

Dirassat & Abhath
The Arabic Journal of Human
and Social Sciences



مجلة دراسات وأبحاث
المجلة العربية في العلوم الإنسانية
والاجتماعية

EISSN: 2253-0363
ISSN : 1112-9751

Literary Genre in Flux: Between Intergeneric Forms and Interdisciplinary Readings

الجنس الأدبي في التغير: بين الأشكال المتداخلة والقراءات البينية

maroua zerkane¹, mourad mezaache²

¹ PhD Student, École Normale Supérieure Assia Djébar – Constantine, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Laboratory of Educational, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Algeria , zerkane.maroua@ensc.dz

² Professor, École Normale Supérieure Assia Djébar – Constantine, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Laboratory of Educational, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Algeria , mezache.mourad@ensc.dz

مروى زرقان¹، مراد مزعاش²

¹ طالبة دكتوراه، المدرسة العليا للأساتذة آسيا جبّار-قسنطينة، قسم اللغة والأدب العربي، مخبر الدراسات التعليمية واللسانية والأدبية في الجزائر، zerkane.maroua@ensc.dz

² أستاذ التعليم العالي، المدرسة العليا للأساتذة آسيا جبّار-قسنطينة، قسم اللغة والأدب العربي، مخبر الدراسات التعليمية واللسانية والأدبية في الجزائر، mezache.mourad@ensc.dz

maroua zerkane,

zerkane.maroua@ensc.dz

تاريخ القبول : 2025/09/03

تاريخ الاستلام: 2025/07/18

Abstract:

This study aims to trace the transformation of the concept of "literary genre" from a normative framework to a descriptive approach, under the influence of interwriting and genre boundary dissolution. It adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology, using tools from deconstruction, semiotics, and discourse theory to examine the link between genre theory and textual practice. Drawing on critical models such as Douma, Todorov, Bakhtin, and Derrida, the study explores how modern texts transcend the notion of "genre purity." The findings show that interdiscursivity is not merely an artistic phenomenon but an epistemological and aesthetic awareness that challenges rigid classifications and calls for a rethinking of literary reading and teaching methods.

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity, Genre Hybridity, Literary Genre, Novel, Literary Theory.

المخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تتبع تحولات مفهوم "الجنس الأدبي" من البعد المعياري إلى الطابع الوصفي، في ظل هيمنة الكتابة البينية وتفكك الحدود الأجناسية. تعتمد المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، مع الاستعانة بأدوات من التفكيك، والسيمياثيات، ونظرية الخطاب، لتحليل العلاقة بين التنظير النوعي والممارسة النصية. وتستند إلى نماذج من النقاد مثل دوما، تودوروف، باختين، ودريدا، لبحث كيف تجاوزت النصوص المعاصرة مبدأ "صفاء النوع". توصلت الدراسة إلى أن البينية ليست مجرد ظاهرة فنية، بل وعي معرفي وجمالي يتجاوز التصنيفات الجاهزة، ويدعو إلى إعادة التفكير في مناهج قراءة الأدب وتدريسه. الكلمات المفتاحية: البينية، تداخل الأجناس، الجنس الأدبي، الرواية، نظرية الأدب.

1. INTRODUCTION

The question of literary genres has long occupied a central position in both ancient and modern literary theory. From Aristotle's Poetics to postmodern criticism, the debate over what constitutes a "literary genre" its boundaries, definitions, and legitimacy has persisted, complicated by the evolving nature of texts and the shifting landscape of critical methodologies.

This study emerges from a central problematic: if literary genres were once perceived as stable, taxonomic categories, how can such classifications remain valid in an era marked by hybrid, fluid, and transgressive texts? The ambiguity of the term genre and the instability of genre-based methodologies raise pressing questions regarding the relevance and applicability of classical definitions in contemporary criticism.

The hypothesis of this paper is that the erosion of generic boundaries does not signify the collapse of genre itself, but rather

its transformation into a dynamic space of textual negotiation. Genre, in this view, becomes a dialogic and structural feature, shaped by epistemological, sociocultural, and aesthetic shifts.

Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach, drawing on comparative literary theory to trace the conceptual evolution of genre. It examines key theoretical contributions by Aristotle, Todorov, Bakhtin, Fraisse, Barthes, Wellek, and Douma, among others, highlighting moments of transition from rigid taxonomies to intergeneric fluidity.

The tools used in this research include conceptual deconstruction, discourse analysis, and structural-semantic reading, allowing the study to map out the theoretical shifts that underlie contemporary genre debates. Ultimately, this paper seeks to bridge the gap between genre as a classificatory tool and genre as a site of critical and textual innovation.

2. The Philosophical Foundations of the Evolution of Literary Genre Theory:

The theory of literary genres is one of the oldest critical frameworks that sought to regulate relationships within the literary field and define the boundaries between its types, from the age of the Greeks to the postmodern era. It began with philosophical justifications, as it was tied to the conception of art as a representation or imitation of the world clearly evident in Aristotle's view, who is considered the actual founder of genre theory.

1. Greek Origins: Mimesis as a Basis for Classification:

In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that "tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; it arouses pity and fear and brings about a catharsis of such emotions"¹. His classification of genres is based on the type of human action each genre imitates: tragedy, comedy, and epic and on the medium used for imitation.

The Greeks laid the foundation of the first systematic school of genres. As Shafiq al-Buqaai notes, they did so "through rhetorical arts in prose, and epics and drama in poetry, setting standards and norms for analysis and criticism"². Aristotle's tripartite division of poetic genres: epic, dramatic, and lyrical remained influential in Western literary studies for many centuries.

1.1. From Essence to History: Genres as Embodiments of Social Evolution:

While the Greeks viewed genres as manifestations of ideal forms (or mental archetypes), modern thought began shifting toward a socio-historical perspective. Abd al-Munim Tallima clarifies this shift when he links the emergence of genres to social change, stating that "each stage of societal development embodies its aesthetic relationship to the world in specific literary genres"³. Thus, genres are no longer seen as fixed patterns but as contingent manifestations that express the dominant consciousness of each era.

1.2. Literary Genre Between Form and Content:

Abd al-Aziz Shabil argues that "the formation of a literary genre depends on three combined elements: the specific thematic content, and both the internal and external formal structures"⁴. In doing so, he moves beyond the binary of "form/content" and lays the groundwork for a more complex understanding of genre as a synthetic structure, shaped through the interaction of formal, semantic, and historical elements.

Meanwhile, Karl Vietor attributes a transcendent dimension to literary genre, asserting that "genre appears in history through individual works, yet it does not dissolve into them, but rather transcends them"⁵. This suggests that a generic structure exists beyond individual texts, though it is not entirely separate from them; it is shaped through their repetition and historical positioning over time.

1.3. Modern European Thought: Deconstructing Generic Fixity:

Although structuralist criticism favored order and classification, many of its theorists questioned the usefulness of rigid genre divisions. Roland Barthes observed that "literature must refer to something other than its individual content and form; it is its own boundary; and this is precisely what allows literature to impose itself"⁶. In this vision, "genre" is no longer a stable value but becomes a semantic structure open to multiplicity and transgression.

Terry Eagleton echoes this perspective, stating that "in the text, we do not recognize the form of the novel, the form of poetry, or the form of the critical essay"⁷. Thus, the "text" becomes the antithesis of the "genre": the former is based on plurality and escape, while the latter implies fixity and closure.

1.4. Genres Between Description and Typology:

Khayri Dumah asserts that modern genre theory "does not establish pre-defined normative rules for writers, nor fixed boundaries for the possible number of genres; it is merely a descriptive theory"⁸. Thus, it does not presume the existence of "ready-made" genres to be imitated, but rather tracks

the formation and interpenetration of genres within textual practice.

René Wellek reinforces this by stating that "the distinction between literary genres no longer holds significance in the writings of most contemporary authors. The boundaries are constantly crossed, genres are mixed or blended, older ones are abandoned or transformed, and new genres are created" ⁹ This conception undermines any attempt to preserve generic purity and instead affirms the dynamic interplay and openness of literary forms.

