Genres as Rules

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Abstract: What is unique about art genres? In this paper, I will show that genres are best understood as clusters of regulative rules for appreciation. Interpretations, evaluations, and other appreciative responses to a work of art are sensitive to how the work is categorised, and genres are the categories that play a normative role in this context. Genres as rules have social foundations and arise from a speech act that I distinguish from classification and call *framing*. Based on this account, I will illustrate genre practices as social practices in which we declare and propose rules of appreciation to each other.
Keywords: art criticism; categories of art; genre; philosophy of art; rules

1. Introduction

The first observation is this: artworks are categorised. Let us call statements like '*Impression, Sunrise* (1872) is an Impressionist painting', '*Fountain* (1917) is categorised as a Ready-made', and 'The category of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) is Magic Realism' *categorical statements*. A wide variety of art categories appear in categorical statements, including horror, science fiction, painting, film, Baroque, Expressionism, blues, haiku, Impressionism, the Nouvelle Vague, Hitchcock films, French literature, and 19th-century poetry. The artworld is full of different categories of art.

The second observation is this: the categories of art do not exist as homogeneous entities, but rather with important distinctions. These distinctions are suggested by the meta-categories that classify the categories of art. For example, horror is a genre, Baroque is a style, haiku is a form, and painting is a medium. This paper focuses on the meta-category of genre and argues that the categories that are genres have an ontological structure and roles that are fundamentally different from those of styles, forms, and media.

In contemporary aesthetics in the English-speaking world, the subject of the category of art has become a popular topic of discussion, beginning with the seminal work of Kendall Walton (1970). However, Walton treats categories as homogeneous and pays little attention to distinctions at the meta-category level. In recent years, theories that focus on the concept of genre have gradually increased, but as we will see later, even here they have not succeeded in clarifying the unique features of categories and only categories that are genres; in many cases, the 'genre' of art remains a synonym for 'category' (Currie 2004; Laetz and Lopes 2008; Abell 2012, 2015; Friend 2012; Evnine 2015; Liao 2016; Terrone 2021; Malone 2022, 2024). The aim of this paper is to fill this gap.

The discussion will proceed as follows. First, I will examine the approach that sees genres as concepts for *classification* (section 2). According to this view, each genre is a concept that tracks a specific cluster of features and classifies individual artworks that meet these features. I will show that this approach fails, even with its possible modifications. Next, I will construct and defend an idea implicitly shared in some existing theories of genre as the *genres-as-rules* account (section 3). According to this view, each genre is a cluster of rules that regulate different appreciative responses. I will show that the genres-as-rules account is more promising in that it is consistent with two observations about genres: genres have roles in appreciation and criticism, and in a way not unrelated to these roles, genres have a social character. If genres are rules, then they are concepts not for classifying, but for an act I call *framing*. Finally, I will explore this consequence (section 4).

2. Genres-as-Features

Common sense suggests that genre is a way of classifying artworks, and that classification is based on the features that artworks have. The approach of understanding genres by focusing on their association with features or properties of artworks has been variously called *genres as regions of conceptual space*, *genres-as-concepts*, *genres-as-features*, and so on (Evnine 2015, 2; Terrone 2021, 17; Malone 2022, 2; See Currie 2004; Todorov 1990). Genres track groups of features relevant to their membership, and individual artworks are judged to belong to a particular genre based on their possession of relevant features. As a very simple example, romantic works are a group of artworks that share the theme of romance.

This view does not necessarily assume that there are necessary and sufficient conditions for genre membership. According to a more promising approach, genre membership is based on the sufficient fulfilment of a cluster of relevant features (Abell 2012, 70; Friend 2012, 187; Terrone 2021, 18). One might consider a fantasy artwork to be one that depicts many, if not all, of the repertoire of legendary creatures, magic, witches, and so on. A paradigmatic artwork for the genre would satisfy most of these features, while a marginal instance would satisfy only some of them.

Following Walton (1970, 339), let us call the features relevant to category membership the *standard features*. An artwork becomes more qualified as a member of a category by having more of that category's standard features, and less qualified as a member by having fewer of those features or more of conflicting features (contra-standard features). For paintings, being flat or stationary is a standard feature, while having a three-dimensional object protruding or moving is a contra-standard feature. Standard features provide clues to help us classify artworks into categories, but each feature is neither necessary nor sufficient for category membership.

