our new thinking about genre as constraint to literature, we can understand immediately how genre is actually a powerful tool. When we are generically competent, we can make conscious decisions about genre, and when we make conscious decisions about genre, our creative products enter into the realm of high generic engagement and thus broad generic appeal.

Atticus. But, do we *want* our work to be broadly-generically-appealing?

Cassandra. That decision belongs to the writer. But, considering that a creative product is a conscious artefact, and the purpose of consciousness is communication, then a writer who wishes to create a work which is unintelligible in a sense hunts, like Narcissus, only his own validation or, in other words, provides merely *scriptible* appeal. Such products do not constitute creativity, much in the same way that Narcissus's love for his reflection does not constitute a relationship. The desire might be fulfilled in the first instance if there is a confusion about the self or a lack of self. But, once the individual has developed generic competence they cannot simply ignore genre, and this effect supports their good fortune. For Bakhtin, a genre is neither a hierarchy of devices nor a complex of themes and forms nor a set of interpretive conventions. Rather, it is a specific form of thinking, a way of visualising the world with "the eyes of the genre". A perfect instance of the generic phenomenon and furthermore a stark reminder that we cannot see with *no* lens. Perception is never "pure". Precisely, it is generic. Thus, when writers attempt to create "post"- or "non"-genres, in actual fact their work is teeming with genre. Because, I mean, if we've done postmodernism, if we've done the "anti-novel" – and the implications of these suffixes are "true" – where do we go from there? Unfortunately, it seems as though these later developments have resulted from us losing touch with the literary tradition. Many would say that is their aim. But, if that is the case, then why do they write at all? Why not be so "anti" or "post" or "meta" that actually you don't write at all but instead build walls out of brick and grout? Or take up

fishing? It's desirable to develop or change or subvert genre, that is the goal of engaging with it. But, one cannot do so in a vacuum, and more pressingly, it is baffling why on earth anyone would want such a situation to arise. We write to be read and because we love literature. If we abandon tradition, which we cannot do, our work becomes unintelligible and thus its messages become meaningless or misunderstood. Furthermore, it's easy to "just write anything". Working with genre, with limits, makes us better writers and enables readers to become better readers. We can consider with greater care, of course, the audience for whom we are writing; who we want that audience to be. And we can question from all angles, indeed, the existing conventions. They are there to be questioned, to be changed. While it is painful to admit, Eliot was right when he said that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past, though his attempt to eradicate the crucial element of the self was embarrassing, and of course his observation about generic tradition must be considered alongside the fact that for much of history literary traditions were passed on only through the colonial canon. Alas, we cannot change the past but we can change its genres for the future.

Atticus. Very good, Cass...

Cassandra. Skilled individuals break the mould of their game. But to do so they must know the rules. They must know the rules better than anyone. Think of Ronaldo; football. To improvise you must know the rules so well that they become unconscious. This is why all of this "anti" and "post" stuff happened, because the rules had become so unconscious that we didn't think we needed them anymore. Good luck in that world. What we must seek instead is to question the rules in a creative way. Look at what Shakespeare does in *Taming*. He follows all of the "normal rules" but he makes new rules in his playworld which alter drastically our interpretation of it. Sure, with uneducated women you can have the world a certain way and certain stereotypes. But now, in Padua, women *are* educated. Now what? It casts a completely different light on the generic action and choices. *Et cetera*. He's doing this kind of generic work all the time. In order to convey that we have broken a rule or subverted it or, most accurately, utilised it to our creative advantage, we need to engage with that rule. There's no point in saying that we are "anti-rules". Refusing genre is a like a child screaming in a supermarket.

Atticus. Cassandra, you are like a fountain which pours only from great height and in all directions. And yet, you are unquenchable. But, what about the "freedom" part? What constitutes "freedom"?

Cassandra. Well genre itself frees us, but, our freedom is inherent within the unique way in which we deal with genre, our unique perspective, our unique interpretation. It seems paradoxical. But upon closer inspection it *makes sense*. Play, our finest and most joyful freedom, requires genre. Different genres suppress or champion individual identity to greater or lesser extents. The SoCo prosaics champions it. But, as Vonnegut said, rules only take us so far, even good ones. We must improvise. We must make choices, generic decisions. And that is our freedom.

Atticus. Right, okay, okay, so, come on, Cassandra. What about your next tenet?

Cassandra. ...which leads me to my next tenet.

Atticus. Good.

Cassandra. The “freedom” element of the tenet which I addressed is realised by utilising the *self-genre*. So, the next tenet regards the self-genre, the unavoidable generic lens which accompanies any other we might choose to adopt. In fact, we ought not want to be rid of it. The tenet follows naturally from its predecessor.

Atticus. But surely, a “self-genre”, subjectivity, the personal, surely all of these features impede creation and interpretation?

Cassandra. Ah, but it is only that it seems as such. You are relying on logic which we have just dismissed in our discussion about freedom and constraint. The self-genre is, besides being prerequisite to creation and interpretation proper, where our creative potential resides. Or, should I say that it is our recognition of, engagement with, and creative utilisation of the self-genre which enables us to achieve creative potential. It is the interaction of the self-genre with the genres of the SoCo from which the effective – or arguably any – creative product emerges.

Atticus. Oh, how so?

Cassandra. In order to achieve or at least to express or communicate our freedom, our nuance, our difference, we must learn about the ways in which our self-genre veers from the “norm” and infuse our writing with its perspective. If the reader wanted someone else’s perspective they would choose another book. I don’t know. Maybe I retract that last part. Of course, Shakespeare realised the potential of the individual; of character, unique perspective, subjectivity, choicefulness... the self-genre.

Atticus. But, surely to prioritise the self-genre and to disregard social conventions is a Narcissian pursuit.

Cassandra. Yes, it is. But I do not suggest that we disregard social conventions. The self-genre does not negate the SoCo. Indeed, it emerges from the SoCo. We must engage in a constant interaction and play between the self-genre and the SoCo. But the self-genre generates a unique perspective on the SoCo, and can produce highly creative and unique combinations, concepts, metaphors, and expression if utilised with competence and awareness. We can identify with or reject different conventions but we must engage with them to an extent which will appeal to a wide range of people.

Atticus. Fine, but isn’t the self-genre incredibly unreliable, biased, and prone to stereotypical behaviour?

Cassandra. Yes.

Atticus. Hah! Thus, how can it be conducive to creativity?

Cassandra. Because once we recognise the function and typical procedure of genre and the self-genre in particular, and even more particularly their interactions, we can become skilled genreists, who manipulate, discard, utilise, and comprehend at will. Once we have identified our unique way of engaging with the SoCo, we gain creative control. To attempt to create outside of the self-genre is, in any case, a futile endeavour. It is impossible and as I have already opined we ought not want to achieve such a goal, despite (or perhaps in spite of) the

writers who seem heart-set on achieving just such goal. Oh, what a world we'd have at all without genre – without the self-genre.

Subjectivity is a word which must be discussed with hushed tones. But, objectivity is impossible. Our very mode of conceptualisation is subjective. That's the whole point. We make subjects out of objects. And we do so by utilising genre. Burr reminds us that facts themselves can never be impartial. Facts are circular, relational, relative, recursive, accumulate, and ever-changing. Burr says that facts emerge from questioning, and that someone must ask a particular question, and that questions always derive from, albeit often implicit, assumptions about the world.

Originality, creativity, freedom; these phenomena are not about *content* – events, objects, plot, *et cetera* – they are chiefly products of *perspective*. We each have unique perspective which is constructed from our personal experience of the social world and which enables us to produce and convey unique interpretations of that world. Alcorn Jr. presents the “self-structure” as a rhetorical device. Because the self-genre itself is deeply crafted by the SoCo, it is ripe for creative development and expression. We must convey the unique combination of experience we have chosen to incorporate into our self-genre. The self-genre has a unique and recognisable style. The writer's self-structure affects the self-structures of the reader. Literature is an important *because* we can use it to represent self-structure, it is the same as self-structure, and we can use it to change others' self-structures as well as to practice new structures for our own selves.

At the same time we must recognise that the uniqueness of our perspective also reflects its inherent unreliability. It is not a bad thing but something which as writers we must capitalise on. It's no different than anything else. Interpretive difference, acting one way and feeling another, etc.

Choicefulness is what makes us human. Koestler tells us that the limitations and peculiarities of their medium force the artist at each step to make choices, consciously or unconsciously; to select for representation those features or aspects which they consider to be relevant, and to discard those which they consider irrelevant; *they must make generic choices*. The generic direction of the creative product depends on what Koestler calls the distorting lens of the artist's mind, the perceptual and conceptual matrices which pattern their experience, the part-automatic, part-conscious processing of the experience, over which the medium exercises a kind of “feed-back-control”, determines to a large extent what we call an artist's individual style. The generic choices a writer makes reflect their self-genre and convey it to the interpreter. Different generic choices informed by the self-genre alter the meaning or message conveyed. Vonnegut says that the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.

The creative product emerges as an instantiation of the writer's generic engagement. All creative products are inherently personal, it is what separates them from other products which we would deem decidedly “not creative” – police reports, tv listings, phonebooks, and so on. Nabokov writing creatively about his synaesthesia has become the example for defining the condition. If we write about our personal experience we have the power to change the collective experience. In part, this tenet supports the use of the personal; the injection of personal feelings and emotions into writing.

Atticus. You make an impassioned case. But, again I must ask you for the reason, the science, the evidence for your passion.

Cassandra. As you please. If Oakley and Halligan are right, if consciousness emerged during evolution as a social communication mechanism, then, surely, the goal of such communication must be to convey subjective experience. Another person's feelings is perhaps the only experience which we can never obtain, never fulfil. But, we can! Through literature. Consequently, then, it is the capacity to communicate to others the experience of the personal narrative, the self-genre, that confers an evolutionary advantage.

Damasio explains that our only direct view of the mind depends on a part of that very mind, a self process that we have good reason to believe cannot provide a comprehensive and reliable account of what is going on. Bartlett found that the remembered story was always shorter, more coherent, and tended to fit in more closely with the participant's own viewpoint than the original story. Memory itself is subjective. We do much reassessing and rearranging and modifying of perceptual experience based on our self-genre. It explains how our stories develop over time. This generic work is directed principally by emotional genres. Wilson tells us that emotional tone is *hardwired and universal*. And thus, we ought to inject it into our work.

Finally, with regard to psychology there are plenty of connections. Philippon explains that a successful therapy results in the individual's self-process becoming "more choiceful" and fluid, capable of broad, varied, and nuanced social communication, resulting in significant changes to the assumptions which emerge from the self-genre, and thus the subsequent behaviour. Horney reminds us that we must take a holistic approach to self-development. The patient should express without reserve everything that comes to his mind, the analyst should regard every detail as potentially meaningful. The process can be performed in self-analysis, too, we must become observers of ourselves. Self-voyeurs. According to Horney, the most comprehensive formulation of therapeutic goals is the striving for wholeheartedness. In crafting literature, we should aim for complete self-expression; highly personal writing which revitalises the confessional style, to be without pretence, to be emotionally sincere, to be able to put the whole of oneself into one's feelings, one's work, one's beliefs.

Of course, this approach has significant benefits for us personally. Csikszentmihalyi explains that the flight into a world of symbols saves the writer from the unbearable reality where experience is raw and unmediated. When painful experience is put into words, the poet is relieved of some of her burden. When we write a novel, we put the conflicts which that novel deals with "on the shelf", so to speak.

Is that enough? It is so hard to conceptualise neatly.

Atticus. Yes, it seems that your thoughts frequent a whore's fencepost. But they are *good* thoughts, Cassandra. You need simply to harness your ravenous mind. Though, I must admit that I am rather inclined to enjoying your messy brain.

Cassandra. Thou would have me enrolled eternally.

Atticus. As the world demands!

Cassandra. Very good.

Atticus. But, yes, that is enough. Let's move on.

Cassandra. Yes. The next tenet is *bisociation*.

Atticus. I've lost my eggs and baskets.

Cassandra. *Bisociation*; The act of perceiving a situation or idea in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference. The bisociative act connects previously unconnected matrices or *genres* of experience. It is the act of creation. Koestler invented the term. Creation involves bisociating different genres into a *new synthesis*. The so-called *Socratic fallacy* is not a fallacy but a function!

Atticus. Hmmm.

Cassandra. Yes, because as Burr says, *agency is only possible in relation with others*. Our relationships make up our self-genres, our stories. Both the SoCo and the unique individual emerges from interaction and communication. Bisociation. Our system of shared meanings, or our SoCo, gives us access to the minds of others; we can imagine what would happen if we were to act in a certain way and can therefore consider alternative actions, which is a way of describing agency.

Atticus. Yes, but what does this thinking have to do with definition, or, more pressingly, your prosaics?

Cassandra. What doesn't it have to do with definition?! It is what we found our SoCo definition construction upon! We define ourselves in terms of our social relationships, and thus we define *things* in terms of other *things* and the relationships between them. It is a matter of co-constructing inferential frameworks for identification. Bisociation across multiple – all – levels! And, it has *everything* to do with the SoCo prosaics, too. Writing and reading are *sociative* activities. Furthermore, if we consider how we utilise definitions and how we engage with the concept of identity and with genre, we see that we are creating experimental bisociative instantiations – emergent products of creative generic synthesis – *all the time*. And so, “experimental literature” *is not a genre*. All “good” literature is experimental. Generic development demands experimentation.

Atticus. Wonderful synthesis, Cassandra.

Cassandra. But it can't just be novelty, we need a level of generic familiarity so that we can interpret.

Atticus. You cry hot and cold, Cassandra!

Cassandra. I do not. The final tenet offers a way out of the incongruency; *conveyance*. The goal of the writer is *to convey experience in the most effective way*. This conveyance always demands both social genres and also the self-genre, interacting with each other, wildly and *ad hoc*.

Atticus. We have come full circle.

Cassandra. Indeed. Many writers would have you believe that conveyance is based purely on instinct. And, well, it is. But, it's not just instinct it's experience, too. A large part of instinct is experience. We based our generic instincts on our social experience. Effective conveyance requires the choice and utilization of the genres which convey the experience in the most efficient or useful or interesting or delightful or affective way. The most effective way. Effective argumentation. Effective rhetoric. Effective social negotiation. Generic engagement effects co-construction based on a shared system of interpretive repertoires, signalled into action by cues, stock types, and such. Burr says that these interpretative repertoires, or *genres*, can be seen as a kind of culturally shared tool kit of resources for people to use for their own purposes. The functions which genres serve are facilitative, enabling, justificatory, translational, definitive, circular, identificatory, gap-filling or -making, gist-abstracting, defensive, and so on and so forth. Different genres can construct different version of events, and functions like those listed above can be achieved with different generic effect. For instance, defensive utilisations of genre can be tragic or comic. Different genres construct different stories. Shakespeare's characters regularly justify their behaviour by appealing to the social doxa implied within the plays.

Atticus. But doesn't that imply that the possible perspectives to which we have access are of limitless multiplicity?

Cassandra. Yes. But, to evoke Burr's sentiment, we ought not mourn this state of play rather we ought celebrate it! And because of our self-genres, because they are constructed and emerge from our unique social experience, we each are equipped with a unique perspective which with generic competence we can convey. We therefore convey *new* experience. The reader then experiences our new experience, or our new perspective on experience.

Atticus. But, if the idea is to convey *new* experience, why bother with genre at all?

Cassandra. We cannot communicate or interpret without it. Because we all are motivated by our desire for a sense of our social identity and social value, and these elements are determined by our social environment, we tend to strive to defend our version of events. "Voice" is determined, according to Gergen, by how skilful a person is at using the warranting conventions belonging to their particular society. Thus, if we are generically competent we can defend our position, our version, our story, our "truth" skilfully. Burr points out that an important part of warranting one's actions, of making them appear reasonable and justifiable, is having the ability to present oneself in different ways according to the demands of the moment.

Atticus. But, surely, based upon this assessment, those who are socially marginalised or *Othered* or in any way devalued within the dominant SoCo have less opportunity to tell their stories and less, if any, access to their group's traditions, is this not logical?

Cassandra. It is logical. Thus, genre is particularly relevant to such "outsiders", and these individuals are often much more conscious of genre and its operations. Therefore, generally they are more skilled when it comes to utilising genre – *they have to be*. We see Shakespeare's characters playing with genre all the time as a way of obtaining their *voice*. Genre enables us to adapt our rhetoric strategically in order to take control over our social identity and thus gain personal control.

As Beauvoir contended, the *Other* is conceived as contingent, defective, and they are forced into immanence. To communicate as *Other* demands the removal of the subjective self. In her seminal *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison indicates that the *Other* does not have access to useful constructs for conceptualising their experience nor can they rely on metaphorical shortcuts because they must struggle with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of cultural hegemony and their own status as *Other*. The dominant perspective has so many constructs that it is blissfully ignorant to its reliance on them.

The literary canon performs in ways which communicate and regulate responses to *Others* who threaten its stable, dominant identity. By doing so, it achieves the exclusion of stories told by and about *Others* and thus diminishes the capacity to comprehend *Others* as capable storytellers, in fact. “I was not expected to be talented” said Karen Finley

I was not expected to be talented.
And when I see you
after you beat me
after you degrade me
And you stand on top of me
in some god-awful museum
you say to me.

She says.

There are no great women artists!
There are no great women artists!
There are no great women artists!
We are always the exception.
I was not expected to be talented.

She says. Dominance renders all *Others* passive. The dominant perspective hates to have the *Other* write a word.

But, inadequate, incoherent, and problematic representations of *Others* emerge not simply because different types of experience are *absent* from the stories of the SoCo – they are decidedly *present* – but instead because those representations are constructed from the dominant perspective and thus they are not only distorted and inaccurate, but they perpetuate the *devaluation* of those types. For instance, Cohn says about military discourse that “the problem is not that the ‘female’ position is totally absent from the discourse; parts of it, at least, albeit in a degraded and undeveloped form, are already present, named, delegitimated, and silenced, all in one fell swoop” and she proposes, quite brilliantly, that “the inclusion and delegitimation of ideas marked as ‘feminine’ acts as a more powerful censor than the total absence of ‘feminine’ ideas would be”. What she makes clear is one of the points which has been drilled throughout the thesis: *control requires genre and generic engagement*.

Others understand the stories of *Others* because they know that *it could have been them*. It is for this same reason that the dominant, white, male, able, rich, and otherwise prioritised perspective will never care about the stories of *Others*, will never understand them or their value, because they will never know that feeling; *it could never have happened to them*. Until the dominant perspective is modified entirely – through our social institutions –

the SoCo will never incorporate the stories of *Others* as valuable to our understanding of the world. Do we wonder why writers like Hemmingway or Nabokov or Miller or Mailer or Bukowski or Roth are famed? They represent the *male* perspective, unequivocally. They justify the male perspective – if it is said in a great work of literature then it must be acceptable. Their work is awfully *manly*. Hemmingway is a caricature of manly manliness. Needless to say, I am extremely fond of their writing, and even their misogyny. It is very funny. We can take a joke. But, the problem is not that we disagree with their perspective, the problem is that all *Other* perspectives are silenced, devalued, misrepresented, barred from the canon – until very recently. The good work must continue.

To paraphrase Beauvoir, the representation of the world as the world itself is the work of the dominant perspective; they describe it from a point of view that is their own and that they confound with the absolute truth. Thus, the canon is based not so much on lies but ignorance; a tragic perspective. The dominant perspective has asserted its view most loudly because it was the most insecure, the most fearful, as far as I can figure out. The emergent interpretations, values, beliefs, and actions are shaped, constructed, by that perspective. But, the whole endeavour *screams* generic incompetence. As Beauvoir makes clear, the point of literature is to overcome separation, not to conserve it.

However, Morrison points out that resistance to displacement within or expansion of a canon is not surprising or unwarranted. That's what canonization is for, she says. She explains that there is no question of whether or not the canon should exist because it is necessary for the critical community. I might add that the canon emerges naturally whether we want it or not or whether the critical community wants it or not. The canon operates not purely to satisfy scholars and critics. The fact that the dominant perspective shapes the canon is no more surprising than its existence or maintenance. But genre can change; it can monitor change, that is its function. It just takes creativity, or as Morrison suggests, at the very least a "sharp alertness as to why a work is or is not worthy of study" and she remarks that such an investigation "is the legitimate occupation of the critic, the pedagogue, and the artist".

For the *Othered* writer, genre constitutes a great ally and tool. Morrison explained that the kind of work that she wanted to do required her "to learn how to manoeuvre ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister, frequently lazy, almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains"; in other words, genres as formulated by the dominant perspective. *Others* must take genre into their own hands. Joyce A. Joyce explains that the *Othered* writer has to struggle continuously to assert their real self and to establish a connection between the self and the people outside of that self. That language is an essential medium for the evolution of pride in being *Other* and the dissolution of the double consciousness. While denouncing some of his other commentary, quite rightfully, she cites Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s proposition that social and polemical functions of *Othered* literature have overwhelmingly superseded or "repressed" the structure of *Othered* literature. Of course, as Angelou penned so effortlessly, the caged bird sings of freedom.

The *Other* must *utilise* the existing stereotypes and traditions and experiment with what works for them, just as Shakespeare's characters seem to do. Robert Kimbrough explains that on a social level, when a woman such as Juliet laments that she wished that she had the prerogative of a man and could speak out in matters of love, she is trying to break out of the frustrating confines of what society has circumscribed and described as appropriate behaviour for a woman or for a man. By achieving the courage and generic competence required to reinterpret genres and then communicate those interpretations, we can mount

solid foundations for our unique stories while retaining the generic trace; the relatable cues required for successful communication. Eddo-Lodge remarks that setting boundaries instilled in her a “renewed permission to speak”. Generic competence enables us to achieve autonomy and then communicate that autonomy.

Genre can assist *Others* in their investigations of their generic histories, too. Alice Walker, in her “In Search of Our Mothers Garden’s” proclaims that “our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, ... Only recently did I fully realise ... that through years of listening to my mother’s stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories – like her life – must be recorded”. And thus, in these times where the dominant perspective seems to be expanding through concerted action towards change, we can use the mechanism of genre, of social memory, in order to tell the stories that our ancestors were unable to. We retain this oral storytelling, this passing on of genre, of experience, and so *Others* can begin now to draw attention to the history and the present of their lived experience, from their own perspective, and shed light on areas of generic experience which have been censored from the canon. Indeed, as Walker informs us, at different times in history, *Others* have been denied basic literacy under penalty of the law, and thus “certainly could not hope to struggle through a novel”. In her chilling little book, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman implies that we might succeed in recovering lost or forgotten or erased genres and their stories from personal journals in particular, where the inexpressible is expressed. In time, the canon itself will be transformed.

Times have changed considerably enough for us to go in full force. It’s a working progress. It will emerge over time. In fifty years, the canon will look wildly different as it accrues diversity, much as it did in the previous fifty years. It changes all the time. “*It’s getting better all the time*” ... perhaps. Genre does not progress in a straight line. Some things will get better, others may get worse. It all depends on perspective, too, of course. Those rich white men may have to get quite uncomfortable indeed. It wouldn’t be a bad thing, from *my* perspective. As we know, things are no simply good or bad. Unfortunately, the past cannot be changed but the efforts which have been made recently to broaden the scope of the canon and the dominant perspective in its totality are admirable and should continue, no matter how flawed academia or the publishing industry remains. The task is to decentralise the historically limited perspective of the SoCo. Decentering; a topic on which Derrida served some actual use. *Recentering* is more apropos.

