

# Classroom as Text: What Genres Do We Teach In?

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## ABSTRACT

This essay proposes to investigate genre as a metaphor for the classroom environment. It aims, through a thought exercise, to present genre as a new paradigm through which to view the practice of teaching. By reading the classroom as a text, this piece hypothesizes about how classrooms would function were they texts of one genre or another: what “plots” do courses have, and what sort of curricular expectations do these plots arouse in the students? I consider eight of the most prevalent ancient literary genres, and for each I identify an underlying plot or structural metaphor which establishes the pedagogical expectations of the genre: didactic – the journey; epic – legendary experiences; lyric – subjectivity for community; satire – the mixed dish; drama – biology; history – the monument; oratory – the battle; philosophy – the quest. I then hypothesize about how these characteristics might play out in the classroom. I do not advocate for any genre in particular; rather, I hope that this thought experiment may give us pause to reconsider the environment of our classrooms, and the expectations for behavior established by the environment.<sup>1</sup>

Keywords: pedagogy, genre, plot, ancient literary theory

Just over a decade ago the late Oxford Classicist Don Fowler (219) closed “The Didactic Plot” with the questions “When we teach, what genres do we teach in, and what are the expectations engendered by the plots and structural metaphors that are part of them?” Fowler frames the question in reference to the genre of didactic, surmising that characteristics of didactic were not restricted to poetry, or to antiquity, or to text. Thus this essay seeks to answer Fowler’s questions in earnest. I will offer neither fixed answers nor practical exercises; instead I aim, through a thought exercise, to present a new paradigm through which to view the practice of teaching.

The use of genre in the classroom has been explored with respect to secondary language acquisition and English composition courses (Johns, Paltridge). Such approaches seek to use genre theory as a tool to teach language and writing by, for example, asking students to compose works in a given genre in order to raise their awareness of the different characteristics demanded by the context of a composition. My work differs fundamentally from theirs in that I propose to treat the classroom itself as a text that may be read as participating in a genre. We might consider genre a metaphor for the structure of the classroom: if the classroom and the course are texts, what does it mean for it to be structured like epic poetry? Lyric poetry? History? I hope, by making explicit some of the expectations implicit in our classroom environment, to provide a new and different model for reflecting upon our teaching practices. Perhaps we will see some of our own practices in some of these genres, and perhaps we will be enticed to add elements of other genres to our own practices.

Classics as traditionally taught, particularly Latin and Greek, has been widely acknowledged as catering to one type of learner: ISTJ (introverted, sensing, thinking, judging), in Myers-Briggs parlance (Deagon 33). This model is a very long-standing, centuries-old, time-tested

<sup>1</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to the anonymous readers for TCL and to its editor, John Gruber-Miller, for their suggestions. I am also indebted to the memory of Don Fowler, whose observations provided the initial impetus for this piece.

pedagogy. Yet as the Classics curriculum increasingly expands to reach more—and more novice—students, and with the influx of the so-termed “Millennials,” we continue to scrutinize our teaching practices to better address the strengths (and weaknesses) of our student body. I hope here to present another prism through which we may examine our teaching practices: genre.

By way of introduction we may consider Fowler’s analysis of the influence of epic plots upon didactic poetry. As Fowler sees it, the martial and heroic metaphors of didactic are vestiges of the martial and heroic plots of epic: the “quest for knowledge” and the “fight with ignorance” are part of the fabric of Parmenides and Empedocles (218). Similarly, “Lucretius as didactic hero is someone who has the epic power to know and to act” (218). In this way the characteristics of the epic genre have influenced Lucretius’ didactic project. We might say that Lucretius as teacher, then, teaches in the genre of epic, and the plots of heroic journeys and battles inform his students’ (both Memmius’ and our) expectations of his teaching.