However, being associated with a set of standard features does not help to clarify what is unique about genres, because categories of art in general, not just genres, are associated with sets of features. As we have seen in the example above, painting is a category of art associated with a set of standard features, but it is not necessarily a genre. Painting is usually thought of as a paradigm of the meta-category of medium rather than genre (Abell 2012, 80).

Proponents of the genres-as-features account have often been indifferent to this point, using 'genre' as a synonym for 'category'. For example, Stacie Friend (2021, 18) and Enrico Terrone (2021, 18) have attempted to characterise 'Fiction as a Genre' and 'Science Fiction as a Genre', respectively, but there seems to be little problem with paraphrasing their attempts as characterizing 'Fiction as a Category' and 'Science Fiction as a Category'. This is because 'genre' in their usage means nothing more than a category with a set of standard features.

If one wants to clarify what is unique about genres, then proponents of the genres-as-features account need to go further. A natural strategy for them is to map different meta-categories onto different types of standard features. Genres, forms, styles, and media are all concepts for classifying, but the categories that fall under each of them track standard features that differ in type. Let us refrain from calling this the *genres-as-a-specific-type-of-features* account and simply let 'genres-as-features' stand

for this modified view. The task of proponents is then to clarify the unique type of features that genres track. I will eventually show that this approach is not promising, but for now let us see how far we can get with it. What is the type of features that, other things being equal, the presence of some features of that type would count toward a particular work belonging to a genre category?

Artwork can have different types of features. Take *Impression, Sunrise* as an example. First, a painting has a certain size and weight. On its surface, there are shapes and colours arranged in a certain way. Based on these non-aesthetic properties, *Impression, Sunrise* has aesthetic properties such as grace, lightness and subtlety, as well as representational or depictive properties such as depicting the port of Le Havre and depicting ships. While providing aesthetic experiences and showing the objects depicted are also functional properties of the painting, *Impression, Sunrise* has various other functions and effects. For example, one of its functions may be to criticise the stylistic rigidity of academic painting. More extrinsic and contextual properties, such as being painted by Claude Monet, being created in 1872, and being exhibited in the first Impressionist exhibition, are also properties that can be attributed to *Impression, Sunrise*.

Proponents of the genres-as-features account may, for example, want to map formal categories onto non-aesthetic properties (especially non-aesthetic structure) and stylistic categories onto aesthetic properties. The form of haiku requires a specific number of syllables, while the style of Baroque requires that grand and dynamic aesthetic properties. Similarly, it may be thought that some genre categories track representational properties, while others track functions of evoking emotions. For example, the crime genre requires the depiction of criminal cases, while the comedy genre requires the function of making people laugh. This hypothesis seems to fit well with a broad range of categories that we consider to be genres. It is easy to identify the representational content that is characteristic of science fiction, romance, action, drama, crime, adventure, fantasy, hero, historical, war, music, or westerns, as well as the function or effect that is characteristic of comedy, horror, thriller, or mystery.

But it is natural to ask why genre is disjunctive in this way. Why should we regard categories that are individualised by distinctive representational content and categories that are individualised by distinctive functions and effects in the same way as genres? The above hypothesis is already questionable in this respect, but let us accept

the disjunctive definition of genre for the time being. Even if we accept this point, the genres-as-features account cannot withstand counterexamples.

Counterexamples arise especially when we consider the concept of genre across artistic media. The above hypothesis may apply to the genres of film, literature, theatre, painting, and video games, but it does not necessarily apply to the genre of music (Ross 2003, 232–3).[1] Needless to say, music is one of the most prolific areas for genre categorization, and it is a serious flaw in a theory of genres that it cannot explain this well. First, except for some musical categories such as program music, typical musical genres such as pop, rock, jazz, hip-hop, R&B, reggae, country, metal, and punk do not focus on tracking representational properties. A hip-hop song is not hip-hop by virtue of singing about life on the street. Lyrical content and subject matter are variable for most musical genres. Second, except for some musical categories such as hymns and dance music, musical genres do not focus on tracking functional properties. A metal song is not metal by virtue of its ability to excite the listener to the point of headbanging. The emotions evoked are variable for most musical genres. In sum, tracking representational or functional properties does not seem to be central to what most musical genres do *as genres*.

