

Genre texts have sometimes been criticised for being predictable and unimaginative. Discuss.

Genre is a type of media material that is recognised by audiences through its common elements such as style, narrative, structure, look and iconography. However genre has no fixed boundaries, it develops with new conventions being added through time, a new genre could be created from the conventions of two others being used together becoming a hybrid such as a romantic comedy.

It could be said that genre has become too predictable in the sense that once an audience knows the genre of the film, they know what conventions to expect when they see it and an idea or probably more of an expectation of how the story will end. For example, in a gangster film the audience will expect an urban setting, well groomed Italian American gangsters who have a strong sense of family but are ultimately criminals opposing the police force. They would also expect to see the pursuit of the "American Dream" from the gangster proceeding the rise and demise of the character. The audience would expect to be introduced to a character who works his way up to being well respected following a lot of crime and violence then we see the fall of them and they are usually isolated at the end of the film from their real family and their gangster family.

The Audience will always expect the same structure of the narrative in genre which follows Toderov's theory of narrative that is in five points.

1. A state of equilibrium – all is as it usually is within the characters' life we are following in the film
2. A disruption – something occurs to disrupt that equilibrium.
3. a recognition – the characters recognise something has happened and seek a solution
4. an attempt at repair – the character will attempt to make things right again
5. Restoration or new equilibrium – the characters have got past their obstacles and returned to a state of equilibrium.

For example in the Godfather:-

- **The state of equilibrium-** The Corleone family headed by Vito Corleone attend Vito's daughter Connie's wedding to Carlo Rizzini. Vito is referred to as the godfather by his friends and associates. He's a very well respected gangster. Vito's youngest son Michael returns home from World War II service.
- **A Disruption-** Vito is shot several times after refusing to work alongside the rival Tattaglia family in heroin selling. It is an attempted assassination. Sonny, Vito's hot headed son vows war upon the Tattaglia family for revenge.

- **A Recognition** – Michael goes to visit his father in the hospital and is shocked that he is not being guarded. He realises there will be another attempt on his life at the hospital and informs Sonny. Michael stands outside his door with Enzo (a baker who feels he owes a lot to Vito) and manages to bluff away the men sent to kill Vito. He discovers one of the police is corrupt and is working with Sollozzo who wants Vito dead. Vito's fellow mobsters then show up armed to protect Vito and take Michael home.
- **An attempt of repair-** When Vito returns home to Sonny being murdered and Michael now living in Sicily to be safe from the same fate, he organises a meeting with the heads of the five rival families who have all united against the Corleones to end the war so Michael is able to return home safely. Having previously refused Vito finally agrees to provide protection for Tattaglia's heroin trafficking.
- **Restoration/new equilibrium-** Years later Vito has died but before he did, he told Michael how he would know who the traitor was to the family. Michael has now taken over the family business and finds out who the traitor is at the funeral of his father. Whilst standing in church as Godfather to Connie and Carlo's child, Michael has arranged for the five heads to be killed. As well as the perfect alibi for Michael's whereabouts, this is very symbolic of the ending of the film which closes with Michael being addressed as "Don" and he has become the new Godfather.

This does not only apply to the gangster genre it applies to every genre as well. Also genre in general follows Popp's theory centred on there only being 8 character types in film genre. The 8 characters are:-

1. The Villain who opposes the hero
2. The father figure
3. The Doner who prepares the protagonist to set out on their journey.
4. The dispatcher who send the hero out on their journey .
5. The love interest/femme fatale
6. The hero or victim
7. False hero/ anti hero.
8. The Helper

This is where directors of films can be unpredictable and imaginative as although there is some form or representation of these characters in their film, they are not restricted to following that exact pattern and one character doesn't have to fit into just one personality like audiences would expect. For example, In Scarface, Al Paccino plays Tony Montana who is ultimately the anti hero. We see the rise of his character but he is not set up as a likeable character with any sort of morals he is selfish and out for only himself, he is not a typical gangster and is certainly not glamorised. He could be seen as a kind of father figure in that he is very protective of his younger sister but his attitude toward her is almost incestuous so she could sort of fit the love interest character although the character played by Michelle Pfeiffer deffinitely is. I would say that's not predictable in genre.

Films are categorised according to genre that an audience will recognise. Some genres come with a ready made audience, maybe fans of a book that has been adapted into a film or fans of a certain genre and they like to see films of that genre and know what to expect. Audiences like familiarity and often films that have been difficult to categorise have been less successful so categorising films according to genre is beneficial to marketing, criticism and consumption for the audience.

Some film producers use genre to decide what content and plot to put into their films and will study that genre to find examples. This is a way they can take successful elements from films and incorporate them into their own adding their own ideas to them.

"You have to know transcended forms (genres) so that you can give the audience a sense of originality and surprise." – John Truby, a Hollywood story consultant.

Overall, I think genre can be predictable at times but also can include a lot of creativity from the film maker. If genre was just totally predictable then every film of a genre would surely just be clichéd. Spaghetti Westerns are thought to have turned the genre around making the hero bad as well as good. Before then everything was stereotyped with the good guys wearing white and the bad guys wearing black. A lot of films today incorporate conventions of other genres to make the film unpredictable with a twist at the end that the audience didn't foresee which is why I don't think genre can be boxed off as predictable and unimaginative.