The Genres in Theory
Danson 2000 Ch1

Asserts that genres exist

- How?
  - Formal?
  - Theatrical strategies?
  - Culturally specific?
- 'Sets of loose similarities'

'They exist, then, in a kind of circularity between the general and the particular, as ideas about genres influence the creation of specific works and as those works in turn revise a culture's ideas about genre.'

Contemporary theory

- Origins of genre theory
  - Classical features of **comedy**
    - New comedy
      - general/universal
      - ordinary characters
      - healthy entertainment
    - Old comedy
      - origins in ritual
      - specific/real characters
      - satirical/bitter
  - Classical features of **tragedy**
    - Harmatia
    - Catharsis
    - 'Tragedy is an imitation of the nobler sort of men'
    - Unities
  - Aristotle's *Poetics*
  - Horace's *Art of Poetry*
- Jonson's title page

Individual work and genre

'We know an individual work—recognize its particularity and interpret its "meaning"—partly by recognizing the extent to which it conforms to or diverges from previous generic practice.'

- Some plays are *about* the nature of the drama itself
- How do you place individual works?

'there is [...] the problem, even within a limited system like the one on the Folio title-page, of knowing where to place any given work, since to place it you must know what conventions it is invoking, but to know what conventions it is invoking you have to know what kind of thing it is.'

(See comments on KL and RIII on p 10)

Genres important to study of Shakespeare

- But add romance

'The Folio's tripartite division [...] has been basic to our thinking about Shakespeare for hundreds of years. Imprecise and logically vexed though it is, it remains fundamental to our ways of reading, performing, and teaching Shakespeare'

Problems of Folio categories

- See Meres list of Sh's plays (History/Tragedy confusion)

'By assigning each play to a single kind the Folio obscures the fact that some plays might go equally well in another, or that a single play might belong to more than a single kind.'

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