If we look at music genres with a focus on feature tracking, we can see that different types of properties are relevant: contextual properties (what kind of instruments are used), non-aesthetic properties (what kind of structure does it have), and aesthetic properties (funky? heavy?). Having a 12-bar chord progression is clearly standard for the blues genre, but this feature is neither representational nor functional. If we want to cover counterexamples, the genres-as-features account would have to extend its disjunction beyond 'representational or functional properties'. This, however, would frustrate the initial project of identifying features that are tracked by genres and only genres. The longer the disjunction, the more 'genre' becomes simply a synonym for 'category'.

A plausible observation is that categories, as concepts of classification, track multiple types of features simultaneously. For example, film noir tracks not only the depiction of hard-boiled middle-aged men and femme fatales, but also the fact that it

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[1] Existing discussions of genre often begin by limiting the scope of their discussion to the genres of representational or narrative art (Abell 2015, 27; Terrone 2021, 17). However, I am concerned that this trivialises the issue.

was produced in the 1940s and 1950s, the dark and sharp screen, the atmosphere of ennui it expresses, and its ability to evoke a sense of stagnation and fatigue. So is film noir a genre, a style, or a form? Any theory that assumes competition or exclusivity between meta-categories will fail here. From the perspective of tracking features, we must admit that film noir is a mixture of genre, style, form, media, and historical profile tied to a specific period and region. But even if we acknowledge this, it is not clear which elements ultimately make film noir a genre.

The different types of features tracked by a category are related in non-coincidental ways. The non-aesthetic property of being upbeat is related to the aesthetic property of being cheerful, and the depiction of monsters is related to the evocation of fear. In general, crime movies tend to have more aesthetic properties of brutality and suspense than romance movies, because murderers are more brutal and suspenseful than lovers. The properties of artworks, such as non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties, functional properties and representational properties, and representational properties and aesthetic properties, co-occur across types. Therefore, a category that tracks one will also track the other.[2]

As a lesson from the above discussion, not only categories that are clearly given hybrid names, such as Texas country music and J-horror films, but also categories that are not, are in fact hybrid categories that track multiple types of different features simultaneously. Comedy tracks not only the function of making people laugh, but also the pleasant and optimistic mood, and science fiction tracks not only the setting of the future or universe, but also the function of providing cognitive insight (Suvin 1979). Horror, defined by Carroll (1990, 27) as a genre that evokes a unique mixture of fear and disgust (art-horror) by depicting dangerous and impure monsters, is a hybrid category that tracks both function and representation. This hybrid nature of the categories of art frustrates any approach that attempts to individualise meta-categories

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[2] In addition to genre, the same can be said of style. Wölfflin (1929) comparison of Classical and Baroque styles is partly a comparison that focuses on the non-aesthetic, formal aspects, but it is also partly a comparison that focuses on differences in aesthetic quality. Similarly, Goodman (1978) argues against the conventional view that styles track only how things are said (the means), suggesting instead that they also track what is said (the content). Styles also track multiple types of features simultaneously.

according to the type of features being tracked. In short, there is no type of features that genres and only genres track.

In any case, even if we succeed in identifying the type of features that genres and only genres track, we will not obtain a complete theory of genres. This is because the genres-as-features account cannot, by itself, account for two crucial observations about genres. First, genres are relevant to the appreciation and criticism of individual works of art. This is almost the only consensus among genre theorists (Abell 2015, 25; Friend 2012, 181; Laetz and Lopes 2008, 156; Liao 2016, 470; Malone 2024, 1; Terrone 2021, 18). [3] Being frightening is a merit for horror, but a demerit for lullabies. However, there is a gap between the fact that an artwork belongs to a genre by virtue of having the standard features of that genre, and the fact that the appreciation and criticism of the artwork is influenced by the normative power of that genre. [4]

Second, genres are also social in a way that is not unrelated to their normative power. This point has also been addressed by many theorists, though less explicitly than the above consensus: Genres have normative power through conventions and common knowledge (Abell 2012, 77–8, 2015, 32); genres are traditions made up of related items and people's interactions (Evnine 2015, 4–6); even theorists who support the genres-as-features account often add that a cluster of standard features is underpinned by a network of expectations held by the relevant community (Currie 2004, 49–59; Friend 2012, 189; Terrone 2021, 20). More recently, Evan Malone (2022, 12–5, 2024) sees genres as a kind of social practice tied to particular communities.