Of course, *Others* can tell their stories but if their voices are not amplified by cultural institutions then they will go unheard and, again, the *Other* cannot turn to any canon which remembers, represents, communicates, and praises their experience, unlike the dominant perspective which is perpetuated by the traditional canon. We are slowly recovering and expanding and more inclusive canon. The good work must continue and its effects will emerge over time. There has been in a surge of interest from the publishing industry in diverse voices, of late. Let’s hope it continues. Action must be sustained, integrated into standard practice. The book covers are looking considerably white and male again after a brief excursion into the black experience, the female experience, and other *othered* experiences.

For a long time, I internalised the patriarchy’s misogyny. Perhaps this is why I enjoy the misogynist writers. I’m coming to see that it was not my fault. All of these great writers

were men because women, any *Other*, had no way of accessing such a circumstance. We are lied to. We have to look out from beneath what they put in front of us, what they say is genre, or the *best* genre. Genres are different, not better or worse; it is us humans who imbue them with value, who interpret them according to a hierarchy of value. We have to make up our own minds, make our own choices, and consider all the options – not just the ones that *they* say are possible or available or right. There would never be anything new invented if creative individuals didn't do such questioning of the status quo; the SoCo.

I am aware that my interest in Shakespeare may seem somewhat hypocritical in terms of mounting a thesis which prioritises *recentering*. However, I don't think that we ought to deny his talent in order to redefine the canon, especially when he paid so much attention to subverting traditional stereotypes about *Others*. Of course, we need not pretend that Shakespeare emerged quite separately from the social structures of his time, and thus it is granted that his representations are limited by today's standards. But, we need not focus on forcing direct links between his and our conceptualisations of social types. Instead, if we focus on what he does with types, his response to dealing with stereotypes, convention, doxa, and all of that which the SoCo maintains is absolute, it becomes clear that at the heart of his achievement is a constant questioning of types, a propensity to recenter or destabilise, a desire to capture human issues from different perspectives and illuminate their interactions, and a penchant for asking "what if?" It is not what he did but the *way* that he did it by which we ought to be inspired. His sustained interrogation of what we take for granted makes clear that his position in the canon should remain undisturbed. "I, at least, do not intend to live without ... William Shakespeare" Morrison agrees. And ultimately, when we investigate his characters and plays, and we investigate current social doxa, comparing the two, we find that we inflate our advances in social conceptualisation by a large sum.

The risk which we take when questioning social doxa or experimenting with genre is that *we will not be understood*. Contrary to its seeming arbitrariness, such a result can lead at the very least to misinterpretation, underrepresentation, erasure, or censorship and at worst can have fatal consequences. It's the same social risk, the risk that we take in communication, the risk which emerges from our development of a social consciousness and subsequently a varied spectrum of individuals consciousnesses. The risk emerges from trying to communicate your unique self-genre to the social world. Self-genres which align with the dominant perspective will incur lower risk than *Others*. The social risk can be misinterpreted or interpreted tragically. We all need to be generically competent so that we can control our performances to our advantage and so that we can interpret others (which is what enables us essentially to construct our performance). Cohn suggests that what is required to change generic gender discourse is "the commitment and ability to develop, explore, rethink, and revalue those ways of thinking that get silenced and devalued that would make a difference. For that to happen, men... have to be central participants". And thus, it is not just *Others* who must be generically competent as they are likely to be as a result of their experience. The dominant perspective needs to get involved. The more *Othered* stories which reach them the better. They need to know what it feels like, they need to wonder, "*what if it was me?*"

Atticus. It's as though everything that passes through your mind turns to gold. Although, how are we supposed to choose which genres suit best our conveyance?

Cassandra. The goal of our conveyance should direct and justify our generic choices. Essentially, we do what has been effectively done before, in *our own way*. We must *warrant* voice; justify voice and control it through generic competence, while interpreting it through

our own unique perspective. Generic investigation and skill can help us claim our voice and power. I think that I am good at voice. I have been told. If we are successful in our generic endeavours we can construct strong and flexible identities for ourselves and achieve our desired social effects. It's all a game – be a good player. We need to be able to use genre to demonstrate the complexity of our beliefs, generate co-construction, validate the reader, and reduce the distance of the writer's perspective.

Our generic strategies are thus highly important and incredibly useful for conveying our unique perspective. Our success depends on our ability to manipulate discourse and use it for our own ends. It is why Shakespeare epitomises SoCo theory and why even characters which we might not like, such as Iago, are skilled rhetoricians. The skill of generic manipulation can be utilised comically – like, say, Rosalind – or tragically. Gergen denounces individualism but I don't see how he can. As I have tried to convey, the *interaction* of the social *and* the individual is what is required for generic development; for creativity. And we can only communicate our subjectivity by utilising genre. So, in essence, genre is what facilitates our personal agency.

As writers we can capitalise on the social construction of identity. When we develop our generic competence, we give ourselves more choice. We can then choose how we want to convey ourselves – we shape our identity in communicating it. We change our story as we tell it. And in the same way a writer should choose their genre based on how they want their work to be interpreted/understood. The more generically competent the writer becomes, the more effective will be their creative output. All legendary creatives have *utilised genre in order to develop it in a new way*. Think about Elvis. He brought together white country with black blues and gospel. He mixed genres. His music was the emergent product of *bisociation*. Warren Zane said it quite aptly, that Elvis could pull in a wide range of genres but they all would come out “Elvis”. He was utilising genre – convention, tradition, formulas, tropes, techniques, and so on – in order to convey the self-genre. The music which emerged from his unique engagement with genre – and not just the music but the entire Elvis experience – was completely new, not because its constituent parts were new, but because they were filtered through his unique perspective and experience. That's what creation and co-construction and consciousness is all about. As Koestler says: Identification followed by vicarious experience. We need to be able to identify or to enable readers to identify which requires genre, but we can then do whatever we want with it. SoCo celebrates the alternative perspective, and intuitive generic strategies. The relativism of significance.

Atticus. I cannot conjure a soul who would doubt your logic. And that was your final tenet? So, what else should your prosaics include?

Cassandra. I suppose that I have to speak about stylistics.

Atticus. Surely.

Cassandra. First, I would like to address a hotly debated generic distinction.

Atticus. Oh?

Cassandra. Yes. The creative/critical distinction. The creative/critical debate. I call it c/c. It is an arena in which willingly I have expended much thought.

Atticus. Excellent. And have you reached a conclusion?

Cassandra. Of course not. I was not deluded about such a goal. I have made a gesture *towards* a conclusion. Part of the issue has been obtaining academic texts. Why are academic books so expensive? It is almost as though academia is this elitist ivory tower which warrants only exclusive access. I bought one recently. God it's big. It is the biggest book to have ever existed. The book is 1400 pages, normal size font. It doesn't even fit on my lap.

Atticus. A serious tome. How much? I might buy it simply to look at it.

Cassandra. It cost me the hair on my head. I cannot pick it up with one hand. I could probably kill someone with it. I need some *things*, too. Where can I filch some *things* from?

Atticus. For work or home?

Cassandra. Work.

Atticus. You might ask Herm if he can find you some *things*.

Cassandra. I was going to ask Dolly and have a look around. It's harder now that the term has started.

Atticus. Yes, but *the labourers* actually keep mounds of *stuff* about the campus which simply sits there unused. Eventually, they bin it. Still, they're the most generically competent of the lot.

Cassandra. So frustrating. I dread to think of the amount of *stuff* wasted in the old buildings — including my previous scholarship no doubt.

Atticus. Well, at least one viper is no longer in our midst.

Cassandra. Yes. She could burst a donkey.

Atticus. She'll probably be moved to a six-figure salary now.

Cassandra. Head like a rock.

Atticus. Be careful, the walls have ears. Anyway, what is your gesture?

Cassandra. Critical writing is pigeonholed. Boring academics ask boring questions and so critical writing is boring. We need to ask more creative questions and our writing will follow suit. In fact, Wilde solved the problem eons ago and yet we still rattle it about. The confusion emerges in part because of our conceptual decisions in terms of generic definitions but also because we tend to define things in terms of what they are not, because we evolved precisely to act as what we are not.

Atticus. For instance? ...

Cassandra. I suppose that we must have had to pretend that we were strong when in fact we were weak, we had to perform socially to win mates and entertain and so on. We had to tell

stories in order to remember. Our survival, physical and later conceptual, depended on pretending as if. And now, we talk about *c/c*, and fiction and non-fiction, social and individual. It's not a straight trade-off. These genres are inseparable. They are spectrums, rather than binaries, perhaps. They are technically two sides of the same coin, the same argument. All good creative work is critical, and all good criticism is also creative. Fiction and nonfiction are basically the same thing. There seems to be a strange corroboration throughout the "creative non-fiction" world that the genre constitutes its own field and regulations separate from other genres of writing. It doesn't, of course. The attempts in this area to justify such an assessment read as forced and generate in the activity of reading a distinct aesthetic, logical, and empirical unpleasantness. All writing achieves the same; conveyance. We choose which genre best supports our mission. I feel like the obsession with this one genre holds them back from understanding the true power of writing and the real connections between literature and science, the brain, and life. It's like valuing a *social* genre above all others; ridiculous, offensive, hugely limiting, and often even dangerous. Genre's function is to be useful in a given context. Our need for and use of different genres should fluctuate depending on the experience that we wish to convey.

So, what should matter is which genres *do* influence the work and how the writer utilises the genres to generate a creative product which is both familiar and yet starkly subjective, personal, and reflective of the individual's unique engagement with its generic influences. In research funding bids we are asked almost constantly the question "how does this research advance the field?" or "how does this research develop the field?". With any creative product, we should be asking basically the same question. How does this work develop the genres with which it engages? It's not about fiction or non-fiction – *c/c*, really.

Wilde dealt with the issue in *The Critic as Artist*. Yet, it seems that our institution missed the reading, judging by its still rigid *disciplines* and *fields*. Through his dialogue he conveys that the antithesis between the critical and creative faculties is entirely arbitrary – that without the critical faculty, there can be no artistic creation at all. He *conveys*, through the character of Ernest, ingeniously, that we ought to stop repeating the same old nonsense about literature and life but that when one is naïve about genre they are doomed to do so. Writers do not create *unconsciously*, or outside of genre. All fine imaginative work is self-conscious and deliberate, says Wilde. Self-consciousness infers, in turn, the critical spirit. Criticism is itself an art, Wilde says, and in fact one which demands infinitely more cultivation than "creation" does. My case has reflected the proposition, for sure. "Just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to exist at all, so Criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word". Ha! He even says "Who cares if views are sound or not? What does it matter?" And most importantly he explains that criticism of the highest kind... treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation.

More recently, Rosmarin has treated the subject. "Theory and practice are not ideally separate but pragmatically joined" she says. To paraphrase Michael McCanles who Rosmarin quotes, a text cannot interpret without itself requiring interpretation. Furthermore, she defends the constitutive power of genre as instrumental to critical thought. Rosmarin explains that even the denied genre has tremendous and finally ineradicable constitutive power and that even the most "realistic" art remains wedded to types. She believes that it is only once we recognise and define genre as *pragmatic* as opposed to natural, as defined rather than found, and as used rather than described, then there are precisely as many genres as we need, genres whose conceptual shape is precisely determined by that need. They are designed to

serve the explanatory purpose of critical thought, not the other way around. While I agree with Rosmarin's assessment of genre's function in critical interpretation, I differ in a sense in my belief that genre sort of imitates the evolutionary process. Her premise is correct but I think that I should add the disclaimer.

In agreement with Rosmarin, genre is the most powerful explanatory tool available to the literary critic. Genre is the framework which enables inference and thus critical thought...*Function* is paramount to genre. Function is paramount to both theory and also practice, too. The questions which we must ask regard function. For instance, "What do I want to *do* and how can I *do it best*?" *How* is where genre comes in. Heck, it comes in at *what*. We must choose or if pushed invent a genre but it is likely that we are simply mixing existing genres. Our new synthesis will achieve a new thing, of course. Once we are generically competent, the most useful genres for our purposes should spring to mind with ease and much will they ease our mission. We demonstrate a true commitment to our purpose or function when we commit to the genres most suitable for our endeavour. It is what enriches our endeavour with authenticity and identity, by matching form with function. We know implicitly social formal functions because we learn them from the moment of conception. With literature it might be a little harder but it is worth the effort. Which is not to imply, I should add, that it is a waste of time to question our implicit social conventions. Genre facilitates the comprehension and consistency and complexity which major literature engenders. Genre enables the presence of difference in similarity. When I invoke the major/minor distinction I do not mean to invoke Deleuze. Minor literature is regarded here as literature which does not achieve comprehension, consistency, or complexity. It may achieve one of these effects. But, not all. Minor literature manages only meaningless difference or formulaic similarity, never a meaningful difference in similarity. Minor literature amounts neither to new thing nor generic competence. This formulation of the distinction stands, of course, only if the SoCo represents an integrated perspective which, historically, it has not and, presently, it does not, still.

Criticism can be defined as reading or interpreting. Of course, we use genre to achieve this skill. Creative and critical are the same - both co-constructed, both infer and require interpretation. Anything that is created requires interpretation (genre). Criticism falls under this remit. All good writing should be both creative and critical. I think that we need both criticism and aestheticism as well as "real" emotion. Creative writers who lack theory reveal themselves willingly as fools.

Atticus. Yes, these types cry "wolf" to themselves.

Cassandra. Genres enables us to "set up" interpretation. Shakespeare's criticism – both social and rhetorical – was built into his plays – it directs the generic engagement of his plays. Critical is embodied within the creative. Shakespeare left us no "criticism" proper but his critical thought informs his generic decisions. His criticism is conveyed through his creations. And it is reflected thus in neuroscience and psychology. For instance, Cozolino confirms that the continual involvement of both cognitive and emotional processing during treatment seems essential for positive change. It is like c/c. We set up interpretation all the time. We infer based on generic cues. The simultaneous activation of cognition and emotion leads to neural integration. Integration is what we are looking for! Or we should be. Wilde says that the one characteristic of a genre is that one can put into it whatever one wishes, and see in it whatever one chooses to see. Literature is so powerful because it's not limited to just the text. Involves all sort of inference and "subtext" – that which is not said. That which is not.

Atticus. But, what about *Truth*?

Cassandra. Exactly, *what's truth got to do with it?* It's about interpretation which in turn is about perspective; *genre*.

Atticus. Your *phronesis*, Cassandra! Your *lysis*!

Cassandra. As Koestler explains, the distinction between fact and fiction is a late acquisition of rational thought – unknown to the unconscious, and largely ignored by the emotions. Truth or not-truth has nothing to do with genre. I don't know why we created these stupid categories. We're paranoid creatures. But, I suppose that it is for good reason because we know that we are all performing and that our performances are often far-removed from what our "actual" emotions might stipulate should they have complete run of things. Wilde states that the one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it, and to do so we must utilise genre. There is no truth only perspectives. And perspectives are shaped by genre. The same "event" can be constructed differently, different versions. No truth. Give your version. Alternative construction. Experience is constructed, in myriad, infinite, *ways*, dependent on the individual's unique social experience. The individual emerges as a unique instantiation of "their" generic relationships.

According to the great Bartlett, memory is a process of *construction* not mere reproduction. We construct based on genre. Most pertinently, he explains that condensation, elaboration, and invention are common features of memory, and all involve generic "mingling" – like Todorov on *mingling* genres. Subjectivity is integral to writing. Yet, so is rationalisation. C/c. Everything is made up so what's the difference? Furthermore, we depend upon *forgetting* as much as we do remembering. Truth turns out to be, most often, what is *remembered*. What we choose to forget is defined as not-truth, then. We do this most unappealingly in terms of rewriting social history and denying different persons' experience.

People are obsessed with the idea of truth. We love *true stories*. I must admit, *I love them*. But there is an interesting loophole. It seems that if we own up to being unsure, uncertain, forgetful, or unreliable in some other way, that we can "get away" with telling that which is not necessarily "truthful." Through unclear memories or through their author's unpacking and analysis of them we get an almost clearer idea of what is going on in their heads, how they think, and surely that is the aim with memoir or autobiography, or even creative nonfiction as a whole. To get a sense of the author and how they think. Their "telling" -- their structure – is what gives us this sense. Their musings on their musings. We find a piece of writing, and its author, more believable when they admit to the possibility that they might not be telling the exact truth. This wonderful tension evokes beautifully the tensions that exist within genre, and within our minds. So, the answer then is not death, but an understanding that these tensions will always exist and that they in fact need to exist and are beneficial to our sense of understanding. We can accept the work for what it is. It is what it is! It's how it works!

Atticus. Right, okay, okay, Cassandra. Compose yourself. You tend to lose your academic or should I say *critical* rigour when you become enthused.

Cassandra. It seems that you've gotten the wrong end of the stick.

Atticus. No, I have not. Your manifesto is logical and promising, if unfinished. Now, we have dealt with your “c/c”. Will you finally tell me about your stylistics? About practice? *Actual* practice?

Cassandra. Yes.

Atticus. Well? Come on, Cassandra. Call a fig a fig, and a trough a trough!

Cassandra. I don’t know where to start. I am not qualified to suggest to people how they should write or how they should read or create or whatever. It’s hard to feel qualified to speak about what one should and should not do with literature.

Atticus. Well, suck it up! You don’t need to straddle the reed, Cassandra. How is your novel going? Perhaps we can utilise it as a way of revealing your stylistics?

Cassandra. What do you think of Lodovico?

Atticus. I confess that I have not given him much care, though he does offer an important perspective on the action and on Othello after the 4th act. Shakespeare often has these sane, sensible, and principled characters who have fairly limited roles but are nonetheless important to how we are meant to think about the developing action. Kent is another one.

Cassandra. I feel like I like him for some reason. He seems *good*.

Atticus. He's apparently Brabantio's brother, but he doesn't really follow Brabantio’s views on Othello. There's probably some point in that part of the representation.

Cassandra. He seems to be of the “new” age. He sees Othello’s madness and Desdemona’s innocence. And, he sees Iago as a hound from hell.

Atticus. Yes, so it's as if Shakespeare is encouraging the audience to try to understand the action without being hindered by doxa.

Cassandra. It’s interesting because, when he first arrives, he walks in at the same time – ish – as Desdemona and he is perturbed by the way Othello is treating her. Obviously, this is way before he kills her. So, his “new” perspective is one which respects women.

Atticus. Perhaps, and it shocks him that Othello seems to be behaving in a way so out of his known character.

Cassandra. Yes, and at the end Othello wants it to be known that the actions he has ended up taking are unusual to his natural character

Atticus. Maybe S is trying to argue that misogyny is a culturally learned behaviour and can be unlearned?

Cassandra. Yes, that patriarchy is sold as *natural* but is anything else. Still now we think of religious folk as naturally and unquestionably “good” and “honest”, just like Iago. But really the narratives which they preach lead to tragedy.

Atticus. So, racism is also learned. Yes, the tragedy is not fate or the gods but because of the implicit logic of the ideologies.

Cassandra. Yes. But, Shakespeare suggests through his naming of Desdemona and Othello that all women and racial outsiders are ill-fated in the world *as is*.

Atticus. As long as the system remains, tragedy is the outcome.

Cassandra. And so perhaps that's why Iago seems motiveless - because he is such a product of monstrous SoCo.

Atticus. And perhaps why so few want to see his motives -- because how he acts is what lies at the base of male ideology?

Cassandra. That's right. Everyone wants to say that he is motiveless because they cannot accept that people behave like this. In reality, people behave like this *all the time*. All you have to do is wander down to the nearest pub and speak out of turn to a lager lout and he will call you a slut just as Iago would. People don't want to accept that it is "enough" or sufficient to make him "do" such evil. When we think about it, he doesn't actually *do* a whole lot – perhaps more towards the end when he is losing a grip on all of the puppets that he has accrued – he simply *says*.

Cassandra. He knows the discourse and how to trigger the emotions, and of course he cannot actually control his own emotions.

Cassandra. Why has no one said any of this before? It's crazy. It's been five hundred years.

Atticus. It's probably too frightening to admit.

Cassandra. It doesn't make any sense. When actually...it makes so much sense. Men are pitiful creatures, aren't they?

Atticus. Yes, and we can see how S represents the whole drama of it all, showing us why any progress towards understanding must overcome a mountain of ugly doxas.

Cassandra. It must overcome an ugly mountain of self-assessment.

Atticus. I cannot disagree, of course.

Cassandra. And assessment of what we allow to go on in our wonderful world. I always found it funny that Michael Jackson wrote that song "Man in the Mirror".

Atticus. Exactly. It's a moral scandal.

Cassandra. Well it makes people face something which means that they have to put work in to change. Especially when Iagos are happy to stay the way they are. Most people are happy to be ignorant

Atticus. Yes, and it has intensified, not become less in this century.

Cassandra. It's interesting that Desdemona speaks of herself as ignorant when she is the purest one of them all. Those who are willing to change are the ones who don't need to.

Atticus. We all need to change to some degree.

Cassandra. Maybe that's why you called me Desdemona. I think that I need to change and probably don't need to that much.

Atticus. Maybe it is why I called you Desdemona. No, I guess that you don't need to change much.

Cassandra. Why do you think that I am Desdemona? I've put a lot of work into changing anyway, so I guess at least I try.

Atticus. You do have a certain purity of heart.

Cassandra. I was surprised when I asked that you chose Desdemona. I thought that you would say Cordelia.

Atticus. I have always liked Desdemona as a character.

Cassandra. I like her, too. I would not complain about being Desdemona of all the characters to choose from. At least you didn't say Goneril or Regan!

Atticus. You're never either of them.

Cassandra. They're fun though, hah!

Atticus. Okay, Cassandra, enough now. Your novel? The stylistics? Spill the beans!

Cassandra. The questions which we must ask when we set out to create any kind of text - critical or creative - are about genre, of course. What genres inform the construction of your new world? Of your text? Your characters - what type are they? What types inform them? Characters may be fictional but the same questions must be asked for non-fictional characters, too. Structure? My preliminary thoughts on the *prosaics* emerged as follows: *how is a prosaics written? What is expected from a sort of manifesto-stylistics-prosaics type text?* We need to think about the generic tradition but then also consider the ways in which we want to veer from it.

These questions identify the generic influence of a creative product, from which its richness emerges. What informs the construction? Genre is key in the creation and interpretation of a literary work, just as it is key in the social performance of these activities. Interaction with genre and utilisation of genre is unconscious, immediately emergent, multifaceted, and expansive. We take little bits from everywhere dependent on our social experience. The mapping process is nuanced and diversified, creating odd personal combinations. We should be presenting them. Consciously interrogate your generic perspective and its diverse and highly personally-moulded generic influences! We must identify the work's associative context - conceptual history - genre. As well as its function. Conceptual patterns - conceptual sequences. Conceptual genre bits. Chains of association.

Generic chains – personal engagement with social genre. Once we realise the interpretive potential which genre makes possible, genre does not seem oppressive at all.