How, then, might we see the influence of literary genres in our teaching? What might constitute the various genres of teaching? While generic theory in the ancient world is by no means unified, it seems advantageous for our purposes to rely upon a more fastidious categorizer such as Quintilian over a more philosophically-directed treatment in Plato or Aristotle (Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 10.1; Plato *Rep.* 3.392c-394d; Aristotle *Poet.* 1447b). Any selection of genres is bound to be somewhat arbitrary, given the fluidity of generic categories. Quintilian provides us with: epic, didactic, iambic, lyric, comedy, tragedy, history, oratory, philosophy, and satire (*Inst. Orat.* 10.1.46-93). We may in some sense view these categories as an expansion of Plato’s division of poetic genres (*Rep.* 3.394c): mimetic (διὰ μιμήσεως), for which he provides the example of tragedy and comedy; narrative in which the poet speaks in his own voice (δι’ ἀππαγγελίας αὐτοῦ ποιητοῦ), for which the example is dithyramb; and mixed (δι’ ἀμφοτέρων), for which the example is epic. With the addition of the predominantly prose genres (history, oratory, philosophy) and the Roman innovation of satire, Quintilian’s list of genres is fairly clearly an outgrowth of Plato’s.<sup>2</sup>

Since we are discussing the question posed by Fowler in “The Didactic Plot,” it seems only fitting to consider first what teaching in the genre of didactic entails. Fowler homes in on the characteristics of plot and structural metaphor for the role they play in the formation of expectations. Fowler specifically identifies the plot of “the journey” as a common trait of didactic. Structural metaphors which support this plot include the path, the hunt, the religious initiation (208-9, 214). As both he and Katharina Volk have shown, the identification of the roles of teacher and student also contribute to this “journey” plot: the teacher shows the student where to go, and how to act (Fowler 210; Volk 37-39). Volk, moreover, identifies another characteristic of didactic poetry that contributes to the “journey” plot: “poetic simultaneity” (39-40). Volk uses this term to refer to the appearance of composition and performance as occurring simultaneously. The poet/teacher depicts the poem as a work in progress, and refers to his progress throughout the course of the curriculum. Volk presents as a primary example the phrase “having sung of *x*, I shall now tell you *y*” (40). Thus we might identify some of the features of didactic poetry as: 1) the journey plot with its attendant metaphors of the path, the hunt, and the initiation; 2) the identification of the roles of teacher and student; 3) simultaneity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The scholarship on ancient literary genres is vast, particularly with respect to the practice and execution of genres by specific authors. On the explication of genre by ancient theorists and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Quintilian, see Farrell, Genette, Rosenmeyer.

<sup>3</sup> Fowler, using Francis Cairns’ distinction of primary and secondary elements of a genre, identifies these characteristics as secondary. The primary elements of didactic are 1) a teacher; 2) teaching something; 3) to a student. Fowler rightly identifies that while these primary elements help delineate a genre, they are less helpful in considering the ex-

How might these three characteristics manifest themselves in a classroom environment? What does a classroom as didactic poem look like? The task of learning is framed as a journey, and students are situated as travelers and hunters. Thus the notion of a destination or a target is implicit: there is a goal for the course. The students are led on their journey by their teacher, a guide who has already made the trip. The roles of student and teacher, then, are fairly distinct and fixed. Finally, poetic simultaneity means that the material is presented as though it is discovered along the journey—the teacher presents the appearance that the material, and the order in which the material is presented, have not been planned in advance.

We may observe some advantages and disadvantages to the didactic model for a classroom. The journey plot establishes an expectation for a destination, a goal for the course, and consistent progress can serve as encouragement to the students. However, too much emphasis on the goal itself may lead students to assume that learning ends when the coursework ends. This potential problem is exacerbated by the role of the teacher in the didactic model. Since the role of the teacher as the leader on the journey and as the font of knowledge is emphasized, students have few resources to teach themselves after the conclusion of the course. When they reach the destination, they are left at the finish line without a guide or even a map to the next destination. The metaphor of the hunt is worse yet: the purpose of the hunt is to catch the prey. Once the prey is caught, the hunt is over. Finally, while simultaneity in teaching can give the appearance of a natural pace and organization to learning, it can of course also appear haphazard: students may be unsettled by an instructor who appears to be making up the lessons as s/he goes.