As I see it, these approaches go in the right direction, but further clarification is needed as to what exactly the social nature of genres is. In my view, a genre should be understood as an element that makes a practice what it is or individualises it, that is, as rules, rather than as a practice itself. The ontology of genres is thus linked to the ontology of rules.

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[3] An exception is Evnine (2015, 6), who does not give much importance to the role of genre in appreciation and criticism.

[4] Currie (2004, 45–6), while adopting the genres-as-features account, attempts to explain the interpretive role of genres by appealing to audience expectations and genre-based implications. However, Abell (2015, 30) points out that this does not resolve the explanatory gap.

3. Genres-as-Rules

3.1 Function

Artistic genres have normative power in different situations. Genres influence evaluation. A feature that is a merit when viewed in one genre becomes a demerit when viewed in another (Kaufman 2002, 2003; Carroll 2009; Gilmore 2011, 2013). The deliberately broken plot of *Twin Peaks* makes it a poor mystery, but the same feature makes it an excellent absurdist comedy. In a more recent discussion, Dominic McIver Lopes (2018, 129–30) focuses on aesthetic profiles associated with aesthetic practices. An aesthetic profile is expressed as a correlation table of the non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic values that an item can have, or in my terms, a cluster of rules. Two items that are exactly the same in terms of their non-aesthetic aspects can have different aesthetic values because the rules or aesthetic profiles that apply to each of them are different. The same movement by a dancer can be emphatic in light of the aesthetic profile of tap dance, but heartbreaking in light of the aesthetic profile of contemporary dance. In tap dance, it is a different movement that realises heart-wrenching, and in contemporary dance, it is yet another movement that realises emphatic. Tap dance and contemporary dance each regulate aesthetic evaluation as a cluster of rules.

Later, I will develop an ontology of genres, strongly inspired by the aesthetic profile presented by Lopes, but genres do not only play a role in aesthetic evaluation. Genres-as-rules are a broader concept that encompasses aesthetic profiles.

Genres regulate not only evaluative responses, but also interpretative responses. If we see the artwork as a Western, it is natural to understand that the setting is the American West during the pioneer era. If we see it as a musical, we can understand why characters who suddenly start singing don't confuse other characters around them. Whether a sentence should be interpreted literally or as a metaphor or irony, or what an item is implying or symbolizing, is often dependent on genre (Abell 2015, 26–7). This is a point often acknowledged by both intentionalists and non-intentionalists (Levinson 1996; Davies 2006; Carroll 2009). In a more recent discussion, Catharine Abell (2020, 35) draws attention to the fiction institutions that regulate imagination in practices of fiction. Each fiction institution contains a cluster of content-determining rules that are formalised as 'If an agent produces an utterance of type Z, imagine X'. It is through such rules that we understand the content of a work of fiction.

More generally, genres regulate different *appreciative responses*. We pay attention to artworks in particular ways, imagine scenes, empathise with characters, and form historical knowledge based on artworks, and these actions are also influenced by the genre in which we appreciate the artwork (Liao 2016; Cross 2017). If I watch a long shot taken with a fixed camera in a work of slow cinema, I should focus on the painterly composition of the fixed screen, and if I watch a fast-paced blockbuster movie, I should focus on the continuity of action across cuts. If it is a tragedy, I will try to follow the emotions of the protagonist closely, but if it is a comedy, I will not activate such empathetic skills.

All of our various appreciative responses are responses to the properties of a work of art. We ascribe meaning and value to a work of art, or, more generally, respond to it in some way, based on certain properties of the work. In such cases, the response and the features of the work are in a relationship of justification. It is appropriate to evaluate it as good precisely because it has such-and-such features. On a similar basis, critics give reasons for their evaluations and interpretations. But the question is, why does the presence of a certain feature justify a certain response and allow for critical justification? This is where genres come into play. In short, genre-related facts function as higher-order reasons for why certain properties are the reason for certain appreciative responses. It is the horror genre that directs and justifies the enjoyment and positive evaluation of effectively evoked fear.

The role of providing a background for appreciative and critical reasoning can also be seen in categories that are not typically considered genres. The fact that it is a Monet painting may only tell us that the painting was made by Claude Monet, and the fact that it is a haiku may only tell us that the artwork has 5, 7, 5 syllables. However, when these categories are referred to in the appropriate context, they function as a set of rules, that is, genres. For example, if we consider a text to be a haiku, then it may be justified to criticise the artificiality of its expressive qualities. As we saw in the previous section, each category is a hybrid in the type of features it tracks, but in addition to this, it is also multifunctional in that it often has a *usage as a genre* (although not all of them do).