One might ask how do we *know* which genre will most effectively fit our purpose? The answer is simple. We *just know*. That's how genre works. Certain modern writers may be obsessed with taking the less-trodden path but the truth is that, actually, if we take the time to ask ourselves these questions about genre, if we identify our goal or the experience which we wish to convey, the appropriate genre will usually occur to us. And this magical skill seems to emerge from our tendency to categorise based on *function*. As I have said before, basically, *function is genre's function*. Perhaps an example might help. B. S. Johnson is best known for his formally *experimental* work *The Unfortunates*. It is all anyone ever talks about, in fact, his use of form in this work. But, once we pay attention to genre and what Johnson is trying to convey in the content of this work, his generic decision to present an unbound, fragmented, and disordered work *makes much more sense*. Johnson wanted to convey memory which is itself unbound, fragmented, and disordered, and thus his form emerged as the appropriate choice. People are overly-distracted by his formal choice and so they miss the point of them which is to facilitate his conveyance of memory. Actually, Johnson simply made a generic choice which best facilitated his goal. That's how genre works, it enables us to convey. Our function, then, "selects" our genre. Using a genre which appropriately conveys your "message" does not mean that one has to deal with that genre in a conventional or stale way. Such assumptions emerge from limited conceptualisations of genre.

Atticus. You speak about structure, Cassandra, but it seems that your expression reflects its absence.

Cassandra. I know, I know. It's all so complicated. Okay, let's think back to the tenets, and we can see how they might reflect in practice. *Freedom and constraint, Self-genre / unique perspective, Bisociation, Conveyance*.

Atticus. Yes, I remember.

Cassandra. Based on the tenets, we can make the several practical inferences.

We need an approach which accounts for both convention and subversion, social and individual, sameness and difference. Genre offers an explanation but the self-genre is required to complete the formula. Self needs to be addressed – it can't be one or other. Some critical theories diminish the self while others diminish the social. Both must be utilised – the resulting instantiation will diminish certain features and emphasise others. Our self-genre is at once what we *add* to social codes and what makes us unique and yet it is generated *by* those social codes. When we create we offer our unique perspective on general concepts.

SoCo promotes an approach which attempts to convey a particular *type* of social consciousness, of social experience and utilises that type to inform generic choices. In my previous tome, *Bernard and Pat*, I tried to convey the child's SoCo, through the lens of the adult who still has the child within them, the experience. How things have affected them over time. Their genre.

Now, because of the unique perspective of the individual, significance is relative to the individual. Greenfield explains that whenever we place an object into a conceptual framework of other connected facts, events and objects, we can appreciate its significance:

we are able to convert information into knowledge. We have to engage with things which are generically significant but then imbue them with our own self- or personal- or unique significance, the result and more-than-sum of your engagement with the SoCo. How little things are significant to us which would be insignificant to others. So, we need to engage with concepts that everybody can relate to, while giving our completely subjective and unique observational and experiential perspective. Our *version*.

It's interesting, then, that you mark my lack of structure. Firstly, Social Constructionism paints a picture of the person as multiple, fragmented and incoherent. We have a multiplicity of different selves, each called forth or conjured by our immersion in discourse and in the processes of social interaction. But our subjective experience is often the opposite; we still feel that there is coherence to the person we are, that it bears themes both historically and across the different areas of our lives that give us this sense of self. So, we actually "make-up" the structure but it then plays a crucial role in our lives. Now, SoCo recognises that many psychological disorders entail a fragmented or disorganised self and so lacking structure infers a particular *type* of experience which may be traumatic or incoherent. If my creative instantiations seem to lack structure it is because they are informed by a lack of sense of self. But, the lack of structure lends me alternative skills such as disparate synthesis, the "outsider" perspective, and a deep curiosity. And, over time, I am constructing my secure base. I certainly set out in *Bernard and Pat* to create a sense of the fragmented self. Though, I must admit that I do not intend to be structureless in my criticism but it seems to be just the way that my mind works – it's not structurelessness, it's synthesis!

But even so, we have learned that our minds fabricate the "completeness" of our self-genre and perspective. Rosmarin suggests that incompleteness is a condition of visual representation, not a consequence of its failure. I would extend this observation to include all creative products to varying degrees dependent on function, paying particular attention to the idea of incompleteness as a condition of literature rather than a marker of failure. All work is then "unfinished", "towards", full of "gaps". And thus, we needn't fret over trivial matters such as pristine continuity or plot, or whatever. Visual description. Genre's magic renders such elements at best pompous, on average surplus, and at worst an actual deterrent to the imaginative co-construction which must take place for the experience of the text to be conveyed. If you tell the reader exactly what some character looks like, for instance, you disbar the reader from the creative work which they are usually happier to do themselves. We all know the common example of going to watch a book-to-screen movie and the horror of seeing your most beloved character look totally "wrong" or "different from you had imagined" or "different from in your head". Why disappoint the reader in areas where you are amicably excused from attending? There are countless other ways in which you can and likely will disappoint them.

Atticus. Ha!

Cassandra. And so, there are various ways in which we can reflect such understandings through our writing. *Irony* is an important tool, I think. Because the SoCo and social interaction generate a pervasive irony. The irony inherent in the reading process, that a reader can never construct exactly the writer's experience or feelings or intentions, or whatever. The irony inherent in our incapacity to experience another's experience of life, of consciousness, their subjective experience. Wilde is known for his constant ironic awareness of the arbitrary nature of social conventions and his ironic-handling of his own self-genre. Irony is so effective because it is so pervasive in our lives. Almost every situation is ironic. We all

“know” different information from each other because of our perspective. Life is highly ironic. The irony is that we all manage to utilise this shared SoCo despite the fact that we all have different experience. It’s amazing. Yet also absurd and ripe for exploitation. It’s hard for people to recognise the ironic absurdity because otherwise our lives would lose all mean. It’s meant to be this way.

What irony enabled Wilde to achieve and what SoCo advocates are creative instantiations of genre which attempt to *aestheticise* life. Terry Eagleton explains that for Wilde the most important goal for a writer is the supreme freedom of self-expression. But part of achieving this goal involves engaging with social genres and our unique perspective, which constitutes a generic type the basic distinction of which is comic/tragic but usually it is more specific, such as Wilde’s kind of satirical comedies. Remember though that Wilde’s works are precisely *Wildean* instantiations. Like Elvis. Through the self-genre. We aestheticise life by utilising rhetorical techniques. Our phrasing or our metaphorical conceptualisation can enable us to tell what we want to tell in the *best* way. Our self-genre provides us with a unique repertoire of experience to draw on. The representation of self will be aestheticised during the process, creating a sort of dual character for the writer as writer and also as character. We can then use our writing as a method of generic development or development of our dramatic personae. This duality is found in all the best artists and seems worthy of being considered a necessary element of writing.

We bisociate all the time. For instance, *metaphor* is so pervasive in our lives and literature that we are constantly bisociating anyway. But we are better equipped to create *novel* combinations when we are generically competent. Experimentation involves trying out new combinations of genre. The process occurs naturally in the process of trait inheritance, in which diverse units freely recombine to produce an incredible variety of possible variants. Furthermore, variants do not represent straightforward recombinations but sometimes totally new units. Simonton suggests that these “mutations” can provide a powerful resource for evolution on those rare occasions when the new trait is highly adaptive. More often, they do not survive. This state of affairs helps to explain why tragedy is the more common form, and furthermore explains the struggle which any writer faces if he hopes to develop the genres with which he works. We must take the social and professional risk of experimentation but we do so at the potential cost of failure, social denigration, identity crisis, and so on. Of course, we predict these costs and perceive these costs, they do not “exist” but they remain crucial barriers to creative risk-taking and experimentation. The thing is, when we experiment, we have already succeeded. The goal of seeing things differently, of adopting a particular generic lens, of combining genres, of changing them is what matters. It’s worth the risk. And we are better prepared for risk when we are generically competent. We’re doing, or we’re trying to do. It’s all good fodder. And our choices about what to do are best informed by lots of generic information. Think of it as, if you will, instead of jumping out into the abyss, you are jumping out into the abyss with a map, a compass, or a torch.

By the term experimental, we should be inferring an aim for some kind of positive results for enhancing our experience and not instead a categorisation of a work as unreadable. We should experiment according to the proposed function of our creative endeavour. In order to best convey experience. Not just for the sake of it. Some conventions clearly work very well. Our mode of thought and conceptualisation is *naturally abstract*. We are naturally experimental. Often attempts to force experimental technique is interpreted as precisely that; a forced exercise. As Damasio tells us, our brain is perfectly capable of and recognised for its highly abstract mapping of itself making maps. Our brains – and genre – can do the work for

us. We need to imbue our work with our natural experimental treatment of genre. Our nuanced interpretation – it is what makes us human. Of course, formal experimentation is not condemned and in some cases is extremely relevant and appropriate. Once again, the function of your conveyance will reveal the clear generic path. The brain’s own processes certainly encourage one technique in particular: what we call “meta” writing. Self-awareness and self-reflectiveness, play-within-a-play, and so on. Very fitting with irony. Really, it should be expected that creative products have multiple generic codes operating at once – far from damning those that do as artless! Furthermore, as Simonton points out, the bisociative patterns found in any domain of creative activity are tri-valent: that is to say, the same pair of matrices can produce comic, tragic, or intellectually challenging effects. *Simply choosing a genre to play with is experimental.*

Koestler reminds us that when the styles and techniques of an art have become conventionalised and stagnant, the audience is exempted from the necessity to exert its intelligence and imagination – and deprived of its reward. The *conventional* product generates a co-constructive interpretive experience which requires no creative effort from the “consumer” – it provides merely a mildly pleasant pastime and thus no emotive impact, transcendental appeal, or cathartic effect. Similarly, Bowlby notes in his work on psychological attachment that brain activation results from *novelty* and termination from *familiarity*. Furthermore, we know that metacognition occurs only when we detect *disorder*. And so, to a certain degree, all creative products must be and are experimental. If they do not deal with genre in some kind of experiment then the product that they have generated is merely *conventional*. *Creative* products constitute an active engagement between writer and reader.

I have accumulated a variety of techniques which I have found to be useful for creating some of these effects and approaches. Let me try to think of a few...: *Titles that don't really represent content* – often our intended meaning differs greatly from what we say, or we say one thing and mean another. We set out to say one thing and end up saying something else entirely. We mislead people intentionally or unwittingly, we are delusional or mistaken or unaware. And furthermore, our sense of meaning is in many ways unique to us, our interpretation of generic information is always unique; *Simplification* – say what you have to say in the simplest way that you can while still being effective, the balance between effectiveness and simplicity, if you will. Simplification is a creative act. Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred, according to Vonnegut. Our goal is broad generic appeal – profundity in simplicity; *Turns of phrase* – idioms and turns and figures and sayings are wonderful because they are highly social in terms of our shared understanding of their often not obvious meanings but our utilisation of them is highly personal, our knowledge of different phrases varies and our interpretation of them is often at least slightly inaccurate, oftentimes we are unaware of the real meaning of the phrase but simply understand what contexts to use it in – of its *genre*. A highly effective way of creating “voice” and conveying the self-genre through our interpretations of them, as though translating subjectivity by utilising generic material, and of creating a sort of secret relationship with the reader which emerges from a *shared knowing*; *Names and naming* – names are highly important and should convey the character or emerge from some personal significance to the writer by utilising meanings or translations of names to convey character. Titles, chapters, stories, essays, plays, whatever, names are hugely significant and carry meaning. Names have long generic traditions which precede the writer’s task. You are creating a world and every detail should be informed by the generic choices that you have made; *“Personal details”, senses, and emotions* – the only universal anchors for

interpretation and relevance, for empathy. I do not accept the new theories about emotions not being universal. Of course, they are. We just perform them differently and we respond to different types of cues. Read Sugiyama's essay on the matter. Another device is *delay*, which links in with *timing, tense, rhythm*, and so on. Making choices about these features should all be informed generically. By this I mean that we should consider the function of our conveyance and allow it to direct these important decisions. Think about the Barry White snare – and all the snares out there! That's why poetry works – the timing, the rhythm. But it's all about genre; *functional categorisation, organisation, formation, synchronised action/interpretation/performance*. We utilise a particular type of technique to convey a particular type of experience. I mean, that's why *music* is amazing.

Atticus. You could try singing your work.

Cassandra. I practice sometimes what I call *generic exercises*.

Atticus. Oh?

Cassandra. Yes, it is not quite the same as your suggestion. But sometimes I put music on loud in my ear things and close my eyes and dance, and it takes a moment to get oriented, but then I imagine that I am dancing with my father at a family wedding, my mother and brother are there too and they all watch me adoringly and my father dances around silly and drunk. It is blissful and sometimes I have to open my eyes because it feels so real. It is a way of healing my heart. It is *meditation*. And, combined, the dancing and the music and the movement and the imagined narrative is a genuinely integrated type of therapy. It is imagined experience. And so it is real experience.

Atticus. Surely though, the SoCo *Prosaics* must promote the *novel*?

Cassandra. The novel. Yes, the novel is the SoCo genre of choice. The key is in the name. Each is a novel instantiation of genre.

Atticus. Isn't *everything* a novel instantiation of genre?

Cassandra. Yes, but the novel best embodies genre's function and operational qualities. *Novel* as a genre is like genre itself; a system of systems from which emerges unique instantiations. The novel's ineffability matches genre's own. The best works are those which we cannot label with any neatness or ease. Burgess said once that the best books bring something new – in technique or view of the world – to the form. When we think of the word "novel," as well as its etymological rooting in the Latin term "novus" meaning "new," and our use of the word to mean literally "new", it illuminates Burgess' terms of judgment for what being a "good" novel pertains. Burgess says that the essential principle of the novel is that it is novel, it is something new. Burgess opined that demonic novelists are ill-qualified to deliver judgments on the fiction of their own day. Well, we can't judge the fiction of "our own day" because genre develops *over time*. It is to be expected. But once we focus on genre, we can in fact reach *towards* judgements based on what has come before. We can reach at least a more specific *understanding* of what the writer is trying to *do*. By recognising genre – the general stuff of literature – we can recognise the unique individual's *specific* engagement – such as *branching* or *pruning* – with it. Time will tell if they contribute to the creative development of the genres with which they engage – whether their engagement is conscious or oblivious. If the latter is the case, then it is unlikely that time will prove their worth. But,

as Burgess suggests, there are few limits on what the novel can do and it is a form in which the writer can do what the hell he wants. The goal then is a new and experimental combination of freedom and constraint utilising their self-genre and engaging with the genres of the SoCo and their historical traditions. The goal is not to try to kill genre, but to do something new with it.

According to Morson and Emerson, and to SoCo, the novel best realises the “potential” of prose. Prosaics, as Bakhtin developed the concept, regards novelistic discourse not as a style but as a style of styles, or, more accurately, as the dialogisation of styles. Burgess said many interesting things about the novel, too, and he dedicated quite a lot of energy to trying to “figure it out”, so to speak – he wrote an encyclopaedia entry for the novel, even! The only discernible necessity that Burgess states a novel must depend on as its primary substance is *human character*. B. S. Johnson believe that novels can achieve the “explication of thought”, that they can take a reader inside the characters’ minds and inside the writer’s mind.

So, if, as Burgess believes, the basis of fiction is character, and free will is one of the most essentially human things, then the novel must be inextricably linked with human choice and free will; the creation of *autonomous* characters. However, in establishing this common feature, we essentially further establish the novel’s *ineffability*. The very nature of free will denotes the capacity to choose whatever one wishes, and so the novel can then be defined as something that is capable of anything. Thus, the novel reflects the inherent nature of genre, which is to facilitate function. The novel demands all of the tenets of the SoCo prosaics.

While it is difficult to know *what it is* that makes characters seem *conscious*, or *autonomous*, by looking at the ways in which Shakespeare achieves this feat and also through my own experimentation in *Bernard and Pat*. The techniques which seem to best convey subjective experience involve, primarily for Shakespeare, positioning the character in a self-discourse or soliloquy but not simply engaging in self-discourse but precisely discourse which questions generic expectations in contrast with personal feelings and interpretation. Two matters of great importance have emerged through my own creative experimentation which have changed the way that I approach literature, and they are *point of view* and *tense*. Again, it’s about perspective – we convey perspective powerfully through our use of tense and clearly perspective and point of view are inseparable. A particular approach conveys particularly well the duality of experience, of the self as existing “inbetween”, the problems of c/c, and social/individual, and interdisciplinarity, of convention and subversion, is the intersection of the first and third persons. We use these terms to convey tense and point of view but really our use of tense in daily life and conceptualisation is nothing like as regimented. It all depends, it’s all relative, based on genre. But our self is not, as we know, a unified and complete essence. Roach points out, in fact, the unsettling and irreconcilable gap and the dissonance between first-and third-person perspectives on the self which pervades our subjective experience. Our use of tense and perspective – and thus voice – in creating literature should be approached, then, with an understanding of this unsettling, irreconcilable, and dissonant quality of consciousness and social interaction. Such an effect can be emphasised or dampened depending on the goal of your conveyance. It may be another matter for another time – another novel. But, in novels which attempt to convey subjective experience – all novels – should play with these two perspectives if only to see what emerges. Such experiments mirror the processes of social interaction.

Atticus. A convincing rationale. But, what makes a *good* novel?

Cassandra. You might have asked *How Should a Person Be?* Ha!

Atticus. Pardon?

Cassandra. It's sort of the same thing, what makes a good novel or what makes a good person. It's to do with rhetoric and genre – utilising genre creatively and to your individual advantage but also a social advantage. The most good is taking bad experience and “making something out of it”. We like “something from nothing” stories. In the same way, the most good in terms of novels is to take an old and stale genre or a tragic experience and turn it into a creative product which transcends generic determination and translates tragedy into creative worth.

The successful novel, like the successful individual, is highly generically competent and rhetorically skilled, is unique but relatable, its language specific but also vague or ambiguous, significant relevant to the self-genre, its structural elements are informed and shaped by its critical dispositions and functional goal, and its structural elements then come to inform the subsequent instantiation.

The novel ought to be emotional and personal. Our own unique perspective offers the most ripe ground creativity, simply, *we know it best*. We just know our genre. We can construct new worlds based on our unique visions and use our real emotions to inform such work. It was demanded of the schoolboys who were taught *Imitatio* that they convey *real emotion*. A successful rhetorical performance – which defines all successful texts – requires real emotion. Another's emotional or personal or subjective experience is the only experience of which we can never fully conceive. And so, isn't that elusive experience what we should be aiming to convey? SoCo says it is. Greenfield says that the difference between a thought and a raw feeling is that every and any thought, be it a fantasy, a theory, a memory, has the defining feature of having a beginning, a middle, and an end – an ordered temporal sequence that a pure emotion does not require. We can wrangle two points from her observation. First, we ought to try to bring structure to our otherwise uncategorised feelings so that we can write about them effectively. Naturally, we do this categorisation anyway. We call them emotions. An emotion is the story for the feeling. She's crossing concepts a little bit, but nevermind. What she reminds us of is that we need genre in order to be able to interpret meaning. The second interesting morsel comes from her questionable but intriguing suggestion that feeling does not require an ordered temporal sequence. She says “emotion” of course, which actually infers an ordered temporal sequence or at least a categorisation of feeling. But, more importantly, she suggests that when we write about “pure feelings”, we do not require traditional or conventional structure. So, like in *Bernard and Pat*, which ultimately tries to convey “pure feelings”, we have tangible “evidence” with which to support the stripping of conventional *plot*. In novels we can translate emotions in different generic terms such as the grotesque or the pastoral, but in doing so we are not attempting to exaggerate the intensity of the emotions but instead to translate their generic coding. It is metaphorical work. It creates a *subtext*.

Characters should be thoughtful, subjective, wonderfully unreliable and inaccurate and ironic. Characters do not need to be described, apart from, perhaps, by other characters. Horney warns that no amount of description, regardless of how carefully it is presented, can convey an adequate impression of exactly what is involved in the process of reaching an understanding of oneself. And thus, SoCo seeks in a quiet way to banish description unless it

is part of representing perspective. But, no. Description must be functional, useful, it must *do things*, it must be generic, in order for us to notice interpretation. Actually, observational and interpretative descriptions which strengthen the conveyance of the self-genre are encouraged by SoCo. Characters should be understood and constructed based on their engagement with types and the SoCo at large. What makes them unique is their specific subversions or conformities - their interpretation of the type. Each character should have a worldview and correspond in some ways to at least one type but to be effective or “realistic” tends to engage with multiple. Characters worldviews and perspectives and experiences don’t have to be shared in full but their language and behaviour should emerge from the worldview - the self genre. The priority codes at play. And so on. Contradictions begin to abound at this stage because we all live by many different contradictory or mutually exclusive codes. We might show this by having the character say one code and behave another. The spoken code must be taken to be the idealised code for which the character would like to be known and with which they would like to be associated. Their behaviour may follow another code and it is probably representative more faithfully of their “true” character; their *genre*. What would they say – which generic maps are they drawing from? Our characters have to be in many ways predictable and also incomplete, composite yet integrated; constructing them compositely generates an co-constructed integrated instantiation in the brain of the reader. The process is interpersonal, intersubjective; co-constructing social experience.

Tell don’t show says Cron. She’s right. I agree, though it seems obvious to me. We don’t care *what* happens we care *how* it happens. Everything that will happen has happened already. What changes is the perspective. What they want is your unique perspective on what happened. If they don’t like it they can toss the book out. We want a *why* – a motive *et cetera* – that’s the part that’s made up. That’s what fiction is: imbuing motive. The novelist should try to convey the relativism of significance based on the shared understanding of the co-constructed SoCo. We must communicate effectively our unique interpretation. Stylistically, we should aim for observational in order to for a unique instantiation of the self-genre to emerge in the reader’s mind. That’s what it’s like in psychology, in social life. We observe – sense – and respond. Observational, qualitative evidence and experience based on observation and interpretation of behaviour/responses/gestures and so on. We imbue them with meaning – concepts – we interpret them – read them. Yes! Genre remembers our past but also shapes our potential for the future, too. This operation explains the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy; we are bound by genre to act again and again in the same *way*.

Atticus. But what about *your* novel, *CANADA*, is it?

Cassandra. It is. Well, I can tell you the genres with which it engages.

Atticus. According to your hypotheses, an account of generic engagement is all that is required.

Cassandra. Indeed. *CANADA* can be interpreted through the following generic chain, the order of the genres is almost irrelevant because of the way that genres work together to produce more than the sum of their parts:

Novel – Roman a clef – Comedy – Travel/Travelogue, trip/journey narratives – Bildungsroman, coming of age/initiation/emergence narratives – Pastoral – Romance – Realism, dirty realism, post-modern realism – Folktale, oral storytelling and speech, conversation – Memoir – Americana – Southern Gothic – Lyrics, music – Lo-fi

cinema – Literary Fiction – Picaresque – Pastiche – Quest narrative – Canadian Literature – Wilderness literature

But the generic influence extends far beyond literary types. The main influences include:

Canada – new experience - Carol Shields – Leonard Cohen (lyrics and prose) – Shakespeare’s comedies – Neil Young – Joni Mitchell – socialising – loneliness – social performance – self-quest – The Velvet Underground – Lolita – The Bell Jar – Richard Brautigan – Charles Bukowski.