1.5. From Genre to Text: The Theory of the Open Text:

Yves Stalloni encapsulates the crisis by stating: "in recognizing the links that connect works with one another, and in identifying constants and differences across the ages, as well as conventions and recurring deviations"¹⁰ ,Genre theory, therefore, is not merely concerned with classification but with observing the breaches that give rise to new forms.

With the modern text, generic definition is no longer grounded in pre-established rules, but rather in textual relations and disruptions that continuously reshape genre. This view is crystallized by Derrida, who declares: "each time the subject of the text is approached, the scene of decomposition begins and so does the end" ¹¹.

From this standpoint, reception becomes a central factor in determining a text's genre. Literature is not uniformly received by all readers but contains conflicting values interpreted according to diverse reading perspectives. This calls into question any notion of fixed classification, as emphasized by Muhammad Ṭarus: "in addition to all this, literature is one of the most expressive fields that contain conflicting values, which are not necessarily received in the same way by all readers" ¹².

3. The Structure of Literary Genre: Between Form, Content, and History:

Understanding the structure of a literary genre is one of the fundamental gateways to interpreting its transformations. This structure is not based solely on form, nor

merely on content, but is rather the result of a complex interplay between modes of expression, patterns of reception, and the historical and social contexts that shape and reshape its horizons over time.

1. Form as a Generic Component:

Form has played a central role in classical genre classifications, where it was used as a criterion to distinguish and separate genres. This is evident in traditional definitions: poetry is metered and rhymed, prose lacks meter, drama is built on dialogue, and the novel on narrative.

However, this formalist conception has been profoundly challenged by the development of textual theories. For instance, Abd al-Aziz Shabil points out that the formation of a literary genre "relies on three combined elements: generic content, internal form, and external form" ¹³, In this view, form alone is insufficient to define genre; rather, its relationship with meaning and content must also be considered.

Austin Warren goes even further by asserting that structuralism "deliberately avoids typological classifications, as its underlying aim is to eliminate the characteristics produced by genres and to reject the supposed stability of genres"¹⁴, This signals a move beyond formalist classifications toward more integrated and intersecting approaches.

1.1. Content as a Marker of Generic Affiliation:

Content has been no less central than form in constructing the literary genre; indeed, it has often served as the primary indicator of generic belonging. Tragedy is associated with noble actions, comedy with everyday life, and the epic with grand historical events.

Abd al-Munim Tallimah notes that "each stage in the development of society embodies its aesthetic relationship with the world in particular literary forms that match human capacities for their natural surroundings at that stage, and reflect the nature of their social system. That is, as literature shapes human perceptions, needs, and aesthetic sufferings, it simultaneously creates for them through expressive realization their tangible

embodiments in the arts (music, painting, sculpture, literature, etc.), each comprising various forms (in literature: epic, drama, lyric poetry, biography, novel, etc.)" ¹⁵, This means that content is deeply intertwined with the historical context that produced it, and that genres are not merely expressive forms but embodiments of aesthetic and social values.

In this context, the observation by Mahmud Jabir Abbas becomes clearer when he asserts that "modern literary genres tend toward the dramatic, especially poetry. This tendency arises from the intersections of cognitive awareness and major transformations... thus necessitating the use of drama" ¹⁶ Here, content becomes the impetus for reshaping generic structures.

The evolution of creative consciousness in contemporary poetry has also significantly impacted the genre's formal identity. Lyric poetry no longer retains its pure generic boundaries; rather, it opens up to dramatic and narrative components through techniques such as interior monologue, dialogue, description of daily states, and the pursuit of the subject's essence all framed within a modern, romantic conception of lyricism. As Abd al-Aziz Sharaf points out in his analysis of al-Bayati's poetic experience: "to enhance the interior monologue and dialogue, to describe the daily condition, to penetrate to the core of the subject, and to propose lyricism in its romantic sense" ¹⁷, All of this solidifies a hybrid poetic structure that merges the lyrical with the dramatic, reinforcing the genre's transcendence of rigid boundaries and preparing the ground for embracing the intergeneric concept.