The rules that form a genre can be formalised as follows by further generalizing the rules for imagining that Abell (2020, 35) discussed.

If an artwork x has the property F, make an appreciative response R to x.

Such regulative rules are functions from the properties of a work of art to the responses an agent should make.[5] Different rules address different properties and direct different appreciative responses. When a rule is active with respect to a particular artwork, the fact that the artwork has the relevant property serves as a justifying reason for a particular appreciative response to the artwork. Facts about genre provide a background for a series of possible reasonings.

Before moving on, a few clarifications are needed regarding the regulative rules of genres. First, there are limits to the input of regulative rules. Being horror suggests a set of rules that tell us how to respond to creeping black shadows, sudden sound effects, and their frequency, but it does not tell us how to respond to every single component of a work of art. The fact that the protagonist's name is Mary simply has nothing to do with the horror genre, because it is not part of any of the rules of horror. Moreover, it is debatable to what extent external features of an artwork can be considered legitimate input (for example, does reggae include a rule that consider songs created by artists from Jamaica to be authentic?) (Lopes 2018, 130; Abell 2020, 12).

Second, the output of the regulative rules may be much broader. With the label 'appreciative response', I have assumed only a specific type of agent, the audience (or critic). However, genres can also regulate different types of engagement, such as restoring, collecting, editing, curating, and, above all, creating (Todorov 1990, 18; Evnine 2015, 13–4; See Lopes 2018, 33). While it is desirable to have room to expand the theory in this way, I will stick to responding to more restrained interests. This paper presents a theory of consumers in the artworld, not producers.

Third, the rules of a genre are often implicit: those who follow a set of rules in a genre are not necessarily able to represent them through a list of statements. This is a general feature of the psychology of rules (Guala 2016, 7; Lopes 2018, 120, 135). If the genres-as-rules account is correct, then the task of articulating the rules of an individual genre would become the central task for the descriptive study of that genre, but that is

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[5] Note that the regulative rules I am discussing are different from rules of category membership, that is, rules that can be formalised as 'If an artwork x has property F, then x is a member of category C (x belongs to category C)'. While both emphasise the social and normative aspects of genre, the rules Malone (2022, 22) has in mind are essentially different from the regulative rules I am discussing, and are membership rules.

not my task here. Rather, my task is to explain what it means for a cluster of rules to be valid and to be followed by the relevant agents, even though it can be implicit in this way.

3.2 Ontology

Just as the genres-as-features account should not regard any arbitrary cluster of standard features as a genre, the genres-as-rules account should not regard any arbitrary cluster of rules as a genre. For example, 'clap and evaluate positively whenever a dog appears in the middle of a movie' is a rule, but it is doubtful that such rules constitute a genre (at least for now). Strictly speaking, a genre is not just any set of rules, but a set of *valid* rules. So, what is the difference between an actual genre and an arbitrary set of rules that is at best a potential genre?

I have argued that genres-as-rules are the *backgrounds* that make reasonings in appreciation and criticism possible, but not that they are the *reasons* themselves. A painting is lush due to certain brushstrokes under the rules of Impressionism. From a pre-theoretical point of view, the two factors that make the painting lush, namely (1) the non-aesthetic base properties of the painting and (2) the rules it follows, are clearly of different types. But this has often been ignored in accounts that appeal to a single relation of supervenience. When X supervenes on Y, X does not change without Y changing (although it is possible for Y to change without X changing). Supervenience is such a unidirectional covariation relationship, and it has been widely used to explain the ontological structure of aesthetic properties (Levinson 1984; Bender 1987, 1996; Zangwill 2001; Benovsky 2012; Hick 2012; Watkins 2021; Sauchelli 2022). According to contextualists who appeal to supervenience, the aesthetic value of an item supervenes on (1) its non-aesthetic properties and (2) relevant contextual facts. A painting is lush thanks to certain brushstrokes and also thanks to a set of contextual facts that make it appropriate to see it as an impressionist painting.