Further, the metaphor of religious initiation lends an additional, unique perspective from which to view the didactic classroom. While the religious metaphor elevates the position of the teacher to that of a sanctified representative of a divinity, it also unites the students as a select group gathered to participate in a life-altering event. To that end this metaphor, while emphasizing the authority of the teacher perhaps overmuch, nonetheless encourages group identification and cohesion among the students. Moreover, the initiation metaphor circumvents the problem of premature closure posed by the journey and hunt metaphors: in the initiation metaphor, the end of the religious experience is not envisioned to take place until death, or beyond death.

The current state of language teaching has much in common with the didactic model. The introductory language classroom, particularly of the ancient languages, tends to be instructor-centered, due in part, no doubt, to the nature of a beginning-level skills course. Moreover, as many teachers can attest, often Latin and Greek classes form a tight-knit community, even at the introductory level. While such cohesion is likely a result of smaller class sizes, it is also a result of the perceived difficulty and esotericism of the ancient languages (which, I should note, in turn leads to smaller class sizes). Students may view themselves as part of an elite, mysterious society which is distinct from the other—modern—languages. Finally, the simultaneity of the course curriculum is mimicked by the Reading Method approach to Latin and Greek learning, which introduces new grammatical concepts in the context of reading (i.e. the context in which a student would naturally encounter a new concept), and encourages students to use their intuition and experience in comprehending the concepts.

These observations about the didactic classroom should not come as much of a surprise. After all, it only makes sense that we teach in the didactic genre. Thus didactic is the baseline from

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peptations of a reader. Certainly primary elements largely determine the secondary elements—the journey plot is well suited to the process of learning, more so than a post-apocalyptic survival plot—but the secondary elements provide the texture which constructs reader expectations of the genre.

which we may consider other genres. Following the lead of Fowler and Volk, we may consider these features in the remaining genres: 1) the plot and structural metaphors; 2) the inflexibility in the roles of teacher and student, which is indicative of the degree to which knowledge is centralized in the classroom (and here we may also take into consideration Plato's distinction of whether the author, i.e. teacher, speaks in his own voice or in a character's); and 3) simultaneity. I propose that we follow Quintilian's order in general, with a few modifications: epic; lyric; satire; drama; history; oratory; philosophy.

### EPIC

Epic is larger than life; it is the stuff of legends. We might generalize the plots of epic as the adventures of heroes, the interventions of divinities, and the bonds of fate.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Vergil put it best at *Aeneid* 1.1: to paraphrase, epics are about massive wars and personal journeys. Plato categorizes epic as one of the poetic genres which mix mimetic and narrative forms: the poet speaks both through the characters and in his own voice. Homer at times speaks as Chryses in direct quotation, and at times in his own voice as a narrator (Plato, *Rep.* 3.392e-394b). As for simultaneity, epic is, per the Parry-Lord thesis, the genre of simultaneity *par excellence*: the poet composes the poem as he performs it (Lord).

These characteristics of epic might translate to the classroom in the following ways: Students view themselves as the legendary hero at war, on a quest, or seeking homecoming. Latin and Greek thus become the treasure to be sought, or the beast to be defeated. The epic plot may imbue the student and his/her role in the course with a sense of larger-than-life importance, which may in turn provide motivation and encouragement. Moreover, the epic classroom may seek explicitly to link the students' personal journeys with grander movements in the world. For example, a course reading Cicero's oratory (in Latin or in translation) may draw comparisons between Ciceronian oratory and the history of oratory, or perhaps even modern American oratory. Similarly, many curricula read Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and connect it to modern discourses about war. An introductory Latin or Greek course, in turn, might seek to equate the acquisition of vocabulary or grammar with other journeys of language acquisition throughout the world. In contrast to these positive aspects of the epic plot, the disadvantages of this sort of casting are that the language is viewed negatively, as an adversity; and that the language is perceived monolithically, which the student believes s/he defeats or is defeated by, with no room in the middle.