1.2. The Historical Structure of the Literary Genre:

A literary genre cannot be separated from its historical context. Each genre carries within itself the traces of the era in which it emerged, the conditions that necessitated it, and the experiences that shaped its development. This is precisely what Karl Vietor affirms when he states: "The essence of a genre can only be extracted from the material provided by its own history" ¹⁸, Here

lies the importance of what is known as the historicity of genre, a field that bridges literary studies with cultural and social history, and raises questions such as: When did this genre emerge? What contexts shaped it? What transformations did it undergo? Did it disappear or evolve into other forms? And how was it absorbed into subsequent genres?

Abd al-Munim Tallimah calls "the dynamics of interpenetration" noting that "the practical and social development of the modern age has profoundly impacted artistic development, leading the arts to diversify, collaborate, and intertwine... As a result, modern and contemporary literatures have achieved a rich and broad interpenetration of literary modes in every successful literary work: the epic and dramatic modes have been realized in lyric poetry; the lyrical and epic in dramatic literature; and all three modes have been interwoven in the novel, etc. This interpenetration has not contradicted the distinctiveness of literary genres; rather, it has enriched and enhanced them" ¹⁹.

Thus, the literary genre becomes an open and evolving structure rather than a closed and rigid one.

1.3. The Literary Genre as a Transformative, Not a Closed, Structure:

Tzvetan Todorov asserts that "the profound literary work attempts to assert its essence by dismantling distinctions and boundaries" ²⁰, This dismantling does not imply a formal chaos, but rather reflects an internal evolution of genres in response to transformations in the epistemological and cultural contexts.

Khairy Douma similarly notes that "textual analysis is what will reveal the paradox of both belonging and not belonging at the same moment" ²¹, meaning that a literary work may belong to a certain genre, while simultaneously violating its boundaries what some refer to as "generic displacement."

Some critics argue that transcending genres "is fraught with obstacles and objections derived from theoretical reflection and textual manifestations, which reveal the

nature of textual formulation, the mode of discourse, and its linguistic tool its meanings and structures. Moreover, there is an incapacity to model a general structural framework for various forms of discourse, including literary discourse"²² In this sense, it is the text itself that imposes its law, not the generic classification.

1.4. Towards a Flexible Descriptive Theory:

Contemporary criticism has moved beyond the normative theory that sought to codify genres and impose fixed boundaries between them. Instead, it has embraced a descriptive theory that observes textual phenomena in their layering and intersection. As a result, the concept of genre now rests on a fragile foundation, yet paradoxically has become more dynamic and better able to adapt to new textual forms.

Khairy Douma articulates this shift, stating that "the task that lies ahead for future literary theories is to demonstrate how the best generic concepts of past decades can become integrated into a network of interrelated systems"²³, This requires abandoning pre-established classifications and starting from the text itself as the primary unit of understanding and analysis.

3. Intergeneric Overlap and the Deconstruction of Genre Boundaries:

The concept of intergeneric overlap has become one of the most prominent manifestations of the epistemological shift in contemporary literary studies. From normative theories that impose rigid boundaries between genres, to deconstructive approaches that view literature as a flexible structure unbound by classification and inclined toward unsettling and restructuring genre systems this shift emerged as an aesthetic and epistemological response to global transformations, evolving taste, and changing expressive forms.

1. Toward a Stratified Understanding of Literary Genre:

Considering literary genre through the lens of intergenericity suggests that creative works do not belong to a single pure genre. Rather, they represent intersections between

multiple genres, interacting with one another to produce new meanings. This is echoed by Abdel-Moneim Tallima, who affirms that "the epic and dramatic modes are realized in lyrical poetry, the lyrical and epic modes in dramatic literature, and all three converge in the novel"²⁴ Thus, the literary work becomes a space for genre hybridity rather than a mere representation of one genre.