Atticus. Okay, it’s difficult to extract meaning from these lists without seeing the work.

Cassandra. Yes, I know, but it displays my creative process.

Atticus. But, how does *CANADA* engage – how do *you* engage – with these genres? With this generic influence? What does it mean?

Cassandra. My generic vision for *CANADA* places a strong emphasis on the narrator’s “self” perspective and both relations and events will filter into and out of the narrator’s view of their “self” -- the trip narrative being a popular generic type (related, of course, to the *bildungsroman* and its many variants). As listed, there will be many generic traditions at play within *CANADA* in order to convey the specific “sense” or “feel” of the experience and thus the work. According to SoCo theory, at least one feature of the narrative stands out already: the narrator leaves a place where they have been “socialised” and travels to another place where past, present, and future understanding and knowledge emerge from the social, the narrator’s “genres” for engaging with reality undergoing change as they navigate this new place. A SoCo reading of *CANADA* would illuminate characterisation as “made up” of various genres based upon a character’s experience and the generic tradition accompanying other similar characters, but further it would recognise the genre(s) of the narrator as the main lens. However, at the same time, *CANADA* makes clear that it is our relationships which make up our self, our story, that, as Burr said, agency is only possible in relation with others. What is interesting in *CANADA* particularly – as it could be said that we could read any other work in the same way – is that the narrator’s genres *change*. Perhaps it should be a requirement of literature. Critical work utilises the model effectively, wherein for instance a critic may begin the piece asking a question and conveying a sense of not knowing, before investigating the problem and ending the piece with a sense of *knowing*. It is a proven technique. *CANADA* will map the change of *the personal genre in relation to itself*, which must be the goal of all novels. I am looking forward to writing it. It will offer creative relief from the hard, conceptual work of *Apropos of Everything*.

CANADA’s protagonist, Alex Tymon, embarks on a comic quest of self-development. She is lover and a learner and a cynic, a lot like Rosalind in many ways, but a bit like Katharine, too. She is named as such because *Alexandra* means “defender of man”, and *Tymon* is my mother’s “maiden” name. It’s Irish. The Tymon’s were rough bastards. Tymon also reminds me of *Timon*, of course, and those implications. Alex leaves her traditional and “safe” but in many ways limiting SoCo to enter into a completely new and personally uncharted territory, a new SoCo, a new way of life. In this arena she can try out a new self-genre, a new approach, a new perspective. Of course, entering a new SoCo is not without its pitfalls. It can be a very lonely experience, with no familiar moorings to anchor our sense of identity and belonging, and more obviously lonely when travelling around alone in a new

place. Joni Mitchell's song "California" captures the phenomenon beautifully. But, in the second part of the book, which I have conceptualised as *homecoming*, she makes another trip years later to find that her genre has changed completely and that she now appreciates the secure base which she has created for herself at *home*... Is that enough now?

Atticus. Wow, Cassandra, you really have been running without arriving.

Cassandra. It breaks my nerves trying to connect all of the wires.

Atticus. Yes, it can't be fought.

Cassandra. I feel as though I am destined to drink bitter wine.

Atticus. Look, Cassandra, you're not just swatting flies, here. You have achieved an incredible amount of work. What are your conclusions? With what ending remarks would you round off your prosaics, albeit preliminary?

Cassandra. Well, I would conclude by reminding the entire hoi polloi that creativity is our crowning social trait but that it is also deeply personal. We unleash or realise or construct our creative potential by engaging with genre. Creativity has a healing power, it transforms us.

Atticus. Great joy! Creativity is a habit, not an act. Creativity is not a thing to obtain but a process with which to engage.

Cassandra. Exactly! *Creative writing*. It's a funny term which has all but lost meaning to me these days. Which is odd, because my PhD is in creative writing and it looks highly likely as though my career will be based around it. But, what does it mean? Shouldn't all writing be creative? Isn't all writing creative? I began my PhD with an idea about what this prosaics would entail. My focus centred around the juxtaposition of critical/creative. Of course, it has become difficult not to see the similarities between critical/creative like tragedy/comedy. But, what I really wanted to say, at the beginning of all of this work, was that what is required is *both*. Both critical and creative. Like we need both social and individual, self and other, general and specific. I think that I have found it hard in the past to adhere to academic guidelines and strict interpretations because my general approach is a completely integrated one. It is why I so pushed against genre at first. The point is just that we don't really get how genre is meant to work. And, I guess, now that I feel that I do know how it works, I feel liberated. How interesting when genre is supposedly so limiting.

According to Kandel, the ultimate goal of brain science is to link the world's living inhabitants with an understanding of the intimate textures of the human mind and human experience. SoCo proposes that literature should share this goal and that it depends on genre in order to achieve this goal. To conclude, we do use all kinds of generic information to inform our perception and perspective and our narratives. It would be impossible for a reader to be able to interpret a writer's work "directly" or as intended. And so the writer must use generic codes in order to convey as much of their generic influence – and their perspective and feelings – as possible. Genre allows them to convey the gist, at least, the structure of their perception. We must co-construct the experience using the generic cues which the writer provides us. The wider the generic competence of the writer, the more that they will be able to "put in" the work. The wider the generic competence of the reader, the more that they will be able to "get out" of the work. We know that we can never really interpret Shakespeare's work exactly as he intended because of the unique perspective (his and all of ours') but

because he utilises genre he ascertains different levels of control over interpretation. It is because he uses genre, and precisely because, that his work has been readily interpreted by many different generations and cultures. Because we know genre and he uses it so that we are naturally inclined to be able to relate to his work, no matter how far removed we are from his actual experience.

The goal then as writers is to fill our works with generic referents and codes so that we can convey most fully *what we mean, so that we can get the readers to think and feel in certain ways*. Our job is as near to “complete” expression as possible, whatever that entails. In certain works, a “complete” expression may take the shape of a fragmented, composite, and “unreliable” narrative, such as performed in *Bernard and Pat*. The completion that is referred to is not the fullness of a work but the completion of the *choiceful* expression, of generic conveyance. A “complete” expression is one which conveys meaning in the best and most generically accessible way. This does not mean that works should be simple but that they should be able to offer a simple reading on the “surface level”. In other words, there must be “something for everyone”, the work must be accessible across a range of generic competence. We can think of Shakespeare again, yes, but another great example – possibly a better example of this specific effect – is Roald Dahl. His generic appeal is perhaps wider than Shakespeare’s, because he somehow managed to write children’s stories which were simultaneously highly appealing to adults. Yes, of course, there are many adults who choose to read Young Adult literature and other similarly youth-orientated works but these works cannot be assessed as major literature. In any case, the idea is to present a work which is richly generically informed but which works basically as a story, too, and one which people feel familiar with and can help construct. Readers need the familiar; *genre must be utilised*. But treatment of individual generic codes or types need not be flattering or compliant. Once we realise the real function of genre we *want* to use it. And we can celebrate doubt and risk and uncertainty; genre as generative, as facilitating generative potential.

We don’t need to know all of genre all at once – we never will. We know more and more, and the more we know, *the more we know*. Or we come to *know differently*. It’s a lifelong game. An everlasting balancing act of freedom and constraint. In the words of Rosenfield, learning complex relations requires first learning simple ones. The self-genre should be the first and principal “port of call”. To be creative you must work in a domain that is meaningful to you. You must first gain control over what you know, then you can write about the rest. There is no truth – only perspectives – like in law. Creativity lies in boundaries. Todorov inferred that any “responsible” prosaics must function to lubricate this generic flux, to encourage in readers a freedom that comes from understanding. Genre is understanding. Genre! Ah, the vaulted ceiling! The self-supporting structure, the foundation, on which we construct, which we cover up, and elaborate on...

Atticus. ...is that the end? Is that all you have to say?

Cassandra. I guess.

Atticus. Well, just say *that* then!

Cassandra. Ah, good wines.

APPENDIX II:

CANADA & SUPPORTING MATERIAL

CANADA

PT I. GOING

1.

Canada. Ca-ah-na-ah-dah-aah! Some years ago, it was just before sunup on one of the last few days in May and I set out young and bold on a journey, in a new life, as a writer. I had my pen, my will, and all. Just weeks earlier had seen *The Great Chicken Crash*, when more than one-thousand brave chickens lost their lives on the M62. Otherwise, it was an unremarkable year. There were civil servants stitching up sad-sack sufferers summoned by the sorry state of subordination (the civil servants superior only in their specific sorriness). That year a woman did Hamlet – *yawn*. Oh, and there was the privatisation of the prisons, and the reinterpretations of “distraction techniques” and “duty of care” employed accordingly. They still talked about shooting gays. People still went missing. The weather was great back home actually. What a nightmare. Nobody wants that. You want the weather back home to be miserable so that you can bask in the unique and smug summer heat of your sojourn. Oh, of course, there was the mass union strike action over one-percent pay increases,

which resulted in a transitory breakdown of education. It is rumoured that those staff who acted upon the strike action were never seen again. It was trusted by *The Toffs* that the majority of the staff would continue to put the interests of their students first, viewing a boycott as diametrically opposed to the interests of the students they represent. Besides, there was no more school to worry about, only the summer, to be had!

I'd like to tell my story. As I remember it, I dreamt about the sea. A tale doesn't always start at the beginning but in this case it does, a beginning of sorts; the beginning of my new life. It didn't have to be Canada. My friend Luke lives there. That's why. I wanted to try out a new life. I wanted to write. It was the year that I became a *real writer* and committed to *the writer's life*. Part of that transformation was facilitated by Canada. *Oh, Canada*. A time to take the new me for a spin. And that day, the day that my life began, the day that I became a writer, I dreamt about the sea. Rough and brilliant, crashing and thrashing, *The Great Sea*. The Hydra thrashed about in that Sea, too, but I rode on its back, whipping its magnificent necks in glorious concert, and effecting an excellent performance out of it all, like a wild Newtonian cradle, like a rebel tribe of synchronised swimmers, like cats' tails batting about in a delight which seems at once abstract but at the same time encoded. It was time to turn to tide, or at least to practice turning. If I had known it, my whole life was about to change. But, I did know it, in a way. I knew it but it actually happened.

I still have the airline ticket somewhere. I'd never been. I'd never been anywhere. I'd been to Sweden and Berlin and Italy and Spain some other places but I'd never been here, never been so far away, never been on the other side. I took an overdose the year before, or some time before, unsuccessfully winding up alive. Everybody knew, I guess. How should I know? Some people knew. People don't want to know that kind of information. It makes them feel uncomfortable. I guess word got out. Everybody knows; *that's how it goes*.

No one to turn to, you know how it is. I think that it didn't work because I didn't believe that it would. It's too good to be true. That it would just work like that. And the only thing lamer than killing yourself is trying and failing. I won't waste time labouring to describe the overdose or its immediate aftermath or the straw whence it manifested in sordid detail. But, for the record, it ought be known that, torn already by every imaginable misfortune, I was moving through a rebirth, of sorts, when I set about this trip, and the "incident" was, obviously, the trip's catalyst. A clichéd goad but who was I to question? Do I not live? Am I not alive? Should I not live? To hell with interpretation! Hateful eyes cannot see and so must be blinded once and for all! It suffices to say that I had decided to live. I just had a feeling that I could be someone. I had realised what life had to offer – so much – anything! Who knows? Who cares? I had hated my life and what I'd done to it. But, not in Canada, oh no! No one knew in Canada. No one knew who I was. I was Alex Tymon. I was great. Shiny and new. And so, I took my heart and my head and left behind the deep harbours of who I had been to cross my way through to a new life. It was the death of the old me. No one would lose tears over a grave. There would be no grave. No tomb, no tombstone! And I let go of it all. Asking only for life to be lived and to be written, in return. But, my name will never die, now.

I was no one back home. And I was no one in Canada. But, my lack of identity or repute was a good thing, in Canada. I could be anyone. Back home I was just myself and all that I had been and they knew all that I had been. In Canada, I was no one in a different way. The traveller is a natural outsider. The shoe fits out here. Back there it pinches and blisters. I will have to learn *the Canadian way*, and I shall adapt wilfully. I'm flexible, honey. The people back home ostracise me. I won't number the unprovoked wrongs that they inflicted upon me. Obviously, by inhabiting the particular part of *Her Majesty's Isle's* that I was and had always been, it was only to be expected that I would suffer my fair share of indecencies and betrayals. I once had an orange – several oranges – thrown at me from a great distance by a large, irate woman at my own place of employment, I had fallen victim to a variety of unmentionable ailments, through no fault of my own, following interactions with various filthy womanisers, I had unwittingly engaged in multiple acts of violence, walloping and thumping, undertaking numerous roles including but not limited to *observer, thumper, walloper, walloppee, thumpee, thump-evaluator, and wallop-beneficiary*, and by the ripe age that I was when I embarked upon this trip I had seen, also, a great many sick, the most recent of which was a sick-into-fishnet-stockings; a front-runner for worst-sick up until that point and perhaps up until ever since. There are dreams that I remember and then there are dreams, also, that should never have been remembered but were remembered no less. None of the people back home ever cared to understand my dreams, I thought. So why should I care to remember them? I spent a long time thinking it over, how much I should think about me and about others. But, no one else thinks about it, so, why should I? You know, I think, hey, *my values* are the right ones; *they* are wrong! But, who's to say? I didn't care anymore about answers. I'd decided that all I had was choice – my own choices – to claim as the best or blame as the worst. But, *my choice*. And as long as I remembered that, then I would be able to figure it all out. Maybe it didn't need figuring out, after all. Yes, countless empty promises, standing ups, broken trusts, lover's trysts, others musts, never my own, well, *now, now!* I will conquer. What weaklings they are, back home! Won't you laugh with me? Come on, won't you beg me for the detail of my trip? All those people, they think that they have got it made, but I wouldn't buy, sell, borrow or trade anything I have to be like one of them. I can insult them all – insult their efforts, by recreating myself –I, one, single life. Would that be just? I'd rather start all over again. Let me live in clear, unblemished glory. All the eyes of Canada are upon me. My strength depends upon me. My expedition depends upon me only. Let the Alex win, not the barbarians! I am free, whereas they are slaves, I thought.

In seriousness, I was in love, once, too young – *too* in love. Up-to-the-back-teeth in love. I think. It's hard to know what love is, or, it was hard to know back then. I couldn't see it. As the saying goes, you don't know what you got till it's gone. You were the wine that I was meant to drink. It tastes bitter, now. It doesn't taste the same. It never will. But, this was back then and I could still have drunk it then. Still drunk on the idea of what could be. We can't untie the knots from back then, they have only amassed in complexity and number. Are you even the person that I knew? Was it even love? I was in love with sadness really. It wasn't your fault.

I'll offer some general advice; don't fall in love young. Love is too great an oppression for such tender babes. Make your true love your second, your third, fourth love. Love is not for beginners and those who attempt to mount will not merely

fall but be saddled themselves. Yet, I am well aware that to remain unsaddled is to lose the bet entirely. No one ever teaches you this stuff. Oh, what a tragic power love can work in people's lives. It depends on the circumstances, I suppose. And, it's because *real* love, the proper kind, breaks all rules of love, all rules of everything. Still, we must learn the rules in order to break them – is that not correct?

It was of no concern to me any longer. Since no man had ever indicated a desire to so much as bless my sternutation, never mind ask for my hand in marriage, I chose of necessity rather than aspiration to perfect *the Writer's* craft instead of *the Lover's*. I decided by needs must that I would be a writer of novels, a "novel-ist". The need that musted the decision was my inability to write poetry. Poetry had always struck me as inherently insincere whenever I had tried to write it, and the more I tried, the more false it seemed. We broke up, that first love and I, over the poetry, actually. The fact that I couldn't do it. I'm too genuine. Besides, the novel is the crown of literature.

I had to leave you so that I could see who I could be. I didn't know it, of course. I left because I thought that you didn't give me enough. Enough of what? Hmm. Of... you? Attention? Love? I don't know what more you could have done. Okay, I know what more you could have done but I know now that it would not have been enough, never. My cup has a whole in the bottom. *Canada* was where I would work on mending that hole. Who am I kidding? I thought it was already fixed. We were over and I thought that my brain had taken note. It had not. But, it was enough that I believed it to be so. I only recognise what we had now, after all these years. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. Still, were we so young? Was it so brief? Love changes everything. Well, it is what it is. Our lives have told the rest. What it is is isn't, anymore. I can laugh about it now. I couldn't then, mind. I got rid of all your stuff. Your reputation was misprized, I get it. Your heart wrung. But, I wrestled, too, and have wrestled, since, if you must know. Enough about that. Men of honour often get wrung. Your heart was not wrung so that you hesitated to be wrung again, however. That's another story. We all have our own problems, our own scripts, I guess. I'd as willingly cure you as myself. But, as you are not the issue here, and having to start somewhere, I start with myself.

My spirits bolder than my years, back with you, and again now, for this trip. Perhaps it is necessary. Punish me not with your hard thoughts, as I know you do. I confess my guilt in the whole of it. Let up, with the hardship, the heartache, please, if you will. I believe in you. If I die on this trip then it will only fulfil my old self's wish. I don't mean to mock you. You could never understand. Maybe you could. I'm sorry, and I was sorry, and my trip would make me forget it all for once. Out of suits with Fortune, I gave you all that I possibly could. I still remember, that great sycamore, outside our little house. All sighing and froing and then crying and coming apart. You kept your promise in love and I broke mine. But what was the promise? To live with me? To stay with me? Nothing more? Your memory has exceeded your stay thrice over. But, no more! No more of all that talk of love. No, I wish to talk about spring time! Travelling to a new land, meeting wonderful people, and living a life worth writing about! I must learn to stand before I can sit!

I mean, I know what trouble is, I have no need of more. Who ever loved that was not disappointed? I've been called a *sweet taboo*, a *Lolita*, a *dew-drop*... *Desdemona*...! Jesus Christ! Ha! No, I shouldn't laugh. Love is being loved. Love is safety. I could not keep safe any longer, I had to embrace risk. The writer's life is laced with risk. I no longer wanted a man. I just wanted to write. I suppose that I had accepted that I was broken when it came to relating to the other sex, and so I ought not do any relating at all. I could relate to myself instead. Fare me well, god damnit! I thought. I will not be hit! I'll be a writer! I thought. Writing and love are not interchangeable, of course. Writing is not *the same* as love. Within lies its appeal! – Writing's appeal, of course, not love's appeal. Writing is a skill at which one can practice and get better. Love rarely fits into such a neat box. This story speaks to every Lover who thought that they knew themselves, and to every Writer who ever thought that they knew a Lover.

Oh, I hate you some, I love you some, but mostly I miss what never materialised. It's my special skill; *missing the fantasy*. All I really want is the best for the both of us, the best that could never be. The shame of it! You hurt me and I hurt you, too. In hurting you, I hurt myself. The Ancients couldn't have told it better! The story started and ended. The soulmate's story ended as quickly as it began. It is not meant to be over at the start of the story. But it was. And, anyway, that misery was not to stain my Fortune. You could not follow me, and I could not look back. You loved me when I was a loser but, you see, I had to win. I had to change from nothing to one. Contrary to what might be inferred in response to the few, extremely minor, inconsistencies between this story so far and a monomyth in the traditional mode, I am now, in fact, an established writer, cavorting and frolicking about in the harvest of my hard work. Back then, I set out to write about my travels and the wonderful people that I'd meet and the incredible things that I'd see and the once-in-a-lifetime things that I'd do.

Needless to say, I wasn't a person when I was with you. As I set out for C, I felt that I was one, basically. And I was, basically. I had exactly one-thousand and sixty Canadian dollars, collected days earlier from Spring Gardens, and I was on my way. Canada was fixed to be my womb; willing, witting, or wont. It's well-known that a writer needs something to write about, and Canada was to be it. I had filled the time since *the incident* creating a new life for myself. Those moments when you realise you're living a lie. When is it too late to start again? And how do you do it? It was my mum, really. I hadn't intended to know or feel her reaction. I was a selfish asshole – the carrots were cooked. But, when her reaction materialised, the very rattling of her core, how she panicked every time the phone rang, I knew that I could never do that to her again, and so I chose to live, for her. It gave me something, someone, to feel it was worth trying for. And so, I changed my life. I went to university. And, then, twenty-two, during my second undergraduate year, I decided that it was high-time I went out into the world to be the *new Alex Tymon*, time to rehearse the new me. The successful me. *The Writer*. The happy girl. The fun girl. Out there in the real world. Out in unknown territory. A place where I could start anew.

I met Luke several years earlier at one of Victoria's notorious New Year's Eve parties. That was the year she and Ekow got together, that's right. They've had two sons since. Luke met Ekow years before, so, I guess Victoria met Luke through him.

I think that Luke used to date Susan or something. That's a whole other story. I think I was seventeen. A crazy year. Oh no, I think that maybe I was even sixteen! Only a few thousand moments prior to my seventeenth birthday, mind, and Luke was still in Manchester because we hung out, yes. Another time he was in Manchester I met him for a coffee and I smelled burnt toast and said

- Is that burnt toast?

And he said

- No... what? I think you're having a stroke. When you smell burnt toast it means that you're having a stroke.

His idea of a joke. And so, five years later, I decided to go visit. It was weird I guess. I just knew that I needed to go, to go somewhere, to Canada, to start my new life. Yeah.

On that fated New Year's Eve we slept side by side on a bean bag. If there is another form of bed so lacking in grace, so comical, so resistant to romance, I would be willing to recognise it as such but my mind fails presently to conjure any such more ridiculous alternative. Yet, there we were. There I was, a spritely seventeen years of age, experiencing high romance. Well, Sixteen! Sixteen and already versed in the melodic tune of love. Victoria was my best friend and also my boss. Probably not the best arrangement. But, for a time, it was the best. All things must pass. Our relationship seemed to be coming to its tail end when I made the first trip. Unbeknownst to me, I would be unemployed upon my return. One of many periods of frantic joblessness and searching. But, I was unencumbered by such unpleasantness on embarking to CAN-A-DA. Everyone is afraid of Ekow from a distance. I guess because he's big and black. He is Ghanaian, a taxi driver, of impressive yet warm and inviting stature, he takes his time, he thinks, he's a wonderful father, he's a calming presence and yet impressive. My mother didn't understand. What the hell would you want to go to Canada for? She asked. I haven't spoken to her recently because of a new book that I had started writing which incriminated and ripped apart various people. They should not exist if they do not want stories told about them. Or they should not act, if they would feel terrible to read about those actions and their consequences on the pages of a book. Your life is, by being entangled with mine, fair game. Some people don't deserve to be written about. Others write themselves into the parts of villains or fools - or both. May god forbid those inclined to cross me and may he have mercy on those who have succumbed. I am at stake to lose a few friends as a result of this book. Alas, such is the writer's life. Anything goes. Anything is up for grabs. Everything is on the table, so to speak. But, I am getting carried away here. What was my excuse? I had no reason to go. There was no bell tolled for action. Just call me Little Nell, ey? That's the point, in life, you see. *You have to call upon your self.* The point is making the choice. Eating the kimchi! Ahah. Never mind, that will make more sense later.