However, managing with a single relationship of supervenience in this way obscures important differences between the two factors. The two factors appear in different answers to different questions (Lopes 2018, 194–5). It is natural to answer the question, 'Why is this painting so lush?' with the explanation, 'Because it has these brushstrokes'. Having certain brushstrokes is the reason for having lushness. Answering this question by saying, 'It's because the rules of Impressionism are applied', does not answer what the questioner wants to know. The explanation, 'It's because the rules of Impressionism are applied', is the answer to another question: 'Why is having these

brushstrokes the reason for having lushness?' Facts about rules come into play only when we ask about the basis for a particular reasoning, not in the reasoning itself. Even if Y is the reason for X, and Z is the reason why Y is the reason for X, it does not follow that Z is the reason for X (Skow 2016, 76).

In addition to grounding relations between social facts, there are *anchoring* relations, which concern the basis of the grounding principles (Epstein 2015, 82). First, a rule (or frame principle, as Epstein calls it) is set up by some contextual fact, and on this basis, for example, the fact that something has a certain basic property grounds the fact that it has a certain aesthetic value (Lopes 2018, 186–9, 192–6). This is a two-step account. Contextual facts do not in themselves ground aesthetic value facts.

Let us take *Impression, Sunrise* again as an example. The fact that the painting in question contains rough brushstrokes is not a reason to criticise it as crude, but rather a reason to praise it as delicate and graceful. Behind the reasoning for the artwork are the regulative rules of the genre of Impressionism. Impressionism as a genre directs us to attribute delicacy and grace to the rough brushstrokes rather than crudeness. Such rules constitute a valid genre when they are anchored by some social fact. A set of rules that lacks such a social foundation is not a genre, or at best is only a latent genre. The social and normative nature of a genre is that it plays an appreciative and critical role with this ontological structure. Put simply, an established art genre is a cluster of rules that has a social foundation and regulates appreciative responses.

So, what exactly are the social facts that set up the regulative rules of a genre? There are roughly two types of accounts that could be considered as candidates: one appeals to the collective, or at least shared, beliefs of the relevant agents, and the other appeals to their patterns of behaviour (Searle 1995, 2010; Epstein 2015; Guala 2016). Abell's (2012, 77–8, 2015, 32) account of genre corresponds to the former, arguing that genres are set up by the fact that relevant agents cognitively share rules in a certain way. On the other hand, Lopes (2018, 195) argues that an aesthetic profile (or genre in this paper) is set up by the fact that relevant agents behave in a stable way in accordance with the rules, regardless of whether they have beliefs or knowledge in the narrow sense. [6] This is a complicated issue, but perhaps we are not forced to make a choice, and

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[6] Xhignesse (2020, 478–9) also points out that behaviour that complies with the norms of each art-kind is reproduced according to salient precedents. When the equilibrium of the

perhaps we simply need to acknowledge that there can be multiple cases of facts that anchor the regulative rules of a genre.[7]

Genres are established by the beliefs or behaviours we have as a group. It has often been suggested that genres are associated with communities, and this can be understood as the anchoring of each genre by each community (Currie 2004, 49–50; Abell 2012, 77–8; Evnine 2015, 14; Terrone 2021, 20; Malone 2022, 12). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of clarity in the discourse that takes groups or communities as its subject. What do we do around genres-as-rules? In the next section, I will attempt to remove this lack of clarity by focusing specifically on the role of individual agents.[8]

4. Categorizing as Framing

Our starting point are categorical statements made by individual agents, that is, statements of the form 'x is a C', 'x is categorised as a C', 'x's category is C', and so forth. According to the genres-as-features account, what is done by these statements is *classification*. Category attribution is a description of the fact that an individual work of art has sufficient standard features of a particular category, and is only a judgment whose truth or falsity depends on the facts already established about category membership. Here, category membership is assumed to logically precede category attribution. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* belongs to the category of magic realism because it has the standard features of magic realism, and the statement '*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a work of magic realism' means that the work in question has the relevant standard features.

However, as we have already seen, this closed relationship alone tells us nothing about the role of genre in appreciation and criticism. A more serious problem is that if category attribution is concerned only with tracking features, then any disagreement over category attribution can only be either (1) a discrepancy in recognition of the standard features associated with the category name and/or (2) a discrepancy in

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behaviour of relevant agents serves as an anchoring fact, a genre becomes what Guala (2016) calls rules-in-equilibrium, that is, an institution.

[7] Epstein (2015, 105) himself favours this kind of pluralism.