1.1. Generic Displacement and Textual Hybridization

Tzvetan Todorov highlights this shift when he states that "the profound literary work attempts to assert its essence by dismantling distinctions and boundaries" and he further adds: "there are no longer books that belong to genres; each book refers to literature as a whole... thus distancing itself from genres and standing outside prose or poetry"²⁵, This is what is commonly referred to as "generic displacement," where a literary text transcends the traits of its original genre to reposition itself within new structures.

The novel, in particular, is considered the most capable literary form of absorbing this displacement. It has successfully integrated other genres into its fabric such as poetry, drama, the essay, and even philosophical writing.

Mikhail Bakhtin also viewed the novel as a genre nourished by heteroglossia, a notion he called dialogism. He emphasized that "Aristotle's Poetics remains the fixed foundation of genre theory, even though that foundation, having receded into the background, is no longer consciously perceived by most"²⁶, This signals the continued need for foundational thinking, despite the transformations genres have undergone.

1.2. Intergenericity as an Aesthetic Act of Resistance

Poststructuralist studies particularly those of Jacques Derrida demonstrate that texts are not defined solely by what they belong to, but also by what they break away from. Belonging, in this context, is not an affirmation of a fixed identity, but a tense awareness of "difference."

As Khairy Douma states: "Derrida does not deny the existence of texts that share certain features, but he emphasizes that at every moment when one attempts to approach the subject of a text, a scene of disintegration begins and so does the end"²⁷ This implies that intergenericity is not a form of chaos, but rather an aesthetic stance toward the world a breach in the fixity of meaning, and a destabilization of discursive structures.

This raises a central question: is what we consider intergenericity a deviation from an established model, or the formation of a new one?

1.3. Deconstructing Genre Theory in Light of Textual Practice

Modernist critics largely agree that "the distinction between literary genres has ceased to be relevant in the writings of most contemporary authors," and that "boundaries are constantly crossed, genres are blended or mixed, and new ones are created"²⁸.

Terry Eagleton maintains that "to write is already to depart from literature in the bourgeois sense of the word," and that "the text is a practice aimed at unsettling literary genres"²⁹ Thus, it becomes impossible to clearly identify the form of a novel, poem, or essay; instead, the text emerges as a complex entity.

Roland Barthes introduced the notion of "literary latency," suggesting that literature exists as a semantic state that transcends both content and form. He writes: "Literature must point to something other than its own content and form it is its own framing that gives literature its power"³⁰.

Despite the deconstructive momentum, we cannot definitively declare the end of genre theory. Rather, it can be said that this theory has shifted from a normative framework to a descriptive one. As Khairy Douma states, "Modern genre theory does not establish pre-set normative rules for writers nor define strict boundaries for the possible number of genres; it is merely a descriptive theory"³¹ In this light, the discussion of "genre intermingling" becomes not only a technical description but also a theoretical stance one that views texts as living organisms that

breathe more than one air and speak in more than one voice.

Abdel Moneim Tallima encapsulates this view by asserting: "Intergenericity did not conflict with the distinction between genres; rather, it enriched and enhanced it"³².

4. Interwriting as a Textual and Aesthetic Horizon

1. From Genre Intermingling to Literary Interdisciplinarity

If the intermingling of literary genres represents a crossing of rigid generic boundaries, then interdisciplinarity (intertextualité / interdisciplinarité) represents a broader and more radical horizon in conceptualizing literary texts. It allows for interaction between discourses and enables epistemological fields to converge and complement one another.

In this sense, interdisciplinarity is not merely an internal generic hybridization it is also an intellectual encounter between literature and philosophy, between art and science, between creativity and reality.

Emmanuel Fraisse pointed to this convergence when he stated: "Literary fields and methodologies are, in the eyes of scientists, among the least precise and the quickest to shift. Their most common concepts are often implicit, mutable, and ambiguous"³³ This characterization reflects not only the permeability of the literary field but its essential reliance on interconnectivity as a condition for its continuity and evolution.