I was guided by liberty; freedom, and, of course, guided by the pen. O ink of my pen! Truthful ink. Let your ink give out the signal that I have arranged. To you, alone, O pen, I'll reveal all. And I am right to do so. You alone accompany me in good times and bad, can convey the intricacies of my journey, hear the sounds of the sighs and throes! You see me and you help me and you don't show or tell your neighbour. But no, not alone. Canada would take me as I was; young, unstrung, and raring, too. Canada as my stage, I was ready to step out. But what was my new role like? My happiness could be my credential, my excitingness, my Alex-Tymon-ness.

The fairy tale which Luke spun in the air down there. I didn't mind. A happy mask but not for long, for the girl would be happy, too. She'd be a woman. Alexandra Tymon. And for now, an errant babe.

At home everything is like people screaming in the street below and riding around on dumb scooters. And what would *Canada* be? I thought it must be the coolest thing. At the time, I invoked the American Deep South. Why did it matter? And hey, maybe there will be mountains maybe there'll be a ranch maybe there'll be great open roads and different air. Maybe nothing will make sense but will be simultaneously full of meaning. There'll be changing times, new tongues, ancient reasons, shared meanings, conflict, harmony, and time. There will be the thrill of the *what if?* I must undergo a forced conversion but not unhappily. Strangers always have to conform so as not to aggravate their new community. I accept my place among new laws and customs. I will work my magic and master the role. My improvisational expertise will compensate for what I could not learn at home. A cure for tediousness. Better than death. Newness!

I don't know what it ever meant. I don't know what I thought of when I thought of Canada. I thought of Luke. Now, I think of me. I think of a ladder, a bridge, or some other connective, supportive, or constructional apparatus. Some mode of getting somewhere, some vessel, some portal. Let me tell you, there was nothing for me in Canada. Nothing other than what I came to know as this bridge and what I first saw perhaps as a door, or the something which exists behind a door. Whatever it was, now it is this. I had no reason to go, but I knew absolutely what I was going to do there. Driven to Canada by the force of my own gift alone. Let that act be what I'll be remembered by; writing! Let that stand for me in place of the children and the marriage I could have had. Let that be my fame! Not simply for my own sake! But so that the whole of Canada may rejoice! I must go with pen in hand and while my old self will be hidden underneath somewhere, I will have a lovable and adventurous outside. I have every right to experiment, to tamper, to trick, so long as I do so with style, so long as I make it in the end. A number of things contribute to my confidence. I have no reputation in Canada. My reputation is radiant; it was crafted by Luke's own loving tongue. I can be uncensored; I've got to be unstoppable. I used to live for them. Now I live for me. The story was about to change: my glory would resound; reversing at last my sad reputation.

I can't say that there wasn't some spark or shred of fear in me, though I couldn't detect it. I had jockeyed the dark horse, and now I had to race alone in my fright, if it were to be there or otherwise, alone but free. I knew that Canada would change me but not how it would change me. What excitement! There's no room in me for rage anymore, I am so full of life. I can be kind here. I don't have to defend myself. And my heart sang be sad no more! Be angry with your life no more! Love everyone and all! Being here makes me forget my sadness. Newness! Newness! Imagine all the things that I'll do! See! Learn! Know! The people I'll meet! The changes I'll experience.

What right do I have to love my life so much? You might ask. I have every right. I'm giving you all I have! And you, English readers, say nothing about it. The future of literature rests upon my actions. The barbarians will no longer abduct my mind and carry it off from wealthy shores; I will be reborn! My trip will bring about all

this liberation and my good name will live into eternity. People will talk about how I've saved Canada. Everything I had done so far had brought me to this point in my existence. It was time to integrate my past learnings and prepare to enter this new world, this new life. I had to reinvent myself and set the stage for the new. I was being led in a whole new direction. I was a fortunate girl; young, someone to be, and champing at the bit. Sick with glory! I would serve Canada!

A perfect journey is afoot. I won't attempt to appeal on behalf of my good character or to call into question the reader's intellect, nor will I play with the reader's emotions. I'm going to make my own decisions. And that way, whatever happens, I can blame myself. Life in pink, before I turned into gold. No companion. Ready and willing to change! It will be a long time before I return, a long time before I greet you again. May all things turn out well for me! Begin now my journey and may it be a happy one! I will come back home only when I have taken from Canada her fairest spoils. And I, the darling bud of May, rough winds in my wake, set aflight to Cannadaah! Goodbye and good luck, then! My new home, my new country! Oh, how my thoughts turn to you now. Hot damn, it was a new beginning! Let my work begin.

2.

So, I end up sat in the bar at the airport waiting for Luke for hours. I decide to drink gin because I can. I open a tab – I don't know how much it costs but I say "hold the bill" because I think that I'm in a movie and I think that I'll get another gin in no time at all. I feel immediately at home. This would never happen in England. I imagine two gins in a place like this will be probably like twenty dollars. If it's possible I love it here already. I can hear a dude hocking up some shit around the corner and even that sounds cool here. I don't get angry now in my new life. I just had a cigarette straight off the eight-hour flight and got a nicotine rush. What a thrill! I will be picked up soon in a red mustang. A mustang! Everyone is so cool here and so nice. I can't wait to pick up the accent which is inevitable and I can feel it happening already. I have never enjoyed *Sprite* so much in my life. I imagine it costs half of the dollars I have in here but most of me doesn't care. I have nothing to lose. And this is just the beginning. And I cannot imagine what everything will be and it feels great to know that no one here knows anything bad. They don't know any of the bad stuff and they will just meet the great new me. I don't even think that it will be tiring. Because the more I act like the new me, the more people that meet the new me, the easier it will become. And I may get so used to it that I will never be able to return to the bad. And imagine if I never feel like that again. And who would have thought? Paradise was right here all along, in Canada.

I feel so far away from home but I don't think that I know where home is anymore. I had been so sad for so long that what I thought of as home became intertwined with the sadness and I can only be reminded of it. And, in that home, I cannot help but feel comfortable in the way I used to be. I revert back to the sadness and the anger and the pain and I don't want that anymore. And I think that maybe I need to move away, move here. Maybe part of becoming a new person has to be starting again, starting a whole new life in a whole new place. I think that maybe this

person cannot exist at home. I am restricted by my past and all of the bad that came with it. There is a dark cloud over Manchester and maybe I created a part of it. And do I really like anyone? Or do I just want them to like me? And do I know the difference? Does it matter? I don't know that I can ever be different in a place that is so entirely and consistently the same. I used to think that I had to be there to feel safe and for everything to be the same but maybe that's because I feel safe being sad. I need to learn that different is not unsafe and sad is not something I should be comfortable with. I feel great here. And I am alone and it is fine. It is great even. You know, *if only I could see me*. And I want to be here. And when I go back to school I have to find a way of moving here. Or anywhere, you know? I need to get out of the pollution and live my life. I am capable of having a great life, aren't I? And all of the potential I had is still there. And I am the only thing that has been in my way. No one has stifled me. I have strangled myself. I have stopped anything good from ever happening because "it might not work out". But, fear is a constructed thing. It is not real, you cannot touch it. Fear holds so many people back from so many things and it is as if it is an unstoppable self-contained real force. But, we create it. Most often people are not even aware of the multitudes of fear they harbour. It is time to face facts and suck it up. I'm twenty-two, I'm new, I'm everything. What is there to be scared of? And I realise it's never too late. I look around and I think, *yeah, that's right*.

My relationship with Luke began romantically. Well, a sort of pseudo-romance. I kissed him that New Year's Eve and we sort of just began this mutual fantasist narrative about us being *soul mates*. His whole worldview is romantic. He thinks life is a movie. I was caught up with it too but I participated mainly for entertainment. We'd talk on the phone after he returned to Toronto. He visited a couple of times. I always talked about visiting him. He is a writer, too, and while no exact evidence of this fact ever surfaced at the time nor since, nor has any indication of his writing style, I am sure both that he is a writer, and that he has a writing style. Back then, I played in bands and he made movies or wrote for television or something. We were always talking about what movies we were gonna make or what we were gonna do when we both lived in the same place. It was whimsical. It fulfilled the same purpose as daydreaming but it was more fun because you could do it with someone else involved while both understanding an unspoken tenet; *it would never happen*. Well, it was still going on. It was hard not to get sucked in. It's good for the self-esteem. And, hey, I wanted Canada to be a movie, too. I spoke to him just before I left. I'd sent him some of our new songs.

- Hey, I just listened to your tracks, sounds fucking great!
- Hiya love, ahah, they are silly but it's fun, so who cares?
- Now I really wanna make this movie, they're perfect.
- Hah! Sickly girl pop with killing?
- I'm sold. I just emailed my buddy Joe telling him he needs to look into financing. I think I can sell this concept.
- I really like *The Furies* idea.
- I think we would have so much fun. Ghosts of the murdered! It will be amazing. Can I send him your tracks?
- Yeah, sure! I'll send you the other ones. What time is it for you?
- Coming up on five-thirty. Or, half five, or whatever you say over there. We're five hours behind. How's everything going?! I hope Ekow misses me appropriately, the bastard!

- I think so, he's excited about October.
- I wish he was bringing you with him! We'll do the cross-Canada train ride. It's the best way to see the country. It takes three days!
- I wanna go out to your house on the lake. Oh, I watched the footage that you sent me! How is shooting going?
- Oh yeah! Shooting is going great! Not as quickly as I'd like but we're getting really cool shit. I'm so happy to be shooting movies again! I took five years off to concentrate only on writing. I just want to make a movie with you like Godard and Anna Karina.
- Hah! I'm really glad you're having fun. Though, it would help if I looked like Anna.
- I prefer the way you look.
- Well, you're crazy. But, that's okay.
- I've been told before.
- The footage, wow. I don't know what I was expecting but it wasn't that. It's beautiful. Some real crazy shots, and the score is amazing. A little Hitchcock. It looks like it cuts from big buck high-end shots to little bits that could be from a gritty little low budget thing ... which is mint. If I had to make any criticism it would be the guy's outfit in the boat scene but that's all. I look forward to working with you. Oh, and I hope that working in black and white is your thing, everyone looks better in black and white ... well, *everything*, really...
- That's the best review I ever got! Thank you! I miss you! Mint! Haha! And yeah, yes, black and white is definitely my thing! Just wait'll we make our *Natural Born Killers* movie! Some nights I'd trade my soul to be with you.
- Soon.
- Oh, and thanks for watching that interview, by the way. You're beautiful.
- Ah, very cool, yes. I didn't realise that the girl found out. She was kind of tapped, in my defence.
- I think she can handle it. Also, Canadians won't know what "tapped" means.
- That's good. Hah, does that mean that you didn't know either? I could say it means ... pretty? Hah!
- I have an approximate idea of what it means. I am a great appreciator of Manchester slang, though.
- She just seemed a little crazy, that's all.
- Hah! I think she did twelve interviews before us. It won't be long till we're doing interviews together for *our* film.
- Ah, I hope not.
- I told Ekow yesterday that I'm gonna get over there soon to make you a movie star.
- Ahaha! Ahhh.
- I wish you could be here tonight for the premiere of my friend's movie.
- You don't, I have a really awful throat infection. That's why my voice sounds like this. Hey, think of some good Halloween ideas for me, I got talking about it with a friend before and I can't stop thinking about it now! Also, if you ever write a character for me, I think I'd much more suit a sad than a happy one.
- I think you would make a good Catwoman but I'm lousy at thinking of Halloween costumes. I just want to dress up like Batman and you can be my Catwoman. You'd knock Michelle out of the park. One year I went as John McClane from *Die Hard*. Some guy pulled a gun on me and I pulled mine and fired a cap at him and he ran away scared. It was funny.

- Oh my god someone pulled a gun on you? Why did *you* have a gun?!
- Oh, no it was fake! Sorry! I did have a real one pulled on me though, when I was seventeen in Washington DC because I was trying to talk my friend out of buying fake *Oakley* sunglasses from street thugs. My efforts were unappreciated.
- Oh my god. I'll have to watch your back.
- I believe it. Northern girls are tough. If I was in Manchester right now I would give you the best kiss you ever had. For starters. Hurry up and come to Toronto!
- You haven't got long to wait for me. Nor for Ekow, really! It'll be nice for you boys to have some time together.
- Yeah, I miss the hell out of him. Like I miss the hell out of you! He sounds pretty happy.
- It's funny at work cause everyone loves him – but they are also kind of scared of him, ha! Not in a major way. But cause they're all new, most of em. And he's the big boss man, and I'm just super casual with him cause he's Ekow.
- Hah! He'd probably be happy to know he's loved *and* feared!
- Hah! the perfect position. Do you think that I could get a job when I'm there, maybe?
- I think that's genius. I'll take you to my cottage so you can have an authentic Canadian experience and drive you to work whenever you need to go. I've wasted enough time not seeing you. We will make the most of it this time. What do you wanna do? Do you have things you have to do? Or is this a trip of leisure?
- I don't have anything to do on this trip except to live. And write!
- Let's see a psychic and take day trips and romantic walks and we'll go to Niagara Falls and anything you want. We can do anything really. We can get drunk, we could do karaoke. I think we should just do everything.
- Okay. We have plenty of time.
- It will be an adventure and then you'll definitely live in Canada!
- As if I don't already!
- Yeah, but after this trip think how much more excited we will be.
- You're right. We could make a short film over the summer.
- We could make a feature. I work fast when I'm inspired. We will inspire each other. Like Godard and Anna. Except I won't be an asshole and you're funnier than she is.
- Haha. Less attractive though!
- Careful what you say about my future wife!
- You're Hitchcock and I'm your blonde!
- I like that too. Except Hitchcock was lousy with them.
- Or let's just say you're Giga and I'm your Alex. That's what they'll say.
- Well, I've always said that. I'm happy to hear you're figuring out all the angles for your visit.
- Also, I wasn't sure whether I'd need a hostel or something... I don't wanna just take over!
- Are you kidding? You'll stay with me, of course!
- But, you might want some space or something... You can't just presume something like moving in with someone for an extended period! It's rude.
- Yeah but you and I are special.

- Ah, me and Ekow were talking about how crazy it is that you haven't just moved here yet.
- It is crazy. I remember thinking I should have just stayed on that trip I met you. I knew in my guts that it was a mistake to leave!
- The only thing I can't figure out is what I'll do with my cat for six weeks.
- How does it feel about airplanes?
- He couldn't come with me! But, I'll figure it out.
- Good. I had heard a lot about you and had a feeling meeting you was going to be significant. And soon, you'll be here!
- Aha! Had you?! And then I can't remember how we both ended up on that horrible bean bag...
- The funny thing about the bean bag, and that whole trip for me, is that as soon as I spoke to you I felt like already knew each other. That's rare. We beat first sight to the punch!
- You're right. I can't imagine what you may have heard about me. My cat has never been on a plane but he hates even being in the car for ten minutes. How does it work? Would I have to buy him a ticket? Maybe I could find someone to take care of him here...I just don't want to though, he'll forget about me and they won't look after him right. Maybe I could ask Coral.
- I don't think you buy him a ticket. He would have to ride with the luggage in a carrier I think.
- Oh god.
- It's probably fun to ride with the luggage.
- Haha! You know that isn't true. I'll work something out.
- There is time. Ekow thinks we will get married. You and I not Ekow and I.
- Hah! I would step aside for Ekow if it came to it. You would be the cutest queer interracial couple anyone had ever seen. Ekow gives me a special kind of smile when I talk about you. As if we're gonna get married. He doesn't have to say anything. Or maybe he's just thinking about marrying you? Hah.
- Cause he knows it would be good for both of us. I'm too tall for him. It would give him a Napoleon complex.
- Haha! Hey did you know it was five years ago we met? On New Year's.
- I can't believe it's been that long.
- I know right!
- And I can't believe I've been away so long. Manchester feels more like home to me than home does.
- I can't believe that I've seen you like ...once! That whole time!
- And we haven't forgotten each other. That's something.
- It is. It feels like I've spent so much more time with you than I have.
- I feel the same. We'll fix that this year. And I am already playing with ideas for our movie.
- Ekow will get jealous!
- Wait'll he sees our wedding pictures from Niagara Falls! He'll really be upset when he sees that I had to get some drunk at the casino to stand in as best man.
- Hahaha!
- Is Ekow giving you tips for things to see here?
- No, not yet. Anyway, I have the best tour guide-slash-fiancé there is. Part of me wanted to say to him he should come for a week whilst I'm there but I

thought I might be rubbing it in a bit if he can't get away. I'm just warning you, if you guys have hot summers, I'm gonna be doing some tanning.

- He'll get over it! And I think it will be hot. We can go to the beach on Toronto Island and my parents have a pool in the backyard not too far from the city. Lots of swimming and tanning can be arranged. Although, I don't know if I'll be able to control myself.
- Meeting the parents, huh? You're making me nervous! I'm so excited. How on earth am I gonna be able to pack for a whole month?!
- Haha. Don't worry, they're harmless. We can swim when they're not there. Packing for a month is easy. You really just need to pack for a week and keep on top of laundry.
- I can imagine they are great, it's me that I'm worried about! And Luke, you have got to remember that I'm a girl, and a girl that loves clothes. I don't repeat outfits! if it's hot it will help, the smaller the clothes, the more of them!
- No repeats?! You're going to need to pack a hundred outfits! I hope you love it here as much as I love it there, and as much as I love you.

Luke was oblivious to the fact that really I had absolutely no intention to do any laundry while I was there. Washing machines terrify me. They run their own world, and ours. The crazy world of the washing machine. My washing machine knows stuff I don't. I am filled with anxiety whenever I use it which is, consequently, a rare occurrence. Recently, I dyed a complete load a sickly pink and haven't touched the machine since. The clothes are still pink. I never really know what it's doing or what I should do. Why do they make it so abstruse? They give you instruction manuals but they do not provide comfort they only mock you by confounding you further still. They are purposefully obscure. They all are like this, washing machines. I try but the machine always comes out on top. Sometimes I stare at it to try to decipher its dream-like conceptualisation of time. Me, in a stand-off with the machine, waiting for it to decide when to end its hours-long version of a minute. It's awkward. I feel awkward. I don't know what I'm supposed to do or when it will all start to become clearer to me. It must do, at some point in life. I avoid it. No, instead, I intend to let my dirty clothes rot and crisp up like autumn leaves until I return home. One day, I will get a maid.

- I'm sure I will. For a start, you are there. Second, I'm itching to be somewhere new. And third, well... I don't know! I just know it'll be great.
- I like the enthusiasm! I think Toronto in the summertime is a pretty great place.
- I have no idea what to expect.
- Yeah that's good. It won't be a total culture shock or anything.
- I feel like I won't want to leave, though.
- Leaving is the worst!
- We can be husband and wife for the summer.
- That's beautiful!
- No, you are! Ha!
- Tell it to a mirror.
- Okay, now go or we'll talk all night.
- I'll get the ring. If you turned me down I'd die.
- No, you wouldn't.
- It seems too long til you're here. I'd buy you roses if I were there.
- It'll fly by.

- But the time you're here better not!
- What have you got planned for us? There are only like... a couple of touristy things I might wanna do. I just want it to be like I live there. And of course, I'm sure you'll be taking me to a variety of fancy premieres!
- We will mix it up. Some touristy stuff. Some binge TV watching. Some fancy premiers. The cottage. The pool. Exetra. We can put a padlock on the Brooklyn Bridge.
- Sounds perfect!
- We will have great afternoons. We can go to the theatre.
- I just bought a white suit that I could wear.
- You're perfect. You're a knockout. You're gorgeous. I'm counting the days till you're here. I'm going to curate a program of movies for us to watch together.
- So, you haven't got a script for me to start learning yet?
- I haven't written anything. I figure we will work out a loose story line together once you are here and we can improvise dialogue. Even though writing is my day job I hate writing for things I'm going to direct. Speaking of day job, I don't know if I've told you the details of my new job but I finally got hired onto a writing room! I've been doing it for two weeks and I have two weeks to go. The last day is May thirtieth so there will be a couple of days when I'll be gone for office hours. The job is ten-five. I haven't mentioned anything about the job because it hasn't been officially announced by the network yet. That happens on the 29th so until then we're supposed to keep a low profile about it. It's a World War II drama. I'll tell you all about when you're here. I'll send you the address and postal code and phone numbers and what not so you have that before you go to the airport.
- Amazing! The show sounds awesome. Oh, so you mean you're not picking me up with a sign with my name on it and champagne?! Haha!
- I'm going to try to get out early that day but I don't know if they will let me. I'm trying to figure that out. If I can't get out early I will be able to get to the airport by six. Would you want to wait that long or catch the shuttle to the subway into town and wait for me there and then we can walk down College to the apartment? I figure customs could take up to an hour to get through, based on my trips going over there. I'll figure out the pick-up stuff this week. What are you eating?
- I'm eating *Ben and Jerry's* "Half-Baked" and I blame you for introducing me to it.
- Don't blame anybody for ice cream that is as good as it gets.
- If you can get there, do, if not just tell me the details. It's all good. I need to stop eating the ice cream. Oh, by the way, I found out about saying "ey?" today, haha! Do you say that?
- Hahaha. So much *Canadiana* to learn, ey!
- So cute.
- Canadians are goofy.
- I can't wait.
- I hope the weather is great for you.
- Yes, me too! But it'll still be great anyway. I'll try to pack sensibly. For varied weather. I looked up some things I wanna see!
- You'll look incredible in anything. Oh good, keep a list.
- And I read about *Pride* in Toronto! It sounds amazing.

- Yeah, it's great. The Mayor refuses to go -- but he's in rehab now anyway. Anything else? I just remembered your hair. Like rich ebony.
- Oh, gross. Okay, so I made a list and now I can't really remember what any of it means:

China town, Kensington market, Queen street west, Yorkville, North by North East, Luminato...

I really have no idea what these things relate to anymore. Oh, and I dyed it blonde.

- Then I am sure it is golden like the sun. *North-by-North-East* is a music festival. *Luminato* is an arts festival I think. I've never gone. The others are neighbourhoods. I will draw you a comprehensive map to get around. Toronto is really easy because it's a grid, like New York. It's a good city for walking around listening to music. You will want to visit Trinity Bellwoods Park too which is really close.
- Ace! I'm sure there will be plenty to do. I want lots of good food.
- You'll be coming to the right place!
- Okay, well, send me the address. I'll see you on the other side of the pond!
- And we can talk for hours. I hate small talk. Let's never do that.
- Deal.
- Meet you at you the airport, in a red Mustang.
- In Toronto!

And, sure enough, true to his word, he picked me up at the airport in a red Mustang. As I saw him pull up in the evening sun I let out a sigh. That gorgeous evening sun, can you beat it? We got my ridiculous suitcase in the "trunk" – how Canadian! – and eased into a long queue on some amazing Canadian "free-way".

- What do you call tea-time?
- Like, tea? Luke gestures his hand like a cup towards his mouth.
- No, like tea-time traffic. Like this, now, I point. Like rush hour.
- Um, rush hour, I guess. Traffic jam?

I had not come to Canada in order to engage in a romance with Luke and, in truth, I had dreaded him perceiving my trip in such a way. Thankfully, he didn't. So much for our marriage. So much for love at first sight. The summer had just begun and we were done already. To be honest, I'd never found him actually all that attractive. He has a face for which you might stay at home. It is often said that the duty of lovers is to tarnish the Golden Rule. Yet, here we were, upholding it.