The teacher's position in the epic classroom is more malleable than in the didactic classroom: s/he is cast simultaneously as the narrator and as characters, be they gods or mortals. In this context the teacher serves as a coach, a companion, or even devil's advocate, rather than an overseer or a master-planner. A teacher in the epic classroom, then, may on occasion take on the role of another student, offering advice and critique in the guise of another learner. Many teachers do so in the form of hypothetical questions, posing as a student who doubts the correctness of a translation, or as a student who offers a wrong answer (e.g. "What would you say if someone thought *x* was a good translation here?"). As a result one hopes that the students of the epic classroom, bolstered by the larger-than-life plotline of their language learning and by the less instructor-centric structure, will be more self-sufficient and confident in their abilities. Consequently the student is granted

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<sup>4</sup> These determinations about the plot and structural metaphors of a genre will necessarily be broad. Genres are fluid, and often works are composed which purposefully defy generic conventions. There will thus be exceptions to these broad tendencies of plot and metaphor.

more agency in his/her education and may be more successful in continuing his/her progress after the end of the course, in contrast to the student in the didactic classroom.

The epic form exhibits simultaneity: the teacher plans the course as it proceeds. As with didactic, the advantage of simultaneity is that students learn the material as they encounter it, as opposed to a prescribed march through the grammar. On the other hand, lack of planning in the curriculum may entirely derail the course.

### LYRIC

If epic is the telling of tall tales through legendary heroes, lyric is the telling of everyday tales in the personal voice. While there is great variety within lyric poetry, perhaps some characteristics may be teased out. Love, hate, friendship, and rivalry are the stuff of lyric. The plots of solo lyric tend to revolve around subjective experiences related in the first person: expressions of emotion (e.g., the most famous of Catullus and Sappho's lyrics), time shared with friends (particularly evident in Catullus 50), or an encomium of an object (Catullus 4, Horace *Odes* 3.13). Lyric poets speak both in their own voice and through others, as in the case of Sappho's and Catullus' *epithalamia* or Horace's *carmen saeculare*. Lyric was composed for a number of different occasions and purposes, but we might see the importance of community in all of them. Certainly choral lyric was often composed for occasions in which the community was being reinforced or expanded (e.g., victory celebrations, weddings). However, even solo lyric can be said to emphasize the importance of a community—at times authors redefine or create anew their own poetic community in opposition to the overriding socio-political community (Sappho, Archilochus, Catullus) and at times authors incorporate the socio-political community into their poems (Pindar, Horace). This interpretation of lyric has been demonstrated by W. R. Johnson's *The Idea of Lyric*, which asserts that "lyricism requires real performance in a real community" (144). Thus, despite the broad variety of lyric poetry, perhaps we might characterize its structure as the personal subjective experience in service of the community. The role of the audience, then, becomes incorporated with that of the author. The addressee or audience is implicitly asked to join the community of the poem. Regarding simultaneity, lyric, like didactic, projects the façade of simultaneity, as if the poems were composed in direct response to the events taking place around the poet.

What, then, is a lyric classroom? It stands in stark contrast to the epic classroom. It speaks not of the bigger picture and the big issues, but rather focuses on the mundane and the minute. This is not, however, to say that the lyric classroom is petty; rather it locates questions of universal humanity in the accessible everyday world instead of the larger unseen world. It strives to be both timeless and timely, rendering the classroom an educational Arcadia. The lyric classroom strives for self-expression and communal understanding. Thus this classroom may exhibit more creative work from the students, such as asking them to compose their own pieces in the target language in lieu of traditional translation. Furthermore, the expression may come from either the teacher or the students. On one hand, given that in solo lyric the poet speaks predominantly in his/her own voice, we might expect the teacher to speak exclusively. On the other hand, we might envision a situation akin to some of the *epithalamia* or *partheneia* (e.g. Catullus 62, Alcman's first *partheneion*), in which a group sings together: students working in groups to produce a single voice, a single position, a single product. Examples of such work might include group research presentations, or a collaborative group translation. The goal of a lyric-structured classroom, then, is personal expression in the service of community-building. As such, while the course will certainly benefit

from pre-planning, this type of classroom is more amenable to spontaneity and simultaneity in curriculum-planning.