1.1. The Text as an Epistemological Network

In the wake of the intertextual shift, the literary text has transformed from a closed entity into an open network of references, where texts, knowledges, and discourses intersect. Ahmad Youssef highlights this by stating: "Ancient poetics insisted on the referential dimension of the text as one of the components that determine literariness, through which the problem of meaning and the meaning of meaning becomes clear, especially the distinction between essence and accident, and between the particular and the universal"³⁴ From this perspective,

literary analysis is no longer based solely on classification but on understanding the relationships that texts establish with one another and with external discourses.

1.2. Interdisciplinarity as a New Hermeneutic Horizon

Interdisciplinarity does not merely unlock the potentialities of the text; it destabilizes traditional interpretive perspectives. Under the influence of epistemological hybridity, literature can no longer be interpreted solely from within; instead, it must be read through a conceptual network drawing from psychology, linguistics, semiotics, history, anthropology, and beyond.

Khairy Douma articulates this complexity by asserting: "The transgression of literary genres is fraught with obstacles and objections derived from theoretical reflection and textual realizations, revealing textual formulations, discourse style, and the tool of language with its connotations and structures..."³⁵ This reinforces the interpretive nature of interdisciplinarity as an opening toward multiplicity and meaning rather than toward fixity and certainty.

1.3. From Literary Genre to Cultural Pattern

Interdisciplinary writing redefines literature not merely as an artistic genre, but as a cultural mode one that engages dynamically with knowledge systems, values, and societies.

Chafic Al-Buqai echoes this broader vision when he notes: "Greek thought illuminated the foundational structure both intellectual and material on which modern European schools built their systems"³⁶ This acknowledgment underscores that the interaction between fields does not diminish the artistic value of literature, but rather enhances its presence at the core of human knowledge.

1.4. Interdisciplinary Writing as Resistance to Closure

Interdisciplinary writing is not limited to cognitive intersection alone; it carries a resistant dimension, as it challenges the notions of "generic purity"* or "fixed

belonging," opening texts to interrogation and difference.

Terry Eagleton refers to this when he states: "As soon as we engage in the practice of writing, we find ourselves outside of literature in the bourgeois sense of the word... The text is a practice aimed at unsettling literary genres"³⁷ Here, interdisciplinarity appears not merely as a stylistic strategy, but as an existential stance on writing: writing as opposition, deconstruction, and transgression.

5. The Novel as an Intergeneric Form

1. The Novel and the History of Openness

Since its modern inception, the novel has never been a "pure" literary genre; rather, it has always emerged as a confluence of genres and discourses, which has made it the most adaptable and evolution-prone literary form.

Abdel-Moneim Tallima emphasizes that the evolution of literary genres is not an isolated process but is deeply intertwined with social and cultural transformations. He notes: "Each stage in the development of society embodies its aesthetic relationship to the world in specific literary types"³⁸ Thus, the novel is a product of a transforming society one that compels the novelistic form toward openness and hybridity, rather than rigidity or closure.

1.1. The Fertility of the Novel through Its Hybrid Structure

When Bakhtin spoke of the novel, he emphasized that it is the most liberated of all literary genres in terms of formal constraints. In *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, he asserts that the novel opens itself to other genres and reproduces them from within. He writes: "Aristotle's book on poetry has remained the stable foundation of genre theory, even though that foundation, in its fading, is no longer consciously acknowledged"³⁹ Thus, the novel not only reproduces other genres but also transcends and reconfigures them within its own logic, integrating poetry, the essay, biography, rhetoric, and history without losing its novelistic identity.

1.2. The Novel as the Art of Polyphony

Bakhtin also introduced the concept of polyphony, which designates the novel as an

intergeneric genre par excellence. It does not rely on a single voice or centralized consciousness but embraces the intersection of perspectives and the multiplicity of discourses.

This polyphonic structure allows the novel to accommodate knowledge systems such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychiatry, and politics as seen clearly in the works of Dostoevsky, Proust, Tahar Wattar, and Wassini Laredj, among others.

1.3. The Novel and the Transgression of Genre

Tzvetan Todorov argues that the novel, by nature, transcends the very notion of genre. He writes: "The profound literary work attempts to affirm its essence by dismantling distinctions and boundaries" ⁴⁰ Thus, the novel moves from being merely a literary genre to becoming an experimental space, unrestricted by form and grounded in aesthetic and epistemic hybridity.