We pull up in the Mustang on a lived-in street full of brick houses, each one unique, a hodgepodge, cars lining the curbs outside each one, every house complete with that most Canadian of touches; a porch, and, oh, so much life! *Francis Street*; my new home. *Francis*, as I will come to know it. I bet this is what the houses look like in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It surprises me that they are made of brick but I glance past the discrepancy with ease and soak in the sheer *Canadiana* – as Luke says – of it all. The house which holds our abode is painted, along with the one seamed to it, and so I can pretend. It doesn't feel like bricks. Ours is red (as if by Fate!). The porch – a porch! – seems poorly constructed, exactly as it should be. The galvanised-steel chain-link fence moved me almost to the point of tears, so joyously did it melt into my pre-established image of the whole locale.

Up the six steps to the porch, through the screen door (!), through the actual door, and then up a set of stairs to the second-story, and we're in. I live here! The door is right at the top of the stairs which seems sort of dangerous but I'm certain that it'll be fine. Everything just feels so sparkly. The floors in the apartment are a gorgeous polished mahogany wood. The kitchen is the most Canadian part and I love it. God, fancy me, being here, on the other side of the world. To my extreme pleasure Luke has weed. He keeps it in the freezer.

- Why is it in the freezer?

I ask. I don't recall his explanation. It seemed a little odd but who was I to complain. There was lots of it. Just perfect. It was a good job, too, because Canadian grass is considerably weaker in its effects than it is at home. I know this to be a fact now because of something which happened years later. We'll get to that. But, sat there in that darndest of kitchens, watching Luke roll a huge number, I did not know, yet.

- I'll probably just have a little bit.

- That's okay. I get it from my buddy Steve, you'll meet him.

- Oh, the weed?

- Yeah.

Luke tells me a crazy story about holding some product for Steve and having to go to a writing job and then being chased by the police and stashing the weed and losing the job, or something like that. We exchange the number effortlessly with the ebbs and flows of conversation, though Luke's participation seems more theatrical. That's when I began to suspect that Canadians don't know shit about weed. But, it didn't matter. I'd just smoke more! Luke explains as well that we should turn on the fan above the oven when smoking, to suck the smoke out, which sounds reasonable. I discard my ridiculous suitcase and we decide to go for some late dinner. Luke says he knows a place.

It's colder than I had envisaged. It's quiet, dark, magic somehow, and the breeze carries the tingling promise of what is to come. It's only just begun. We walk for ten minutes or so and arrive at a dark, candle-lit, hole-in-the-wall. It's perfect. We sit and order red wine from a beautiful dark-haired waitress and it really does feel like I am somewhere else. The wine is blissful. The dark, warm place. I'm here. We turn to the menus which list various sandwiches. Sandwiches? I think.

- Sandwiches?

- Yeah, they're really good, I come here all the time.

- Oh, okay. Great!

Sandwiches. What the hell? How Canadian! I thought. It turns out it's a French place. Our waitress is French, too. French sandwiches! How unique.

- I can't believe you're here.

- I know, it doesn't feel real!

- So, you're ready to get some writing done this summer?

- You bet. I can't wait!

- You're gonna be a bestseller, I just know it.

- Hah! Oh my god, how is the new job?!

- It's great. Writing with a team is so quick-fire, you know.

- I can't even imagine it.

- That's because you're a singular genius. And a beautiful one, to boot.

Luke's accolade was dubious, but I smiled to indicate that, as accorded with my new ethos, I agreed. I could not write in a team, I say. I explain to Luke that art is not about money. Art is not about criticism. To hell with critics! I can do whatever I please. I can write whatever pleases me! Oh, even my errors won't matter, Oh, the charm of error! The wonder of beauty and awe. Fancy! Will! I can fashion exquisite forms and recreate the world as suits my whim. Delightful! The artistic spirit; like a sumptuous wine which makes you want to drink every last drop in the bottle. The spirit of life and beauty. Art is about *freedom*, the right place, the right time. All limitations are lifted in Canada. My writing will be marvellous, splendid, enduring, and true! I am language's slave. The literary faculty is unmatched. The one duty we owe to life is to write it! And writing must be important, imaginative, inspired, profound, significant, brilliant, genius, unlimited, unbounded, propitious, prodigious, productive, encouraging, supportive, attentive, exceptional, rich, discrete, merciful, capable, transcendent, invulnerable, incandescent, all-consuming, all-encompassing, authentic, colourful, extraordinary, various, heroic, splendid, beautiful, great, dominant, perfectly true, substantial, radiant, enlightening! I can read, I can spell, I am free, what else do I need?! Perhaps I am a singular genius. Perhaps I will be a bestseller. Perhaps I am beautiful, I thought. I will make something entirely new, I thought. I leave all of my self-consciousness behind. I want to *just write*. I don't want to think about it too much. I don't want to try to write, to write consciously. I just want to live here and let the writing flow out of me. I want to write because I just *have* to write! Simple, fresh, natural. Already I feel like Canada has this romantic quality of its own, just being here, and that I wouldn't even need to try at all, I mean I wouldn't need to add anything at all. I can sense it! I thought. I said as much to Luke.

- Wow, that's beautiful. I hope so.
- C'est fou! The waitress interjects, her neck craned towards the large, almost-wall sized window. Luke and I crane our necks, too.

A dog has rendered itself from its lead and is gambolling violently about the street, frightening passers-by. Luke reaches his hand out to collect his wine glass but punches it instead, sending it flopping down, and the deep red wine splats on to the table and sloshes as well on to my white blouse – *I wear white in Canada* – and spatters across the hairs on my arm forming tiny grapes on the fine dark strands. I look down at my arm and at my blouse and at Luke and let out a huge belly-laugh. Luke's expression morphs instantly from worried to elated, satisfied that he has not caused offense, and he belly-laughs, too. You see, I don't care that there is wine on my top. I laugh because life is for living and wine is meant to be spilt – it is an emblem of just such living!

- Life is for living and wine is for spilling! I cry merrily.

The waitress laughs, too. We all laugh. The waitress fills our glasses. Luke and I clink our glasses together to cheers. The sandwiches arrive and though they are ever-so-slightly difficult to eat on this mine and Luke's first meeting for a considerable time, the warm feeling lingers on. I get rocket in my teeth. Rocket is uncouth. But, on the whole it is delightful – of course it is! I'm in Canada. Little red lights hang from strings in the French restaurant and there it is again, red for Canada. The feeling that I feel is just like in the films. The sandwiches are rather expensive but I have just arrived and I have volleyed caution far beyond the winds, to the depths of the very seas and the flames of the very suns which do stir the winds! Hah! Nothing could touch me.

Only, there was touching, *après le Français restauranté*. Yes, I have said already that I had dreaded any romantic perception Luke may or may not have had about my trip but it was simply too awkward at this point not to play the gambit. I had to stay in character. We kissed, that first night, awkwardly on the bed which was unusually solid and it must have been a memory foam, I thought. As he pushed himself against me I recoiled – untellingly, of course. I had to keep up my act. It was not a manipulative act but there was nothing to be gained by revealing my disgust in this moment. I haven't brushed my teeth in so many hours, I thought. After not long, Luke stopped and said

- I can't.

Thank god, I thought. I forged disappointment by way of face-pulling and it seemed to pass well enough. Realistically, this was the best outcome. We were not going to live as lovers, and that was just fine with me. Best to get it out of the way now, really. That is all, simple; "I can't". It was all the detail I required. I couldn't believe my luck! Never matter, I thought, I was not here for love! However, there was, consequently, one slight fault of the revised arrangement; I was to sleep on the sofa.

- Oh, the sofa, yeah sure!
- We can take turns with the bed.
- Okay!
- The sofa is great, I end up falling asleep there all the time anyway.
- Oh, nice!
- So, I'll see you in the morning. I still can't believe you're here!
- I know! Okay, in the morning!

Not exactly a room of my own but hey, it's free. It doesn't matter where I sleep! Tomorrow will begin all of the wonderful things that I'll do, I thought. Artists are meant to live rough, I thought, yes! I'm a writer, sleeping on a couch, in downtown Toronto. What a quintessential experience! And anyway, if Luke had foreseen this turn of events then he would never have had me stay with him. I would not be here at all, I could not afford a place to stay! It is real, my state! And, it is courteous to offer to split the time with me, I thought. I'll be up early every day and out late every night and whatever I call my bed is of no concern to me! It'll be just like the movies. Ha! Haha! How can I sleep, now?! I thought.

3.

It was such a hot summer. That first chilly night had thrown me. Though, the nights were always sharper. I'd been there a few days now and the other shoe had hurtled from a great height and slapped across my face. I do not believe that any person can understand their own potential for idiocy and indignity with more clarity or intimacy than when in a new place. It suffices to say that Luke did not make me a comprehensive map.

On home turf, I slept well into the afternoon regularly. But here, I get up every day and do things. That first day, I wanted to get the lay of the land, to get acquainted with my new stomping ground, and, above all, to get some groceries to make dinner, because, after all, that is the kind of thing one does in normal day-to-day life. I decide to cook lamb, for Luke and I. I ask him where the nearest butcher's is.

- *The butchers?*
- Yeah.

He says he doesn't know where the butcher's is, he says he doesn't know what I'm talking about.

- I don't think we have those here
- What? Like... I don't know... a "*meat shop*"? A shop where meat is prepared and sold.
- Oh yeah, okay.

- Well what do you call them here?
- I don't know.

I ask where can I find some lamb? He says what is lamb? *What?* Christ, he doesn't know what *lamb* is. Maybe it's just that he is an idiot, I thought. I was sure that this stuff was not to do with Canada in general and more to do with Luke in particular and his weird child-like knowledge-set. But, I was to find that no one knew what a butcher's was, and *no one knew what lamb was*. What kind of place is this? I thought.

After abandoning the fruitless butcher's inquisition, I asked Luke to tell me some general, useful information, some Canadian conventions, in preparation for my first foray.

- You can't walk in the road.
- Why would I?
- To cross it.
- Oh. Wait, what? You can't cross the road?
- No, well, yeah. You can't just walk in the road.
- I think I'll be okay.
- I got a ticket a while ago.
- What? For walking in the road?
- Yeah.
- But, why were you walking in the road?
- To cross it.
- Right.
- This is a *loonie*, and this is a *toonie*,

Luke tells me without request while shuffling around some coins in his hands. Sure, I say. I know I won't remember which ones are which, anyway. Foreign currency always stumps me. It's more about the audience effect I think. I am nervous because I am not comfortable performing with the material. It won't change over the course of a trip, and nicknames won't aid my performance. While we're at it, Canadian money is made of plastic and is, therefore, ridiculous (we have it now, too; ridiculous). It's like toy-money. Luke's assistance is more decorative and, let's say, *idiosyncratic* than straightforwardly practical. Or, it is *practical in his world*. He offers vague directions to different places, such as the park, the shopping street, and so on, and he tells me that there are pancakes in the freezer and eggs and bacon in the fridge and maple syrup on the counter for breakfast before leaving for work.

I get ready for the day, choosing to wear my favourite and not-much-worn wooden clogs that look just great, and I clop about my new apartment soaking in the beautiful light from the windows and breathe in all of the newness. I love the kitchen which is small but bright and dreamlike and homestyle. I sit at the table to smoke instead of standing by the fan while Luke is out and I gaze warmly through the window and think of all the possibilities that life here – anywhere – has to offer.

Breakfast. At least Luke got in food for breakfast. I gather the various elements and turn to the available appliances. It takes me I'd say twenty minutes to figure out how to turn the stove on. I do know, however, how to turn on the fan. Thank you, Luke. I look for the grill. There is none. I look for the toaster. There is none. I investigate a strange sort of mini-oven on the counter top. The heat dial says "BROIL" above it. What the fuck is broil? Is it grill? How is "broil" an easier concept

than grill? After attempting painstakingly to broil for what feels like hours I manage to turn out an edible breakfast. I will come to eat many more breakfasts – eggs, bacon, pancakes, syrup, and all sorts of other wonderful and hazardous things.

With no help from Luke, I set out from our place, and from *Francis*, to conquer my new neighbourhood. Of course, I walk in the wrong direction. I walked off quite far uptown, where the neighbourhood turned into bigger open roads and a dusty light and a setting heat, bigger warehouse style buildings. I had walked the wrong way. But, it was a hazy part of town and perhaps I was meant to see it. I did find one supermarket out there, called *NO FRILLS*, and its eponymous promise did not disappoint. It was sort of like a giant, mostly-empty warehouse with an apparently strictly-curated and thus limited selection of dirty fridges full of suspicious food items and, you guessed it, no lamb. There was meat but no lamb. And what a first sunset it was, in the sparse uptown, full of meaning and sparkle and that feeling that things are to come. I have walked far enough at this point that the wooden clogs pierce my feet to the point of bleeding and wincing. It is much hotter than my outfit is catered to. I sweat. I brought all the wrong clothes. I brought too many clothes. It is so hot. I walk all over town, all day – in the wrong direction – looking for a butcher's, looking for lamb. For christ's sake. And then, as if by some flit of providence on the way back to the apartment, my quest for lamb resigned, I stumbled upon the breath-taking mecca that is *Walmart*. My feet still bleeding, my clothes drenched in sweat, but my soul destined no less for some kind of unique transformation. And that yellowy part of town full of strangers must have meant something. Luke didn't even tell me which direction to walk in. But, then again, I didn't think to ask. Like a mirage in a sweltering desert, *Walmart* appeareth to fill my cup.

I love it. It is so new to me. I know that it's crappy but it's what I want and need and I don't care about the standards of others. It's a sort of newness and familiarity wrapped into one. Oh, the supermarkets! Not just *Walmart* but them all! *Walmart* was crazy; the sweets on every aisle, the poster-paint-yellow tills, the semi-chaotic nature. *Twizzlers* and *Cheetos* and *Eggs* and, oh, those English toffee cookies – ridiculous, I know! They were so good. It was all so good. Here I am and I will live a life of excess, I thought. The chocolate bars make me think most of home. It makes me think that we make better chocolate bars, and the thought disturbs part of my conceptualisation of the place, and of other places, too. I find out that the eggs are different here. They are in the fridges, whereas back home they're on the shelves. After several weeks of living in Toronto, I did find eventually quite a nice supermarket on College called *Metro*. In fact, that is where those damn English toffee cookies were from! Nowhere sells filters, and I presume that means that no one uses them, either. Luke had informed me about this convention, actually. However, in mind of some of the duds that had emerged, I had ignored him. I didn't think to bring any filters with me, I guess. I found some finally at a "gas station" behind our block somewhere, on College I think, but it was a big bag and the filters themselves were big and unsettling and awkward. Luke said everyone will think that you are rolling a joint. God damn, he was right.

After my thrilling and also soothing experience in *Walmart*, I emerge and realise that I am sort of back where we live. I take my bags and sit in a park on Dufferin and watch. Watching people have a nice time is easier to do and to appreciate when you're alone. Everything seems so romantic, reading, the music in

my ears provides the soundtrack to these people and their lives, insignificant yet completely evocative of all that there is and all that we are. And, it is easier than having a nice time yourself. But, I was having a nice time, still, in the face of it all, I think. Maybe I could marry someone here, I thought. And then, maybe not. People look different here, sort of cartoonish. There's a lot of different kinds of people here and they all seem so integrated. Sexes, races, ages, abilities, personalities, backgrounds; united. And perhaps this is why they seem untroubled or artless. Art divides people, trauma ignites us with guile.

I think about the relativism of significance, how the same things hold different meanings, how different things hold different meanings, how some things stay the same everywhere. The modest and abundant difficulties of exploring new terrain. It's hard because you don't have that base knowledge. The streets are strange. Everything is different. There is no familiarity to anchor you. The familiar is different. Luke had told me about *Tim Hortons* but for the rest of my time here I see mainly *Starbucks*. Perhaps it is because my eye is not trained to detect *Tim Hortons*. I use both mainly for their free internet connection. And *McDonald's*. All of these places are good. They are glimmers of hope, sometimes, on a lost and lonely street. I use them for their bathrooms, their cheap and familiar food, and their anonymity, too. In the coming weeks I will drink my first ever caramel frappuccino and from then on out, I'll use the same places for those, too. I spent probably \$130 on frappuccinos that summer. I regretted it towards the end of my trip when I began to run out of funds and to count each dollar spent on those frappuccinos, drank and gone. But, there is always a sense of strangeness and unknowing. Of loneliness and alienation. It is always good *and* bad. Exciting *and* bewildering. Kind *and* cruel. Novel *and* completely isolating. I can't stop thinking about Philip Seymour Hoffman dying some time earlier.

It is customary here to apologise for everything which suits me because I am an extremely anxious person but instead, in the reality of this situation, it is extremely unnerving. There feels more serious things to apologise about at home, or there seems more need to apologise because of the calibre and the performance styles of the people there. Here, there is nothing to apologise about in the first place. The incredible politeness of Canadians would be ridiculed at home, I thought. It may even cost you a few teeth. I like it at first but as the reader will come to learn, it becomes extremely grating. I came to know that this marker is stereotypical but it is no less true. I speak to my mother everyday pretty much because she is scared that I will die out here. She doesn't understand that Canadian strangers would be more likely to martyr themselves for you than kill you.

I had set to work on trying out my Canadian accent throughout the day which is my version of an American accent which is generic. I will practice more and more, perfecting it. I still have the affected twang from my committed performance. I have curated, actually, a melting-pot of dialects over the years and the result is an odd hybrid which adapts in different environments and with different audiences. Of course, it is frowned upon to call Canadians Americans. However, keeping in mind, and with great seriousness, I might add, the regrettable inevitability of cultural misconception, they just *are* Americans, *basically*. They are diluted Americans, perhaps, Americans but wetter. There, I said it. I take it back. They are wonderful. But, there *is* an air of the sheltered about them, an air of idealism about the "real"

world. Sort of an unblemished enthusiasm, a naïveté, a moral innocence. Canadians are trustful... They are ... unsuspecting and thus unguarded... Oh, and here I am, poaching them! Yet, I have said already that a writer's life demands detachment. They are genuine and welcoming and enthusiastic and sincere and yet their ownership of such very qualities renders them, by all appearances, simultaneously wide-eyed and spontaneous. So, it's good *and* bad.

It is hot, sloppy, with heady air and wet skin, and I arrive up all of the stairs and onto the hot wooden floors, laden with groceries. Once again, I can't figure out the stupid kitchen. This difficulty becomes a problem throughout my stay. I stick with eggs and pancakes in terms of cooking my own food from then on, the occasional breakfast. Everything else I eat out. Everything else is junk. Living with Luke is like living with a child with a stunted palette. If you can't make a horse drink, join it. We eat dollar slices from *Little Italy* around the corner and twizzlers and drink soda. What else is there to do? I did find a butcher's at some point, kind of. I think that it was on Bloor. Of all that *Wallmart* could offer me, still it could not offer me lamb. The vibe of the shop (which was never actually confirmed to *be* a butcher's) was non-existent hygiene rating and killing people in the back. If I remember correctly they cut my lamb with an axe on a large wooden plinth in the centre of the room. Another titbit which applies both here and at home (or, should I say *Timbit?*); if you laugh then other people laugh. It's a good trick. Of course, if you laugh at the wrong person then you could end up with your blood in the gutter. In the end I am informed that they call lamb *mutton* here. For god's sake. I call Luke and ask him to bring home some wine and he says there's one in the kitchen. There isn't. I know because I drank it while I was trying to figure out the damn stove.

Over dinner, which he barely touches, we make agonising conversation. His palate is childish. I talk to him about food. "My favourite is surf and turf" he says. Good god. Surf and turf! Never trust someone who orders surf and turf. A psychotic restaurant order if there ever was one. He loves *Greggs* when he comes here which is only mildly less ridiculous and yet at the same time captures perfectly the sophistication of his taste. He loves the sausage rolls, arguably one of the least chosen items from *Greggs*.

- They don't have them here! I love those things! I nearly got arrested at the airport once for trying to sneak three of those bad boys on the flight.
- I found a butcher's, by the way, I think. And I got some groceries from *Wallmart*.
- Oh, so you went to Sufferin
- What? No, *Wallmart*.
- Yeah but the mall.
- What mall?
- *Wallmart* is in Sufferin Mall.
- What? I thought it was Dufferin? I didn't know it was in a mall, I came from outside.
- Yeah, they just call it Sufferin.
- Right. Nah, to be honest, though, I loved it. It's something about the familiarity and the newness at the same time, the mixture of feeling at home but feeling totally far away... do you know what I mean?
- Mancunians speak in such a wonderful way.
- Like, you are finding little anchors to help you navigate a new world.

- I like that, “*Naaah-to-be-honest-though*”.
- It’s not a saying. You don’t always say those words together. “Nah” is probably the only vaguely “*Mancunian*” part.
- Oh, right! I thought that it was like a catch-phrase.

Luke says out of a smiling mouth with a clueless deportment.

- No.

And then, by some uninterrupted pirouette of Fortune, as I clear away the dinner that I made, Luke tells me that we are going to meet two of his friends, Nick and Tavis, if I’d like. Yes! I would like! Friends! Friends! Anyone!

- Tavis? I ask. What kind of name is that? It sounds like a loaf of bread.
- Is that a Manchester thing?
- No, never mind.

The truth is I couldn’t care less what his friends are called. I am dying to meet anyone that isn’t him.

- Nicky is my best buddy, and Tavis, too, but I’ve known Nicky all my life.
- Cool!

We meet Nick and Tavis in a bar on Dundas – Dundas Street, that is. That’s what they do here; they don’t say street they just say the street name. So, Dundas Street is Dundas, College Street is College, Queen Street is Queen, Bloor Street is Bloor – you get the gist. I am happy with the social arrangement. I like there to be three people or more. I don’t like two because it is too intimate, too much pressure. Unless I get very attached to someone and then I don’t want to see anyone else. Just two. But, this set-up is very “all or nothing”, I know. The adage seems to reverberate throughout my entire conceptualisation, perception, behaviour.

We walk into the bar and it is dark. The lights in the bar are red, which seems to be common. There are old arcade style games, whatever they are called, things such as pinball and *Pacman* and *Space Invaders*, I guess. Luke guides us to a table at the back where a guy is sitting alone.

- Alex Tymon! Nick holds out his hand. I hug him.
- Ah hugger, I approve!
- It’s so good to meet you!
- Likewise! Luke has kept you from us for all this time.

Luke doesn’t flinch. Nick’s comfort around a stranger is almost but not quite off-putting.

- What happened to our plans last night?
- Plans?
- We were meant to do this yesterday. I booked the night off work to meet the great Alex Tymon from Manchester!
- Oh, we only got in late – I didn’t realise that we were meant to be seeing you guys! Luke had to work so he picked me up at like 5:30.
- Wow so right in peak traffic, huh?
- Hah, yes. It was fine. I can’t believe I’m here!
- You better!
- Tavis! Luke interjects.

I turn to see to see an oddball-looking guy made to look even more odd because he walks in eating a share bag of *Doritos*. Who is this guy?! Ha! He’s the weirdest guy I’ve ever seen and his name is the weirdest name I’ve ever heard.