The lyric-modeled classroom, then, works well for students and courses which seek interpersonal activity and self-expression. While it stands in stark contrast to traditional Latin and Greek pedagogy, it may be particularly successful with students for whom the traditional model is felt as too restrictive, isolating, and regulated.

### SATIRE

Though satire shares the subjective point of view with lyric, in other respects it is quite distinct. We might characterize it as a conservative genre, concerned with carping on moral faults, though with humor and colloquialisms. Perhaps of all the genres satire has the most clear structural metaphor, derived from its very name. One of the etymologies of *satura* is the mixed dish (Lewis and Short, s.v. *satur* 2B), and this variety is indicative of satire: high poetic vocabulary is mixed with crude idioms, high morals with vulgar language, everyday occurrences with philosophical ideals. In terms of the roles of the teacher and students, Plato would likely classify satire as mixed in form, in which the poet speaks both in his own voice and through the voices of others in both monologue and dialogue. For example, Juvenal 6 is a monologue in the satirist's own voice, while Horace *Serm.* 1.8 is a monologue in the voice of a statue; Juvenal 9 and Horace 1.9 are examples of the dialogue form in satire. When he speaks in his own voice, however, the poet often denigrates others, including interlocutors and addressees. As with lyric, satire is made to appear spontaneous, responding to daily events.

A classroom that embodies the structural metaphor of the *satura* will necessarily be diverse in its language and pacing. It should be suffused with humor. We might thus characterize the satire classroom as generally more casual. The relaxed atmosphere and varied pacing is likely to be helpful for all students, but particularly attractive to classrooms with students who require frequent changes in activity.

And yet the spirit of satire is the maintenance of the status quo through the expression of disapproval and the nitpicking of faults. Thus we might expect the satire classroom to approach the curriculum with a critical eye. This is welcome, but we should also recall that the narrator of satire looks down upon others with disdain; this posture may in fact be counterproductive if it serves as an excuse to dismiss the curriculum or the ideas of others. And when assumed by the teacher this condescending posture is clearly counterproductive: we are all familiar (thanks to Horace's *plagosus Orbilius*) with the stereotype of the harsh teacher who belittles the students' every mistake.

Finally, the appearance of simultaneity, as in the lyric classroom, is important for the satire classroom: humor falls flat when it appears to be scripted. Moreover, a key characteristic of satire is its timeliness: it is thoroughly enmeshed in its time and culture. This aspect may translate to the modern classroom in either the classroom atmosphere or the curriculum itself. For example, a teacher may reference current events and culture during the lesson or design assignments that ask students to connect the course material with current events, such as in *Nuntii Latini*. However, while variety, colloquialism, and simultaneity make the satire classroom a spontaneous classroom, the lack of a more fixed itinerary detracts from the cohesion and continuity of the course as a whole. It should be noted that in at least satire, didactic, and certain forms of lyric, the simultaneity is merely an appearance of it—the poetry is composed as if it were spontaneous. Similarly many teachers employ the appearance of simultaneity, while nonetheless knowing precisely where the lesson is headed.

While satire's carping on errors and faults is not a productive practice to adopt, nonetheless it offers a variety and freshness that we may seek to reproduce in our classrooms.