This is echoed by Khairy Douma, who affirms that: "Structuralist terms such as 'text' and 'book' deliberately avoid generic classifications" ⁴¹.

1.4. The Novel as a Zone of Semantic Latency

According to Roland Barthes, the novel is not only about what is said, but also about what is implied what is alluded to without being explicitly stated. This constitutes what he calls a zone of latency: "Literature must point to something something distinct from its individual content and form, which is its own unique frame" ⁴² This is what renders the novel open to multiple layers of interpretation, as it operates not within a single semantic system, but through a complex web of references, symbols, and cultural markers.

6. Toward an Interdisciplinary Theory for Understanding Literature

1. The Crisis of Genre in Modern Contexts

Rigid boundaries between literary genres no longer prevail in contemporary creative practice. The twentieth century and beyond have witnessed increasing skepticism toward the legitimacy of "literary genres" as normative categories. These genres have

shifted from being "taxonomic classifications" to "open-ended propositions" governed by the dynamics of discourse.

As René Wellek states in this regard: "The theory of literary genres no longer occupies a central place in literary studies in this century... the very concept has become questionable" ⁴³ Hence, the central critical question today is no longer: "To which genre does this work belong?", but rather: "How does this work transcend traditional genres?" or: "What is its intergeneric structure?"

1.1. From Genre to Discourse: The Transformation of Theory

Structuralist and post-structuralist theories especially deconstruction have taken a clear stance against the "stability of genre" Jacques Derrida argued that every attempt to define genre places the text in a paradox: each text belongs to a genre, yet the moment of belonging is also the beginning of unmaking that very belonging.

Khairy Douma comments on this idea: "In every moment of approaching the subject of the text, the scene of disintegration begins, and the end begins" ⁴⁴ This suggests that generic affiliation is not an essence but a textual effect meaning that the text does not "belong" to a genre so much as it negotiates with it or transcends it.

1.2. Genre Theory Between Description and Normativity

There has been a clear shift from viewing literary genres as "predefined molds" to considering them as "dynamic descriptive structures." Khairy Douma affirms that: "Modern genre theory does not establish prior normative rules for writers, nor does it impose strict boundaries on the number of possible genres" ⁴⁵ Here, interdisciplinarity is not merely an artistic choice, but rather an expressive necessity stemming from the nature of contemporary knowledge marked by overlapping and openness across intellectual domains. Knowledge is no longer governed by fixed classifications, but by continuous interaction and entanglement among epistemological systems.

1.3. The Interdisciplinary Theory: Concepts and Propositions

To understand literature in its modern context, interdisciplinary theory proposes a revision of critical concepts moving away from notions of "purity," "clarity," and "boundaries" toward concepts such as:

- Transgression
- Juxtaposition
- Hybridization
- Fusion
- Intertextuality

(Intertextualité)

Terry Eagleton notes: "The moment we engage in writing, we find ourselves outside literature in the bourgeois sense of the word... I mean a practice aimed at unsettling literary genres" ⁴⁶.

What matters in interdisciplinary theory is not to establish new rules, but to realize that literature always operates at the boundaries: the boundaries of genre, the boundaries of language, and the boundaries of identity.

1.4. Towards an Interdisciplinary Conception of Literary Studies

Based on the foregoing, one can propose an interdisciplinary theory for understanding literature that rests upon the following principles:

- Analyzing texts from within their pluralistic structures: This involves uncovering the levels of generic, linguistic, and symbolic interweaving embedded in the text.
- Deconstructing genre categories: Not as inherently invalid, but as premature and provisional practices that reflect historically contingent modes of classification.
- Understanding literature as a multi-field discourse: Not merely as a linguistic artifact, but as a bearer of epistemological, cultural, ideological, and psychological dimensions.
- Reformulating literary critical methodologies: In ways that enable openness to adjacent disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, political theory, and the arts, among others.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to trace the theoretical evolution of the concept of literary genre by employing a critical-comparative approach rooted in both Arabic and Western traditions.