- Alex Tymon! Tavis announces while framing me from a distance with his arms.
- Tavis! I cry, having learned his name.
- Hang on, I don't want to get dust on you.
- Dust?
- *Dorito* dust!

Tavis licks each affected finger, wipes his hands on the outer-sides of his shorts – yeah, shorts – and gives me a hug. Nick lands his hand down on Tavis' shoulder and curls his face into him like a friend.

- You bastard Tave! I haven't seen you in a long time. What are you having?
- Oh, yeah! Thanks! I'll just have a beer.
- True. Nick walks away to the bar.
- Why did he say true? Why did he ask what you wanted if he knew already?
- Haha, true just means okay, Tavis laughs, and instantly after he winces and clutches his arm around himself.
- Oh shit, are you okay? Stitch?
- Broken ribs.
- Oh, right, wow.
- Yeah, I fell off my bike.
- So dangerous!
- I know, I know.
- I've broken my ribs a couple of times... from coughing.
- Woah, what?
- Yeah. I coughed so hard I broke my ribs.
- Oh shoot, I can't laugh! Don't make me laugh! Tavis splutters, clutching.
- Hah! Sorry!
- Stop laughing!

Nick and Tavis tell me some actually useful information about Canada. Nick tells me about tipping and the streetcar and the Eaton centre, and he tells me where the university is – near the bar where he works, apparently. Tavis tells me about *The Island* and waxes off some food options that I could have done with knowing earlier in the day.

- *The Metro* is a grocery store on College, and *Shaw* is a good place that sells prepared foods... If you ever want a burger the best is *Utopia*. It's on College, too, closer to Clinton. There's an amazing panzerotti place called *Bitondo's* on Clinton on the south side of College. Luke knows all those places.

Scoff! I stare at Luke. Why him? Why did I have to get stuck with *him*? All of this information is more useful than anything Luke has ever said to me. Another thing. He keeps his phone volume on. Psychotic. The phone just rings loudly in the middle of a busy social place so that everyone around turns to see who the psychopath is. It's him, and he goes off to take his call.

- Wow, thanks! I want to really get to know the neighbourhood.
- Ah, well, Nick's your man for that. I don't go out. But, we can go to *The Island*.
- Also, if I can get a spare wristband for *North-by-North-East* would you wanna come?
- I don't know about *North-by-North-East* yet, I haven't looked at the acts yet. I'll do that soon though.
- Don't worry if not. My friends from Glasgow are playing. Actually, they asked me if I knew anybody here who could put them up for a couple of days...would

you be into that? Or do you know anyone that would? I told them I'd spread the word. They would definitely be happy with a floor.

- I can't billet anyone unfortunately because there's three of us in a two-bedroom place and my other roommate often has his boyfriend over, especially on the weekends.
- Fair enough.
- But, I have Monday the sixteenth off, so let's go to *The Island* then. It's best to go late morning, early afternoon, like, eleven to one, to be there. About that, how are you with walking?

What a kind question. I thought.

That first night was short and sweet. We're two beers in and I am just loosening up when Tavis gets up to leave and everyone else follows suit as if this is a normal thing to do. No one drinks here. I realise in the weeks to come that it is one hundred percent certain that I am an alcoholic, and that my home land is a people of alcoholics. It is the only thing that we know how to do. And, let me assure you, living in this alternate reality where people actually have two drinks and then go home and this is a regular good night is fucking bizarre. What do they do? Imagine how much free time I'd have if I adapted this element of the Canadian way. Imagine how much writing I would do! But, no. I think against it. I can outdrink most people I know, certainly most of the men that I know, and even those triple my stature. In many ways it is like any other heroic semblance. Thus, it must be celebrated! More still, writers should drink! They must! Think of Hemmingway, think of Bukowski. The Greeks! They loved a drink! It is decided, then. I will go on drinking, I thought, for the good of art. Hell, for the good of civilisation!

I wonder are these the kind of people that I would be friends with at home. Maybe, I think. It's hard to translate. I think Tavis would fit in, by not fitting in. Nick is too straight, maybe. Either way, it's something to work with. More than Luke. So, well done, Luke, kind of. They are my friends, now. Tavis told me he will take me to *The Island*. We arranged a day and a time. My first social engagement! Followed swiftly by my second! Nick told me that he will show me around the neighbourhood, too. So far, so good. It is, all things considered, a much more successful second evening. But, then comes the night. Oh, the night. The unbearable night!

It is so hot I could cry. The heat, like glue, disgusting, the fan, the sheets, the fucking sofa, god damn it! Luke! How did you let this happen? I wouldn't have come! There were various nights throughout the trip where Luke would stay elsewhere, and I would get the bed, and be alone in the apartment, my apartment, then, and I so preferred these nights. It would have been better if it was that way the whole time. Dumbass. The windows of the living-room where I slept had screens like all the other windows in the apartment. So, at least there were no bugs, and that I could relish. If there's one thing that I hate, it's bugs. My worst nightmare vision is a world where giant bugs exist. More giant than in places such as Australia, or so I have been told by my brother who has been there, but I would not enjoy those places, either, for the same reasons. Repulsive. Every time I think about bugs I feel like they're on me and start itching all over. I think about the scarab beetles in *The Mummy* films. Well, good luck to you, bitches, those screens don't even let air through! You won't be getting your chops around this young flesh, I thought.

But, the heat had company and it came in canine form. As they say, One desperate grief cures with another's languish. Peculiar, it seems that there are lots of dogs here. And I heard this particular dog that second night. Perhaps I was too distressed by my romantic cod with Luke to notice the night before. The barking started. I suddenly remembered a screaming baby from my flight in. Now, with the heat and the dog, I really felt like crying. Dispatch, hound! I thought, hoping that my thought could will action. I imagined getting up from my sticky mess of thin sheets on the sofa, tip-toeing across the wood floors, out the apartment door, down the flight of stairs, across the linoleum vestibule, through the door, through the screen door, down the six steps of the stoop, scaling the metal fence, and grappling the wretched pup in a choke hold, wrestling it into submission, and then creeping back to sofa. But it is not the dog's fault. The night is too hot even for him. The poor miserable mutt. The dog will have his day, he's worth a dozen Lukes, at least. I decide to call him Curtis. I suspect that we will come to know each other better throughout the duration of my stay by way of his continuous barking and so it is worth giving him a name. What did I do to deserve this? I wondered. It was about to be a long, hot, summer. And I was left in this contemplation. Sullen. I was to spend many nights just this same way.

In the days following, I learned many new things but possibly the most incredible discovery concerned the existence of *The Old Composer*. It was the day after meeting Nick and Tavis and I was out exploring when I got a message from Luke disclosing to me that there was in fact a gentleman living in the apartment directly below our shared cell. Sod laughs!

Hey, the landlord is at home gardening and I'm not sure if he's going to be weird about giving keys to anyone else so can we meet up and go to the house together?

Uselessness, thy name is Luke!

So, I am not supposed to be here. As if the situation called for worsening, the landlord suffers from something called *synaesthesia*, though I don't know if "suffer" is the right word. Luke said "he sees sounds as colours". Synaesthesia is a syndrome where the person's senses are more connected than the average person's. It can present itself in various forms, for example a common form of it creates a link between letters or numbers and colours. So, the person may link the number four with the colour orange and so on. Many people who have the condition don't realise that others do not experience the same and the condition can develop at any time in a person's life. Apparently, the Landlord condition creates a link between sound and vision. Sounds create colours, like fireworks. Sounds can also stir up negative emotions, and the person is more generally audio-sensitive. Luke explains that he knows about the Landlord's condition because he learnt about it from the guy he is *sub-letting* the apartment from – another formerly errant detail. The day after I arrived here, Luke got an email from the guy explaining that the Landlord had complained about the "second person" and all of the noise being made during the daytime. What goes through Luke's head? Why must I now feel guilt? Anxiety? Why must you infect me with your dumb Canadian feelings? Your farcical circumstances?

I have not seen him - the Landlord. But, a girl can imagine, and I did. I was consumed in fact by thoughts of who he might be and what he might be like and whether or not despised me. I imagine him as Richard Attenborough, basically, when he was in his final quarter. The *Jurassic Park* years. All white beard and no John Christie (amateur-abortionist- célébra). Accordingly, I call him Richard. I doubt he cares what my name is. Ha! Richard Curtis! Perhaps the dog is his? He ought shut it up. I imagine that he wears sunglasses, always, even inside, even at night, and maybe he wears clothes made from linen. Either way, I think he probably wears sandals. I can only see his sunglasses, not his eyes. I wonder if anyone has seen his eyes in years. I'd say he only ever drinks root-beer and eats sandwiches with no butter.

Apparently, he is composing a symphony. I wonder if he is composing it from the visuals that the sounds create, or the sounds themselves. Basically, what this guy had not explained when sub-letting his one thousand, one hundred and eighty-five dollars a month apartment to Luke is that the guy downstairs expects complete silence during the day. Him and Richard had an agreement. He worked all day; it was no trouble for him. Or, you know what, he probably did tell Luke. Essentially, Luke is paying over two hundred and fifty dollars a week to live somewhere solely in the evening. I wonder how Luke gets himself into these ridiculous situations and then I realise I am stuck, too. I think about the hour I spent walking up and down the apartment's polished wood floors in my wooden clogs and I think about Richard downstairs with his head in his hands. I imagine that every sound we make reduces him to tears. Luke said that it was unreasonable and that he didn't care but he has insisted that we tiptoe around the apartment. Maybe the symphony is disturbed with every creak of the floor. I think Richard must be pretty bitter and I suppose I would be too, but I can only conclude that he has chosen the wrong way of making a living. In fact, it is probably the only source of income which negates daily social interaction. I think his floor must be carpeted, maybe that is a renovation he should have considered for upstairs. Maybe he should have chosen to live in the upstairs apartment. He probably doesn't talk much. Maybe a relative- his sister or mother – might call daily but the sounds upsets him. I am not sure that he knows what I look like but I think maybe he watches me and he despises me.

I shouldn't speculate. But, I think that the synaesthesia stuff must be like the film *Flubber* with colours flying around instead of flubber and, as I pranced up and down the apartment in my clogs on the hard wood floors, loud sharp sounds would scratch against the inside of his head RRRP! RRRP! RRRP! God, what a life. I wonder what he thinks of me... *loud blonde girl*. How long will she be here? Hundred percent he hates Luke. Maybe he takes his trash out at night to avoid social interaction. But, then, he was gardening in the day. All I'm saying is I didn't see it. Consider this, Luke, that any sane person in such entangled circumstances would not invite someone to stay. What is your thought process, Luke? Pretend it's real life. How comical!

He must think that I am one of these new invaders of the city, these young people ruining everything that is good in Toronto, the small-town vibe of his *Francis*. I wonder if he's ever been in love. I wonder why he makes his symphony I wonder if anyone hears it. I don't hear anything. Evidently, he can hear me. I feel so sorry to him. Maybe I could visit him. Maybe he's sick of the world now, sick of the

city, the place he moved so that he could be accepted for his art, way back when. And now he sees that it was foolish. And he longs for the quiet and seclusion and the green. *The Old Composer*. I always feel drawn to older men because I crave a father figure. Perhaps he's looking for a daughter. It seems unlikely in light of the email. I think about Nabokov, too, because he had synaesthesia, too. He was a genius. Maybe Richard is. I see the colours splatting on cabinets and walls and furnishings and now I see butterflies because Nabokov liked them. What a wonder is the imagination and how it mixes everything all up so vividly. My suspicion that Richard holds negative feelings towards me personally only goads my curiosity about him.

He's like this fey genius. A cultivated but unsympathetic mein. I feel pity for him – if it is at all proper for a stranger to feel pity for another stranger, one they have made up, in fact. Perhaps artists are miserable here. Perhaps after hearing colour for so many years everything has turned slightly grey. Then he locked himself inside upon detection of my arrival. And I imagine that he's gotten much worse and his symphony is all in a ruin. He's trying to craft a symphony so high and wild he'll never need to make another. He wants to trade this game he plays for happiness. Like the last invader and the one before that and the one before that, he must think. That might kill him and will at least frighten him in his native dwelling. My greasy hands all over his things, careless. The flux of company creates misery – Luke's new roommate. For both you and I, Richard, for both of us, believe me. I'm a usurper. Richard, I turn, too! Can you hear me?! He's always alone. And his heart is like ice. But, I bring the fire, Richard! If it be your will that I am absolutely silent then please make it known and I will abide. I can almost hear him singing, hear the symphony, while I writhe in sofa. See his tired face, see his old things, see a single apple core on the edge of the tiled kitchen counter. He could be my master. Not Luke. This is what I need; the wisdom of old, the scrutiny of melancholy. I'm a lot like you, Richard, I'll say. Follow me, he'll say.

Of course, I cannot possibly know what he is like at all, or what life is like for him. It must be hard for him to connect with people. They can't experience life in the unique way that he does, all colours and fireworks. But, it is only a more explicit instance of what we must all face up to; no one can ever experience life in the way that we do, and we can never experience theirs. It is sad. I think that Richard must be sad. The essential loneliness. But, it could make us happy, too. Our experience is totally unique and we can find creative ways to communicate it. Thus, the life of the writer. His symphony, just the same. Luke; barely conscious. However, no matter how much I fantasized about *The Old Composer*, no less did I resent my stupid state. If he turned out to be all I'd imagined, if he was destined to be my mentor, and I his student, then the stage had been set by the sloppiest of hands.

Ultimately, all else pales in comparison to pale Luke, the palest person I have ever seen, who is the ultimate thorn in my fucking side, the man himself. He's so pale. God, that dumb face. A blinking idiot – literally, he has one lazy eye. Or one blind eye. Or some form of defect. Whatever. He's an idiot. I keep it decent. What good is it my status as a legendary writer when it is wasted on him? I might as well be dead! But, after my few days lodging, I found out the *real* reason why he "couldn't". Remember, "*I can't*"?

Luke had, by some turn miraculous and preposterous in equal parts, a girlfriend. Her name is Ola. Ola looks exactly like me. What a strange life Luke leads. I think about Curtis. Luke is a lot like a dog, such simple choices and needs.

- There's someone else.
- What?
- The other night... that's why... I'm so sorry. I hate this. She's called Ola. We're together. I wanted to find the right time to tell you.
- Oh, right.
- What's she like?
- Well, she's a girl I've been seeing.
- Yeah...
- She's really nice.
- I would hope so.
- I wish that we could be together... this summer was meant to be so magical for us... in another situation...
- In the other situation, we would not be together.
- But you're so beautiful... but, so is she.
- All women are beautiful.
- But, you ... and her... are the most beautiful.
- Well, only one can be the most beautiful.
- It's not fair! Why is love so hard?
- But, love is not hard, it is soft.
- Man, you're so right!
- Look, Luke, it's fine.
- You're so great. You're so amazing. I don't deserve you. You are so good.

Vomit. Like he's choosing between his own life and death.

- Honestly, it's fine.
- I really bit myself in the foot. I have such bad luck!

What the fuck is he talking about?

- Look, it is what it is, and you know, we're still friends, we'll still have a great time.
- You're right. I can't wait. Just know that I love you. You're perfect. This has been torturing me. I'd rather be tortured!

Ugh, I'd rather listen to Curtis. Hell, I'd rather *be* Curtis, barking at the moon.

I don't think that Luke has the first clue about his own feelings or how to act at all. Ha! The smoothest water of all. Less a ship of fools and rather a ghost ship. It was one of the more particularly excruciating conversations I'd ever had. His performance is so formulaic. But at the same time so sincere! Cringe! This is what I mean with these Canadians. What are you meant to believe? That they really just perform straight off the cuff and tell you everything they really feel? Abnormal! I don't know what Ola is like. Perhaps she is half-witted. It is good, I suppose, that he has found her. It relieves me of any inferred duty. Why would he have let me come knowing all of this? I'm not saying that he's braindead but, in reality, who would allow this turn of events to unfold? God knows what he thought of it all, if he thought at all. And so, I was stuck with him. We were stuck, together! Only one bed - you couldn't make it up!

Of all the evils in the world, an idiot is the worst; Luke's exclusive incompetence commands the promise of my journey, and governs over my new

existence. Like opening a box of chocolates to find that only the gross fruit-crème filled fucks are left. What hinderance you've brought upon me, Luke! My fervour hampered my prudence. He exudes averageness, lousy with insignificance, one-dimensional, ignorant, oblivious, so limited, simple-minded, unsophisticated, so without personality, apart from trying to sound like a movie script, so detached from complex conceptualisation. Toronto is the South, and Luke is the pits. There are no grapes on the vine. Sad fact. One of us cannot be wrong. How was I going to survive a whole summer of his tedious romanticising of life and childlike renderings of love? No wonder he falls in love with every woman that he meets! His brain is missing. Or, maybe it's that eye of his. An indiscriminate lover. The pleasure of frustration? No, just frustration! Frustration is a torn pocket. Like catching your sweater on a door handle. A door handle has more sense than Luke. Canada, Canada, all around me, and great lugging idiot right in my way.

And maybe I could have taken it upon myself to train him, to help him mature into a full and rounded man, strong in love, and capable in life. But my own task was herculean to begin with! I had to rehearse my new role. And besides, why is it that in order to realise her own story a woman has to teach a dumb guy to not be an ass? It wasn't my problem. Well, it was, and it wasn't. He was a nonstarter. Waiting for Luke to evolve into an effective person would be as dreary as dragging his dead body down a beach. Trying to fix Luke would be as easy as shutting Curtis up. Why does he pull that face when he asks a question? Why does he look so fretful at all times? Good god. I am baffled by him. He is baffled, generally. You hick! It's like extremely sincere amateur dramatics. So uncomfortable. Let me explain something to you, Luke. Us Britons are accustomed to hiding our true feelings and putting on a show. Have some respect. I've always taken care to make others feel comfortable. Screw this! I will not teach Luke how to be a person. This is about me. It is not my job to develop his stunted view of the world. I won't waste my time speaking sense to a fool.

Most of these things I don't *want* to say. I didn't hate him, because I didn't love him. I know that Luke's heart is good and pure, that he wants for simple things and does not want to hurt, he sees life as better than it can be, but does not see the actual goodness in real life. I hope that his journey offers him some time or cause for experimentation. Although, perhaps I do not. I don't know if I wish it on anyone. It is the only way that we can get the very wonderful most out of life but too it requires dealing with those bads of life that I would not wish on Luke. So, let him live in his dream. He lives his life as if it's real. What is the harm in it? I just had to settle in with him. It was awkward because we hadn't seen each other in so long. I mean, it wasn't yesterday. I choose to soft-soap him for the duration, and, thus, the majority, of my trip.

Fortune forbid! Sentenced by Fate to live with this incompetent. I swear if he existed I'd kill him. I should have known. The airport! That was my omen. Still, it would have been too late had I recognised it anyway. Too late to find out that you are lame, Luke. Neither practical nor entertaining and in dumb-faced witlessness. Too much of a bad thing! Okay, so my advice at this stage – or should I say one of the first lessons that I learned in Canada: never, ever, judge a person based on how they act on holiday. The irony! I mean, I should have known sooner. Who chooses to take someone for a sandwich as their first ever meal in a new place? Whatever. I did not know. Weed in the freezer! Idiot! How could I not know?! Fate had outwitted me.

But, as a traveller I could not speak my mind freely; it would be undignified, and insult the very splendid opportunity which my position as *new* granted me. I have to keep up appearances. I must stay in character, Alex Tymon the wonderful!

Luke was, neither wicked nor wise, my guide. It wasn't the *worst* situation. I was grateful for the uncertainty, and for all of the horrors and suffering to which I was being subjected. You can really learn a lot this way. And when one is so accustomed to terminal uncertainty, new kinds of uncertainty pose no specific threat. And perhaps no it isn't the exact image that I had created in my fantasies about the experience but there I was, and I *was in* Canada, definitely, at least. And, anyway, the writer's journey should be chock-full of such obstacles, conflicts, and trifles. Everything was going to be great. Of course, the worse that things are, the better that they may become! I must demonstrate an honourable and patient resolve. The wise plot their own course. What can I do? It's just as well, really. I'm the better side of disappointment. After all, I am not unversed in pain and suffering. Conflict beckons the brave! I will persevere with all my hopes. My pedestal kicked from beneath, only to topple, alone, around Canada and see what it has to offer to me. I will not be crumpled by doubt. I could die tomorrow. It must be some forgone conclusion, I thought. My bed, the sofa. Here I was, a writer living in somewhat of a dosshouse and managing by. Brilliant! Even the most perfect boundary is a rough and broken terrain, crisscrossed with gulleys, and pierced with branches. What greater joy than being confronted with a new world, no matter the struggles it presents? I still have a lot going for me, I thought. Can you believe it? The people back home would ask each other. Alex Tymon went to *Walmart!* Anything is possible! I still felt strong and powerful and Luke wasn't going to change that. In fact, he brightened my own spark with his worseness.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

SYNOPSIS

CANADA is a metafictional-pastoral-satirical-monomythic-roman-à-clef-bildungsroman-novel which follows and is told by the young and brave Alex Tymon as she embarks on a great quest across the Atlantic and a transformational journey of the self. The majority of the action takes place in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and New York City, New York, USA, as well as Manchester, sometime about a decade ago. In *Part I: GOING*, we meet Alex and learn that she is on the cusp of a dramatic change in life. After surviving a near-fatal misuse of prescription medication, Alex rises from the ashes a new woman and wants to explore the world; to make life worth living. The reader travels with Alex to Canada, facing harsh conflicts and struggles along the way, and meeting a variety of memorable characters, including *The Old Composer*, Christie Perry, and Jacob Hernando (!), in an assortment of exotic settings, as she sets about an inspired new life as a writer. Alex stays with a friend, Luke Giga, who she met years earlier at a friend's New Year's Eve party. We accompany Alex as she gains experience through a variety of fluke occurrences, romantic trysts, failed plans, and surprises at every turn. In *Part II: COMING*, Alex returns to *CANADA*, and we find that she has learned and changed in complex ways since that fated first trip. After initially rejecting a quest for love in preference of a quest to become a writer, we learn that Alex now conceptualises love, literature, and life in more mature, more realistic, and more sophisticated ways. The novel comes to a close as Alex attends the wedding of two friends, Victoria and Ekow, of the New Year's Eve party and reflects on what she has learned over the years, over the

Atlantic, over the experience of life. Essentially, *CANADA* is a story about a journey of self-development, about the significant roles that others play in our journeys, about the differences between us, and the similarities, and, finally, *CANADA* questions the compatibility of the roles of “Writer”, “Lover”, “Woman”, “Friend”, and “Human”. Alex asks, “*Why is it that we can be in our own heads but not each other’s?*”, all the while trying to craft and communicate her own story. At the end, we learn that Alex is more conventional than she first realised in some respects, and, yet, in others, she is equipped to break the mould. The novel in its entirety opens up a more resonant debate: *Can the self be transformed?* The answer seems to be yes, with regard to most elements, but not without time and considerable difficulty. Alex has indeed succeeded by the close of the book in transforming herself into a considerate and balanced woman. However, various knots in her romantic conceptualisation linger on. We suspect that it is not her role as writer which stops her from experiencing love but that it is deeper within her self - her foundational connections to men were damaged irrevocably. But, the novel’s conclusion leaves us with the warm feeling that Alex’s shortcomings need not cause her necessarily a miserable, tragic life. *CANADA* is novel about real, living, people; it is an education of the heart and the self which amplifies and enriches the conventional sense of human possibility, of the perfectibility of the self, of what human nature is, of what happens in the world, its language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree and mining for all they are worth the highs and lows of the human spirit.