### DRAMA

Drama, whether tragedy or comedy, tends to revolve around problem-solving: tragedy and Old Comedy encourage audiences to process political and ethical issues; New and Roman Comedy feature problem-solving as the plot itself; even in the plots of tragedies the protagonist must negotiate the particular situation or fate that befalls him/her. Drama is structured with what might be called a biological metaphor: the play grows in complexity until it reaches its climax or resolution. In his discussion of the proper magnitude and arrangement of the plot of tragedy, Aristotle provides a biological metaphor, explaining that plots, like living creatures, should be neither too large nor too small, and should be logically structured (*Poet.* 1450b-1451a). Plato classifies drama as mimetic: the poet speaks through the characters, rather than in his own voice. Drama is of course not simultaneously composed and performed, but composed in advance of performance.

A drama-modeled classroom is unique in the absence of the teacher speaking as the authoritative head. Rather, it is the students who do the talking. We should note, however, that the material is scripted out by the teacher in advance. Thus the topics of the class sessions, and perhaps to some extent what the students say about the topics, are planned by the teacher. Despite the teacher's scripting, the students still do the bulk of the learning on their own. The biological metaphor establishes the expectation that the course will continuously expand, and that there will be a payoff at the conclusion. The teacher, then, must plot out the course accordingly—failure to provide a satisfactorily grand conclusion will disappoint. Finally, the course should include some problem-solving aspect—the students work together to resolve an issue.

The drama classroom does indeed already exist in the form of the Reacting to the Past pedagogy, in which students take on the roles of historical figures and determine the course of key moments in history.<sup>5</sup> In the Athens game, for example, the students are members of the voting citizenry who must decide the course of democracy after the expulsion of the Thirty and in the face of such rabble-rousing characters as Socrates. The teacher provides the roles, the context, advice, and mediation, but the students ultimately choose the course of history. Often roles are predetermined to behave in particular ways such that the event occurs as it happened historically.

In both Reacting as well as in other applications of dramatic pedagogy, students are responsible for locating, digesting, and reproducing information; in essence, they are facilitated in teaching themselves and each other. There are, however, some difficulties with solely student-driven curriculum. Some students express dissatisfaction with it, in part because they are accustomed to the traditional format of a classroom in which the teacher stands before the students and dispenses knowledge, and in part because student-generated curriculum requires that all students participate fully—disinterested or undermotivated students are a greater detriment than in the traditional classroom. While the former complaint arises mainly out of the comfort of maintaining the status

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Anderson and Dix. Brooklyn College CUNY, "CORE 10.5 Brings Students to the Front of the Classroom" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDXyEhdUc6o>) and Southwestern University, "First-Year Students debate some 'Fundamental Questions of Democracy'" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTSgRfe-96M>) have produced news stories about the game on campus. At Trinity College, students themselves produced news updates about the progress through the game: "Episode 1: BFF or Strange Bedfellows" (<http://www.youtube.com/user/myreacting#p/u/7/zuFJWVP0eDY>). For more information about the game, the pedagogy, and different scenarios, visit Reacting to the Past (<http://reacting.barnard.edu/>). I must thank my colleague and Reacting practitioner David M. Johnson for enlightening me on the Reacting pedagogy.

quo of passive learning, the latter needs to be addressed. Teachers may institute checks on each student's participation, or this type of student-generated curriculum may be better suited for students who take a course voluntarily or are generally more mature. Finally, student-generated curriculum may not be workable for skills courses such as beginning Greek and Latin language, given that it is difficult for students who do not have the tools to learn the skills on their own and in turn teach them to another. While such a methodology is useful as a review activity, it seems counterproductive to ask a student to explain the genitive case to his/her classmates when s/he does not know what the genitive case is. It may be practicable in an upper-level language course in which the instructor sets the task or goal for the course, gives students guidance and resources, but ultimately leaves the daily execution to them. For example, in a course on drama, the instructor may ask the students to create a translation and production of a play, leaving the organization, debate on translation, research into staging, etc. for them to determine.

