

Is the Medium the Message?: Writers Working Across Genres

Type of Event

Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Event Description

This panel explores the myths and realities of writers who work across multiple literary genres—nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Panelists will address the specter of genre mastery, institutional pressures, and how genre pivoting influences personal and professional lives. Craft topics will include the relationship between form and content, voice across genres, poly-genre versus hybrid work, and the persistence of genre. The panel affirms writing across genres as transformative practice.

Statement of Merit

Hybrid work has challenged classical genres, yet genres persist within publishing and MFA programs. Lack of attention on writers thriving across genres confirms the illusion of a significant divide in terms of literary production, relationship to language, and aptitudes and potentials. The panelists have published in notable publications and presses across genres. This panel is necessary to foster a rethinking of writers' identities in relation to genre, encouraging growth and reducing harm.

Event Agenda

The moderator will introduce the topic and four panelists, reading their short biographies. Panelists will briefly introduce their relationships with genre. The moderator will open discussion with questions for 30 minutes: 1) Relationship to “genre mastery”? 2) Institutional pressures to stay in genre? 3) Contemporary state/definition/form of genres? 4) What makes a genre suitable to a specific project? And 5) Benefits of working between genres? The panel will end with a 15-minute Q&A.

Schedule

- Accessibility statement
- Welcome guests to the panel/topic
- Silence cell phones, will Q&A after
- Introduce panelists and moderator
- Discuss prepared questions
- Q&A (10-15 mins)

Panelists

Casandra Lopez

Suzanne Richardson

Jen Soriano

Samantha Tetangco

Moderator

Lev Keltner

Questions

1. Opposing attitudes exist about writing in multiple genres. Some see “genre jumping” as a cop out. (Owing to stratified perceptions of genres and their writers? To “master” a particular genre, a writer must devote a lifetime to one genre? Genres are arbitrary distinctions, anyway?)
2. Are genres simply a function of marketing? Why was there ever pressure from the industry/academia to only write in one genre? Does that have to do with money? Is this also a strategy pushed by MFA programs so that people pay for multiple MFAs in different genres?
3. “Each era has its own system of genres, which is in relation with the dominant ideology, etc. Genres, like any other institution, reveal the constitutive traits of the

society to which they belong.” What contemporary genres exist and how are they defined? Where are they headed? (hybrid/intersectional form?)

4. What makes a genre suitable to a specific project/work?
5. Benefits: 1) Each genre privileges certain writing skills that one can carry to the next. 2) Jobs asking for 2nd genres.

Resources

- [“Be a Triple Threat, Write in Three Genres”](#)
- [“Multiplicity from the Margins: The Expansive Truth of Intersectional Form”](#)
- [“The Origin of Genres”](#)