WRITER’S NOTE

CANADA is presented as a practice-based response to the tenets of the SoCo prosaics, a creative engagement with various ideas, themes, and debates established by SoCo theory, and a creative product which fulfils SoCo’s definition of creativity which is principally two types of generic engagement; *competence and experimentation*. The representative selection of chapters 1-3 provided demonstrates each of these qualities. It is three chapters, not four, and not by matter of coincidence, and not reflective of the productivity-eminence scale, but instead of a choiceful selection in accordance with what *kind* of chapters are represented and what *type* of criteria they correspond with, and the *way* in which they enable gist-abstraction and thus interpretation of the text as a whole, of its engagement with SoCo theory, and of its emergence from the prosaics. In actuality, I began with the verdict to present chapters 1-3, and then I added 4, in order to introduce *The Old Composer character* in the provided selection, and, then, later, I changed back to three chapters again but for new reasons. However, this decision called not only for the melding of the original chapters 3 and 4 into one but also for a larger and in my opinion all-round-beneficial restructuring of the book’s narrative arrangement, of which the melding of 3 and 4 came to be only one part. Of course, the reader would not know this if I didn’t tell them. The selection introduces the action of the book in full, its narrative voice, its central characters, Alex and Luke, the main setting, as well as various future settings and events, and it contains the hard generic work of establishing all of the book’s major themes, metaphors, motifs, and other generic engagements.

The major themes of *CANADA* might create a list like the following: performance, identity, change, values, experiment, significance, *all the world's a stage*, journeys, time, people, nature, metamorphosis, choice, wilderness, love, transformation, literature, wandering, *a whole new world*, convention, acting, place, conversion, *actual versus ideal*, life, loneliness, position, similarity, theatricality, self, fate, homecoming, friendship, irony, weather, difference, distance, glory, art, disguise, accommodation, rage, going, intuition, hosts, culture, coming back. Motifs include: dog, wine, clothes, appliances, weather, food, directions/roads, the colour red. Note that many of these themes and motifs are shared by SoCo, as well as by classical artistic tradition, and as well by Shakespearean art. As well as by *pastoral-comic* art and by *pastoral-tragic* art. While it may seem that there is a concentration on paltry detail, the chosen motifs, for instance, clothes, are actually seeped in genre and speak volumes about SoCo.

The selection introduces *CANADA*'s protagonist-cum-narrator (or perhaps vice versa) as a green twenty-two-year-old, rosy-eyed, and ready for action. She is not unreasonably excited in terms of her trip but it is slightly unnerving to consider that this is a retelling years later. Over the course of the book it will become clear that the narrator was caught up in reliving the moment made likely by faulty wiring from childhood trauma but that she has in fact changed by the end (and thus the beginning). At this stage, (chapters 1 & 2) she is committed to seeing it all in a certain way. Alex enters the new SoCo and we enter her narrative voice and delivery-style – scatty, disorganised, sentimental, digressive, immature. Other characters call her by her full name “Alex Tymon” as though she is renowned.

The first conversation between Alex and Luke that we experience reveals already that Luke is Alex's inferior in terms of competence and is somewhat more sincere in his affections towards her than she is in hers. Her spell of fantasising about *The Old Composer* tells us even more about her approach to men and to love, though not explicitly. Alex the narrator is obviously reliving the mystery of his unknown identity, a looming presence over her time in Canada, considering that at the time of writing years later she knows his real identity. One of many instances of irony throughout the selection and the book, she says that she couldn't know and shouldn't speculate but goes on to do those very things at length. The passage about “Richard” – as she has named him at this stage – provides evidence of just how frenzied her fantasies can spin. Revealing her own personality traits, behaviours, and values by obsessively imagining someone else – and that someone is a man who she assumes despises her simply for existing. She reveals her engagement with dysfunctional, reverent conceptualisations of men, all kinds of men, and a troubled conceptualisation of love. *The Old Composer* is imagined as a sort of *Jaquesian* old man/mentor/guide figure. Her dependency on patriarchal values and structures and fantasies is reflected in the barrier that Luke poses to her exploration of Canada. Despite her renunciation of the romantic endeavour, her situation is steeped in generic romance tropes; the “*stuck-together*” situation, the *taming*, the *love-triangle*, the *one bed*, the *hot summer*, the *French restaurant*, *et cetera*. Alex is keen, as well, to keep up appearances, and thus she is a willing participant in what she begins to denounce as Luke's nonsense. It becomes clear that Alex sees love as like a game, a fantasy, or a performance, and that while she parades her new self around she still courts low self-esteem and unfavourable behaviours. She is having a love affair with herself, really. Alex is more concerned with the details of her trip and

going away somewhere new and being her new self, whereas Luke is presented as a typical *Petrarchan Lover*, which Alex lampoons as ridiculous. He uses lots of bad metaphors, clichéd, basic and idealistic conceptualisations, and generally reveals his ineptitude through his misuse and/or dearth of language. The different language that the two use in conversation demonstrates also the cultural contrast between their speaking conventions – and thus their conceptualisations of life. Alex establishes their two distinct voices – Luke’s Canadian voice and her English voice.

At first Alex is drunk on novel experience, ridiculously optimistic, noticing but choosing to ignore any potential flaws, and gayly tolerant of Luke’s idiocy. Alex’s dialogue with Luke is similar to Rosalind talking to Orlando in *As You Like It*. From the beginning of chapter 3 there is a marked change in Alex’s tone and attitude; the other shoe has dropped and she becomes extremely cynical about Luke, observing many of his intolerable idiosyncrasies and ineptitudes, and learning of several facts about their circumstances that Luke failed to inform her about prior to arriving. Some of this information is revealed through her interactions with his more competent friends. However, Alex refuses the opportunity to train Luke and instead concentrates on her own journey of self-growth. Alex reveals a naïve stance on art, reeling off unattainable ideals, alongside her naïve conceptualisation of the trip and of Canada, which will be transformed by the end of the book. Her approach is revealed in one instance by her pseudo-use of the French language. Alex also reveals her duality; she is acting the part with Luke but thinking something else entirely. Obviously, there is an indicator for humour, here. But, with the love potential squashed almost immediately, what is the journey about? What is it for? Romance is off the table (for now), so what is on it? Alex steps into a role that neither the classical women, nor Rosalind, nor even Orlando (Woolf) could. She is on a journey purely to accrue experience and to perfect her craft as a writer. Alex is a woman who is free to live, to write, to travel, and, horror of all horrors, women’s greatest sin; to change!

CANADA performs spirited engagement with various genres, tones, and narrative arcs, including the *trip* or *quest* narrative, often called *The Hero’s Journey*; the *renaissance-pastoral-romantic-satirical-comedy*, and *Classical Greek Tragedy* and *Middle Comedy*. We find that the travel details of the journey have been skipped. The journey is over before it begins. Traditionally, of course, these details constitute a key element of trip narrative construction. The reader is plopped magically, along with Alex, in Canada, with no information about the *type* of trip which transported either of us there. There have been no obstacles to Alex’s (or our) arrival in Canada, as far as the reader has been made aware. The majority of the action expected from a conventional journey narrative has elapsed without comment. So, where do we go from here? The reader must modify their expectations in order to accommodate the omission. If we are not to learn about the details of the journey *to* Canada, then it can be inferred that we will come to learn, instead, about a journey which takes place *within* Canada, *following arrival*. Despite the lack of travel details, *CANADA* begins with a bombardment of introductory tropes straight from The Hero Journey playbook. Alex conceptualises travel conventionally, as device which sets the stage for conflicts, lessons, and transformations. The action retains this function of the travel device though its delivery is ironic. The wanderer type is traditionally a tragic type yet here, arguably like in *As You Like It*, the type is adopted by a comic and female hero.

But, in many ways, Alex turns the journey principle on its head. Her trip has no “point” – no educational or exploratory expedition. Her guide is not erudite and is in fact a hindrance to the exploration. Furthermore, for a book called *Canada* (which is set variously in Canada, America, and England) we learn actually very little about and see very little of the country. The quest is for nothing. Alex borders on an antihero. She is not chaste or necessarily moral but you still have to love her and go along with her because it’s her quest, whether or not there is anything to find. From chapter 3, the ironic and satirical sort of pastiche-baroque-melodramatic tone reflects Alex’s sharp intellect and wit if at the same time her immaturity, and her tone will change as her character develops. As she recounts the action it is as if she is embodying the mindset of the time at which the events took place. So the reader experiences the development in voice, in outlook, in conceptualisation, in competence, in realism, and in experience. Initially, and what will become a more subtle stylistic element, is an over-the-top, clichéd, hyper-punctuated, and bordering-on-absurdist rhetoric, satirising artists while at the same time celebrating them. Alex regurgitates classical arguments but at the same time delivers them with a smothering of irony. The selection sets up several future disappointments and ironies to be revealed later. From chapter 2 onwards, the style of dialogue is introduced, as inspired by Leonard Cohen’s style in his two novels, *Beautiful Losers* and *The Favourite Game*. The narrative voice flits between haughty melodrama and quirky digressions and conversational style evocative of oral storytelling. The synopsis employs the same tone as the narrative voice and satirises the Synopsis genre. *CANADA* as a whole satirises literary convention, generally, and the trip narrative, primarily but at the same time takes these conventions very seriously.

CANADA pokes fun at literary stereotypes and traditional trip narratives which treat travelling as a form of “finding” oneself. The entrance of an individual into a new SoCo should not be used to “find” a self but instead as arena for *creating* oneself. Alex lampoons the traditional concept by embarking on her trip with a new identity already devised and thus on the bias. While her journey illuminates the problems with the traditions of the trip genre, ironically she still fails to grasp the true power of the quest device until the end when she can look back on what really happened; she wasn’t fully cooked when she set out, she was made into the woman that she is at the end of the book by the years and the places and the people that have happened in between, Canada representing the gist for her of the development. In the beginning, she sees Canada as a stage on which to perform her newly-improved self-role. By the end, she realises that it is her continued rehearsal and refinement of the role which has in fact come to constitute it. Our self cannot be “found”, it is shaped over time, and over that time, we develop, and refine, and change it in complex and nuanced ways. Travellers feel that they have “found” themselves because the new SoCo makes them realise their dependence on the old, known, and familiar SoCo, and the various generic distinctions which emerge. They can they choose whether or not they wish to adapt or rigidly defend. So, they start from a position of ignorance; the trip makes them aware. Alex is aware already and can manipulate her performance. But, what she cannot manipulate are universal struggles such as weather, writer’s block, loneliness, Sod, *et cetera*.

The moment of realisation comes, as is conventional in comedy, at the beginning – as opposed to in tragedy where the realisation comes at the end (too

late). But, unlike traditional comedy where there is potential for further action, the recognition is accompanied by the inhibition of further action – for the travel, for love, for having interesting things to write about. Alex realises all of Luke's faults. She has already completed the journey to Canada. The real journey must take place in Canada, or so the reader is left to assume. And, since the potential for love has been squashed, and the unravelling of the irony already achieved, what is left but a sincere quest for *experience*. Because the only viable option is sincerity it is clear that the approach must be in many ways absurd so as to carry and successfully convey its sincere messages. The tone must be faux-heroic, satirical, absurd. It is only in this way that the comic can transcend sentimentality.

The protagonist character engages with the lengthy tradition of the woman as presented on stage from tragic women in Ancient Greek plays, such as Medea and Iphigenia, to the Aristophanic female as embodied by Praxagora, then jumps to deal with Shakespeare's interpretation of a woman travelling to another world; Rosalind, and further still grapples with Virginia Woolf's handling of the woman as writer. Alex is a capable, educated, and by most measures privileged young white girl. She is free to write and to roam the world but we find that she is still drawn to patriarchal structures – and to men – and she is still subject to male ineptitude. Instead of denouncing self-expression, as Woolf would have it, she takes up both endeavours; to express and develop the self and to make art for art's sake. Unlike Woolf's Orlando who travels through time magically as the same person but a different gender, Alex travels through time and place realistically as the same sex but a different *person*. In terms of generic development, Alex shows how you can be like a man for comic purposes like Rosalind but in contrast to the tragic women which help to inform her construction including Medea and Iphigenia. Alex utilises disguise much more subtly than Rosalind because she has no need to pretend to be a man – though one would not call her generically "lady-like". But, she still performs, and she curates and cultivates her performance. Disguise as it pertains to social identity (which it always does) is arguably one of the central themes in the book although it is a more subtle application. Her disguise is emotional and performative. She is performing the role of the new, happy, and successful Alex. The reader gets privy to her true feelings which often contrast humorously. Her's is a self-established constraint, unlike other forms of disguise such as Rosalind's which can be considered technically a necessary transformation to brave the forest – although I always find her decision dubious. Alex is free to take pleasure in her performance and to utilise it as social currency, and she gets to enjoy the silliness of life's conventions as opposed to abhorring them. Alex as a woman is free to travel, explore, experiment, and write – decency forbid! Still men seem to rule Alex's life. And so, we get the sense that while life for women has changed a great deal, it hasn't changed all that much because generic traditions continue to shapes the selfs and performances of women. As conveyed through an abundance of male characters and sexual/romantic entanglements and romps, although Alex moves from one SoCo to another, she does not move away from the strong male influence on her identity, choices, and feelings.

Because of the humiliations and deprivations that Luke adds to her life, it is easy to understand why Alex would never marry a man like him. She doesn't really want all that movie stuff. She wants basic security. Though, it must always be tinged with the insecure if she is to remain interested. How can this careful balance be

achieved? Danger in the midst of high security? Is it tenable? Is it not a perfect description of the writer's predicament, their task? The artist's? the creator's? Without risk we cannot develop, yet structure is our boon. The idea of an education in self and love mirrors the themes of *As You Like It*, of course, and echoes throughout *CANADA*. Alex considers the choices available to her and the relationships between love and the critical imagination, between the options for women of a life and a career, of creating, truly creating, or of the other kind of creating, the babies, the marriage, the woman things. Can we have both? Is it compatible? I mean compatible, harmonious, and not possible, of course. Does the woman who has the intelligence and creativity and ambition and discipline to be a successful artist have the right mind to want to do those woman things, those love things, and to be capable of wanting them in the right way as accords with all of the traditions? And because there *is* a right way, to love, like Ekow and Victoria, who marry and have children because they are happy and they love each other and they want to and they can. Alex is more cynical than Rosalind but she adopts a more realistic and in fact more sentimental conceptualisation of self and life and love by the end, with no help from Luke. Paris said about Rosalind and Orlando's relationship, "the ingredients are here for a satirical treatment, and, indeed, there is some gentle mockery; but the relationship is an authorial fantasy in which love at first sight does not turn out to be foolish". *CANADA* demonstrates an apparent and/or feigned love at first sight which turns out not to be love at all, or at least, not love with another person. Love at first sight turns out to be a faulty and in-much-need-of-mending conceptualisation of love and a lack of experience and self understanding; a desperate cry for self-love!

Alex swaps multiple weddings for multiple trips and by the close she achieves a herculean development of a balanced (though imperfect) self-love and approach to life. Eventually, none of the men in the book match up to her. The singular wedding at the end of the book, Ekow and Victoria's, sums up Alex's takeaway that she sees love now as a beautiful thing, but perhaps not for her. Both writing and men have come to mean different things to her. We suspect somehow at the end that it is not her role as writer (as she maintains) which stops her from experiencing love but that it is deeper within her self - her foundational connection to men which is damaged irrevocably but perhaps need not cause tragic misery. , it is clear that her conceptualisation of life interacts still constantly and dependently with the male genre. And so, the Iphigenia narrative directs us. Will Alex work out the death of her father and her not so healthy relationships with men? Or will she sacrifice her chance at a comic narrative in order to remain wedded to her traumatised construction of the male genre. Furthermore, if she is to eventually "figure out" these conceptualisations in a healthy manner, does a standard romantic relationship really align with the self that she has created, with the life of "a writer"? Counselling in loving the self so that you don't end up like Medea, for starters, but not necessarily so that you will end up like Rosalind: married. We can achieve the same values about love by starting with our most important relationship – the self.

Alex's validity as the spokesperson for the central comic vision of *CANADA* lies not simply in her scathing commentary about others and her awe-struck lyricism in response to the pastoral settings of Aurora and Omemee but also she becomes vehicle for exposing the inherent ridiculousness of her *own* attitudes. Alex is at once a romantic spirit and also a cynical iconoclast towards the standard romantic

convention. Canada is patently not an Eden-like place – or at least not through the filter of Luke. However, Alex does cherish the biblical, green, pastoral in extended glimpses. She conveys through her handling of pastoral themes that while it's a nice idea that travel can change us, and that certain places are magical and free, it's not true – or, at least, it's not so straight-cut. She provides self-reflective commentary on the unreality of the pastoral convention realising that life is about achieving a balance. The pastoral is not an attainable ideal. It must be considered a practice, a perspective, an approach, a genre. A force or a principle which we can *use* in life. Her engagement with pastoral themes highlights the benefits but also the difficulties of entering a different SoCo but because she views Canada in general with a pastoral lens she proves that the pastoral renders histrionic manipulation not only possible but essential. She interprets the pastoral tradition conventionally in many ways, as a playworld where anything is possible, with different orders, anchoring, and organisation. She understands that what is pastoral to some is just everyday life to others and that the outsider must *always* perform. In these respects, CANADA can be considered traditional pastoral comedy.

Alex starts off with a comic perspective. In chapter 3, we see her falter and she spends the time interpreting comic action in a tragic way. But, by the end of the chapter she is resolved to seeing things comically. Then, throughout the book, we notice that this “comic choice” is active in all of her decisions but at the same time her rationality is increasing, which is seemingly counterintuitive. But, in this respect, CANADA is pointing to a glaring issue in dealing with comic material: we presume that comedy is irrational. Of course, such an observation could be made only by someone lacking competence in the comedy genre. Humour – that device we associate most readily with the comedy genre – depends entirely on our *sense*, our generic inferences and expectations, of what is rational. One could talk of “joke logic”. The comic perspective requires – demands – if anything much more rationality than the tragic. But, comparisons aside, the comic interpretation and utilisation of rationality may indeed be less simple to detect. Sometimes, remember, it is rational to behave irrationally. It is important to “throw caution to the wind” in various circumstances. The comic hero needs to be capable of knowing how to navigate these kinds of choices and, indeed, we can squeeze a few laughs at their failed attempts but these failed attempts contribute much more to the character's comic development than is usually recognised.

Alex undergoes a willing adaptation, though she may not be aware of its wider implications. We see developments in seemingly arbitrary details such as the state of her accommodations, which improve over the course of the book and the various trips. On her final stay, she has a whole apartment, and a terrace, out back, of her own! The decline in Canada's appeal to her mirrors the incline of her realism. At the beginning, Alex conceptualises her role as the interesting and happy new person or stranger. She realises by PT II. that the role is not maintainable or substantial and could not be performed with any longevity. She dislikes being in the *second world* at this stage, because she realises that she no longer wants to be roleless as holiday-time renders us. Now that she has developed a comprehensive and meaningful role at home, she sees Canada as a pointless vacation. She now perceives home differently. She considers that she may no longer belong in either place and makes comparative observations about academia and art. She observes as a general response to these comparisons that *time makes things comic*, conjuring Morrissey's

“I can laugh about it now but at the time it was terrible” and also continuing the thematic engagement with the pastoral tradition and *As You Like It* specifically, well-known for its extensive reference to time in through its pastoral forest where famously “there’s no clock” to tell “the swift foot of time”, where people “fleet the time carelessly” and “willingly waste” their time.

Alex is not transformed into a perfect faultless being. Instead she is a woman. Now, she picks her skin instead of her nose and sweats in the night rather than crying. It is different but the same. But she is more choiceful. More competent. More experimental. And she is content. And she is trying. As she says herself in the final chapter,

I’ve been through many peaks and valleys, good things and bad, and, throughout it all, I’ve been... persistent. I’ve been... earnest... Never hesitant.

She is a version of the modern female comic hero.

CANADA is relentlessly allusive – *generic* – like the mind. Like the title and subsequent contents suggest, the novel plays with the SoCo argument about gist-extraction and gist-elaboration. A story is governed by the perspective from which it is told and thus generic choices function to support that perspective. Look at history. It is told by the winners and this group then choose which stories are told and whether they are told as comedies or tragedies. A gist can be elaborated for comic or tragic effect. Good writers make things more complicated and threaten the generic manipulation of the dominant perspective. A thrilling example is Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Why did he present Richard as a *tragic* hero? Why do we root for Richard? Generic choices reveal a wealth of engagement and, for lack of a better phrase – after all, it’s one of Shakespeare’s, the method in a writer’s madness. More so, generic choices function as a means to telling *different versions* of a story. History is told “on the bias” we might say, diagonally, slant; like all good literature. Thus, vis-à-vis our consistent desire to figure out what writers *mean* – and thank Sod for the consistency! – it is worthwhile for us to develop a keen generic competence. *CANADA* is a creative interpretation of SoCo’s themes and questions, as well as the tenets provided by the SoCo prosaics, which reflects primarily the proposition that the interaction of the individual and the social; the specific and the generic; the private and the public constitutes the central mechanism of creativity and life.

To follow is a concise list of the major generic material which informed the construction of the novel, a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes work of practice-based research:

Shakespeare – chiefly, but not limited to, *As You Like It* and its hero Rosalind; Classical Greek Drama – both comedy and also tragedy – *Medea* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides; *Assemblywomen* by Aristophanes; The *trip* or *journey* narrative; *Bildungsroman*; Critical engagement with forebears including Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, and centuries of Shakespeare and Genre criticism; Canadian writers Carol Shields and Leonard Cohen. Other writers Sylvia Plath, Philip Roth, Charles Bukowski, Richard Brautigan, and Vladimir Nabokov; Canadian singers Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Drake; New York singers Lou Reed and The Velvet

Underground and The Ramones and The Stooges; and the conceptual genres of art, love, life, and self.

I did consider in what arrangement I should present these “creative” elements, *CANADA* and its supporting material, and decided upon the current order; *CANADA* first, supporting material after. I arrived at the decision after contemplation of the reverse ordering, which I rejected because such an arrangement would deny the reader of the greatest quality of the reading experience; the bliss of aesthetic and conceptual (generic) surprise. In order to retain the benefit of the original readerly experience, any potential preparatory benefit of foreknowledge about my creative process and intention was forfeited. Instead, a more pleasing outcome is hoped for. It is hoped that the reader will read *CANADA*, experiencing the aforementioned bliss, then come to the supporting material, which they will read and think “ah! I got that” or perhaps “oh, I must have missed that”, all the while feeling urged to re-read *CANADA* armed with all of this newly-acquired generic information. And, by enforcing a rigorous and yet no less delightful and blissful engagement with the text, I will have succeeded in the purpose of the writer; to engage.

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