### HISTORY

Quintilian lists three prose genres in addition to the poetic genres: history, oratory, and philosophy. Whereas drama seeks to work through socio-political issues in the present, history seeks to preserve the past for the benefit of posterity. As such, the plot of history is the monumentalization of lives and wars for the edification of future generations, as Thucydides famously claimed in his preface (1.22.4). Accordingly a structural metaphor for history might be, *pace* Horace, the monument. In constructing this monument the historian speaks both in his own voice and in the voices of various figures. As many a historian makes evident in his preface, there is no simultaneity of composition and performance: the shape of the monument is planned out in advance. Thucydides 1.1.1 describes his history in the past tense (Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε), as a completed work; Livy pref. 4-6 in contrast lays out the entire scope of his work at the outset. For both historians, the entire work is envisaged as a whole.

A classroom conducted in the genre of history works toward the construction of a monument to memorialize the material. This monument need not be a physical object, but rather the course is envisioned as ultimately forming some coherent whole product, tangible or in the abstract. Tangible examples of this monument in language courses include a course website, grammar book or grammar poster, and may especially suit visual and kinesthetic learners. Visual learners may benefit from seeing grammar charts with a clear organizational principle, while kinesthetic learners may benefit from the process of fashioning the organization and the actual putting together of the monument (particularly in the case of a large physical product, like a wall-size grammar poster). In advanced language courses, the students may create a commentary for the text at hand. The expectation of this metaphor is that the various pieces of the curriculum play a part in the ultimate whole. This particular aspect is a challenge in introductory language courses, and the construction of a course monument may alleviate it somewhat. Having a physical or visible reminder of how the different aspects of grammar relate to one another may reinforce the point that there is an overarching structure to the daily lessons. Another implicit expectation of the monument metaphor is the sense of completion at the end of the course. While the sense of completion is on the one hand satisfying, on the other it gives the impression that the study of the curriculum is over: it is not a work in progress, nor is it subject to modification after it is finished. In this light the website monument may be particularly appropriate precisely because it can be revisited and edited to reflect the students' changing understanding of the content, say, at the next level of Latin or Greek.



Throughout the course the teacher teaches both in his/her own voice and through the students'—at times the teacher disseminates information, at times the students discover it. Finally, as a monument with discrete parts which each play a role in the final product, the curriculum cannot be composed at it is encountered, but needs rather to be planned out in advance.

### ORATORY

Perhaps more than any other genre, oratory has a clear and explicit purpose: to persuade the audience. More often than not there exists an opposing speech which attempts to convince the audience of the opposite point of view. Thus the structural metaphor for oratory is battle: the orator must defeat his opponent for control of the discourse. This metaphor is particularly pronounced in discussions of forensic oratory, which stresses the two sides of prosecution and defense (Aristotle *Rhet.* 1358b, Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 3.9, Seneca the Elder *Controversiae*). Speeches as a matter of course feature only one side of the story, the point of view of the orator. The orator dominates the speech, speaking in his own voice only. He has likely composed and memorized the speech in advance of delivering it.

The oratory classroom proves to be rather one-sided. The teacher dispenses his/her beliefs about the material, persuading the students of his/her correctness. Other points of view are not represented by either the teacher or the students: if they are presented at all, it is in order that they be refuted. The lessons are scripted in advance, providing little opportunity to discuss the material. However, in the figure of the teacher the students may be provided with a good model for the presentation of a persuasive case. The agonistic metaphor adds some interesting characteristics to the classroom. Students view learning as a zero-sum competitive activity: someone wins, someone loses. In contrast, however, students also acquire the impression that the material is not a set of facts to be memorized but rather interpretations to be debated.

The oratorical genre may be found in the traditional stereotype of the classroom of a teacher lecturing to a roomful of students. This correlation is not entirely surprising, given that for centuries oratory was the centerpiece of an education. While this genre of teaching is still practiced as a component of the modern classroom, it has largely fallen out of favor, particularly in the language classroom. (It survives, perhaps, in the most stringent versions of the grammar-translation method.) The limitations of exclusively teacher-centered education in an introductory-level language course are evident, but despite efforts of the modern classroom to stamp out the extreme power inequality of the method, students still exhibit its vestiges. For example, students often fixate on producing the right answer to please the teacher, and often students unconsciously hierarchize the students in the class.

### PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, like oratory, encourages the consideration of material as questions to be debated. But in contrast to oratory, the plot and structural metaphor of philosophy is the search. While oratory posits that only one version of an event will be judged to be true, philosophy acknowledges that various competing claims may be true to differing degrees, and perhaps no one in fact knows what is true. Philosophers, though espousing competing claims about the world, are nonetheless all engaged in the communal activity of searching for the answer. Perhaps the question has no answer at all, but the philosophers nonetheless participate in the quest. In Plato's and Cicero's philosophical dialogues the author speaks both as himself and in the guise of other characters, staging discus-

sion and disagreement. Indeed, the question of simultaneity is complicated by the prevalent frame and dialogue form: the author (or a character) reports a conversation held in the past. Indeed, the entirety of Epictetus' output is thus preserved by Arrian. The frame may be staged to appear as if the action occurs simultaneous to its composition, but the reported dialogue has already occurred prior to the composition of the piece. Thus philosophy both exhibits and lacks simultaneity.

The classroom modeled on the philosophical genre, then, may be a combination of impromptu thoughts and prepared statements. It is also a combination of the teacher disseminating his/her thoughts and student discussion. But what is most characteristic of the philosophy classroom is its underlying plot of the search. The class is engaged in a search for an answer to a fundamental question on the material. There may or may not be a distinct correct answer for this question, and the students are aware of this. Thus in contrast to the oratory classroom, the philosophy classroom is not fixated upon winning, but rather upon the processes of considering an answer and evaluating its merits. The students—and even the teacher—are together involved in the project of ferreting out the answer; while they are to some extent in competition with each other, more powerful is the notion that each searcher contributes to the overall project by surveying his/her portion of the territory. Moreover, the notion that there may be no correct answer extends the search indefinitely, beyond the bounds of the classroom. The absence of one correct answer encourages more cooperation among the searchers, but it may also result in nihilism: why search if there is nothing we are searching for?

In practical application, philosophical pedagogy may be more appropriate for more advanced language students; informing less advanced students that there is a spectrum of (in)correct answers may have the opposite effect of what the teacher intends, confusing and demoralizing the students. In advanced language courses, however, a teacher might ask students to consider a range of translations, or to create various translations on their own, and discuss the merits of different approaches to translation. Students may thus learn to appreciate various points of view in seeking a solution to a complex question.

## CONCLUSION

I have above taken eight of the most prevalent ancient literary genres into consideration as potential pedagogical genres. For each I have attempted to identify 1) an underlying plot or structural metaphor which establishes the pedagogical expectations of the genre; 2) the (de)centralization of knowledge in teacher and student; and 3) the presence or absence of poetic simultaneity (Table). I then hypothesized about how these characteristics might play out in the classroom, and I hope that the advantages and disadvantages of each genre are observable. While many pedagogical genres have similarities, I believe they have distinct constellations of characteristics that give each a unique flavor. I do not mean to advocate for any genre in particular; rather, I hope that this thought experiment may give us pause to reconsider the environment of our classrooms, and the expectations for behavior (both our and our students') established by the environment. I suspect that many teachers have identified pieces of themselves in many of the genres—we are perhaps like Lucretius, teaching at the intersection of two (or more) genres. But I also hope that the paradigm of genre will provide us with new avenues for conceiving of teaching: there are yet many genres I have not considered, as well as the hybridization and parody of genres. Ultimately teachers, like authors, have a message they want to impart to an audience, and our choice of genre plays a central role in the communication of that message.

TABLE. SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS BY GENRE

Genre	Plot Metaphor	Knowledge Taught By	Simultaneity
Didactic	journey	teacher only	yes
Epic	legend	teacher and student	yes
Lyric	personal community	teacher and student	yes
Satire	medley	teacher and student	yes
Drama	biology	student primarily	no
History	monument	teacher and student	no
Oratory	battle	teacher only	no
Philosophy	quest	teacher and student	unclear

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