[8] This is not an endorsement of anchoring individualism. In general, it is highly debatable whether a social fact can be reduced to facts about individuals. I simply want to add a micro-perspective to my theory by focusing on what individuals do in genre practices.

observations of the features of individual artworks, and in either case the disagreement becomes superficial and futile (Evnine 2015, 15–6). Of course, it is common for categorical statements to be used for classification, and it is not uncommon for superficial conflicts to arise due to misunderstandings or oversights on the part of the attributors. But this is not the whole story.

The genres-as-rules account suggests that category attribution is not just a matter of classification, and that disagreements about it are more substantive and tend to persist. An individual agent's attribution of genres is an indication of the set of rules that relevant agents, including the attributing agent, should follow. Let us call this act *framing*. When someone says, 'This work of art is a horror', they are *declaring* their stance that they will respond to the work of art with an appreciative response according to the rules of horror, and they are *proposing* that the listener share their stance. If we understand it this way, then we can understand the disagreements over genre attribution as a mutual imposition of rules. Conflicts such as '*OK Computer* is a rock album' and 'No, it's not!' are not conflicts over classification that can be resolved as long as some facts about the artwork can be confirmed. Conflicts over framing are normative and substantive conflicts over how we should respond to artworks with certain features.

In fact, framing a work by referring to a particular category does not require that the work possess many of the standard features of that category, understood as style or form. Framing is different from classification, which requires genre membership. Non-descriptive speech acts may be inappropriate, unsuccessful, or insincere, but they are not judged false in light of any established facts. This makes such *forceful* statements as 'The genre of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) is comedy' understandable, rather than simply dismissing them as false. The genre-attributor may not be trying to say that the artwork sufficiently possesses the standard features of the category in question and therefore belongs to that. When we ask for confirmation, 'Are you saying that *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* belongs to the genre of comedy?', the attributor is not necessarily saying 'yes'. What the attributor is doing is the act of framing, which is different from classifying: the attributor is declaring and proposing that the appreciation and criticism of the work in question should follow the set of regulative rules of a particular genre. As Carroll (2009, 94) points out, 'situating the work as a certain kind of artwork at the same time implies the type of criticism suitable to bring to bear upon the object'. Framing is creative. As long as there is relevant input,

it is possible to impose some kind of appreciative or critical rule on it, regardless of what the artwork is like in other respects.

Understanding genres, rather than styles or forms, as rules and linking them to the act of framing is supported by an interesting linguistic asymmetry. First, as noted above, a category used as a genre allows for forceful attribution (e.g., 'The genre of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is comedy'), but a category used as a style or form does not. Statements like 'The form of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is a musical / its (individual) style is the Monet style / its (general) style is the Baroque style' sound simply false. The best explanation is that styles and forms are concepts used to classify works, and therefore we cannot attribute those forms and styles to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, which does not sufficiently meet the membership conditions.

Second, while it is natural to describe individual works as *having* a certain form/style, it is rare to describe a work as *having* a certain genre. We can say that Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 14* has the form of a piano sonata because the work actually has the structural features that are standard for a piano sonata. Since forms and styles are classification concepts associated with a set of standard features, an individual work of art can have a form or style by having these features. On the other hand, an artwork does not have a genre of piano sonata. If genres are rules, then they are not something that individual works of art have, but rather something that works of art are located under or governed by. This asymmetry shows that we generally do not use genres as concepts for classification in the same way that we use forms and styles.

5. Conclusion

An approach that tries to understand genres in terms of classification fails because it cannot distinguish genres from other meta-categories, or identify the type of features that genres and only genres track. The actual categories are not neatly divided into genres, forms, styles, media, and so on, but are often hybrids of these, tracking different types of features. Concepts such as classification, membership, and standard features are not good explicans for understanding the concept of genre.

According to the alternative approach proposed in this paper, a genre is a cluster of rules that regulate appreciative responses. This directly explains the social and normative aspects of genres. Because a genre is a cluster of regulative rules accepted within a given group, certain ways of responding to a work of art become appropriate or inappropriate. The validity of genre rules is anchored, set up, or activated by facts about

the relevant community and agents. I have chosen to be open about such anchoring facts, suggesting a pluralism. At least, the act that seems to be their causal origin is the framing by individual agents on individual artworks. By making categorical statements such as 'x is a C', agents can indicate certain rules, declare and propose that they should be followed. The act of framing is dynamic and creative foundation of genre practice.

Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare

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