The findings demonstrate that literary genres are not fixed or immutable categories, but rather dynamic and historically contingent constructs shaped by cultural, philosophical, and intertextual transformations.

A key result of the study is the recognition that the rigid, normative view of genres has gradually given way to a descriptive, open-ended understanding. Drawing on the works of theorists such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Tzvetan Todorov, and Terry Eagleton, alongside Arab critics like 'Abd al-Munim Tallimah, Khayri Dumah, and Abd al-Aziz Shabil, the research reveals that genre transgression and hybridity are not anomalies but intrinsic features of modern literary consciousness.

Another important result is the emergence of intergenericity and interdisciplinarity as central tools for reading contemporary texts. These approaches challenge traditional taxonomies and emphasize fluid boundaries between genres. This is especially evident in modern Arabic literature, where narrative forms often intersect with poetry, philosophy, and historical discourse, defying classical genre expectations.

The discussion also highlights the conceptual shift from genre as a tool of classification to genre as a space of negotiation, interaction, and epistemological inquiry. In this light, genres become dialogical rather than prescriptive, encouraging multiple interpretations and opening up the literary field to innovative critical methodologies.

Overall, the findings affirm that adopting flexible, cross-disciplinary methods, and revisiting classical texts through the lens of intergeneric theory, enables a redefinition of genre as a living, evolving process. This aligns with broader intellectual movements in contemporary literary studies and provides a pathway for revitalizing Arabic critical practice in the face of global epistemological changes.

8. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the theoretical evolution of literary genre through a critical and comparative approach,

engaging with both Arabic and Western literary traditions. Its primary aim was to trace how genre has transformed from a fixed, prescriptive system into a dynamic, open, and interactive framework shaped by broader philosophical, historical, and intermedial influences.

The analysis demonstrated that literary genres are not immutable taxonomies but culturally and aesthetically contingent constructs, continually redefined by textual practices and intellectual shifts. Drawing on the contributions of Western theorists such as Barthes, Derrida, Todorov, and Eagleton—alongside Arab critics like Abdel Moneim Tallima, Khairy Douma, and Abdelaziz Chabbi the study revealed that the permeability of genre boundaries is a universal phenomenon rather than an isolated trend.

By emphasizing concepts such as intergenericity, intertextuality, and interdisciplinarity (al-bayniyya), the research highlighted the increasing complexity of modern literary production and the need to move beyond rigid classifications. This paradigm shift not only reflects an epistemological transition in literary studies but also opens new avenues for critical inquiry particularly within Arabic literary criticism.

In summarizing its purpose and findings, the study underscores the value of adopting flexible, descriptive approaches to genre, integrating interdisciplinary methodologies, and re-reading canonical texts through the lens of hybridity. It calls for a redefinition of literary genre as a site of negotiation and dialogue, rather than containment and separation.

Ultimately, the study argues that interdisciplinarity is not merely an academic trend, but a necessary orientation for literary criticism in the 21st century especially within Arab contexts. It offers both a critical tool and a transformative vision, capable of renewing interpretive frameworks and enhancing our understanding of literature as a cross-disciplinary, culturally embedded practice.

4. Bibliography List:

Books

- Aristotle (1973), *Poetics*, Translated by Abdel Rahman Badawi. Dar Al-Thaqafa, Beirut, Lebanon. (2nd ed.).
- Al-Bakaa'i, Chafik (1985), *Literary Genres: Schools and Trends* (in Comparative Literature), Ezzeddine Publishing House, Beirut, Lebanon. (1st ed.).
- Tallima, Abdel Monem (2013). *Introduction to Literary Theory*. Dar Al-Tanweer, Cairo, Egypt. (1st ed.).
- Chbeil, Abdelaziz (2001). *Theory of Literary Genres in Prose Heritage – The Dialectic of Presence and Absence*. Mohamed Ali Al-Hami Publishing House, Sfax, Tunisia. (1st ed.).
- Viëtor, Karl (1994). *The History of Literary Genres*. In: Viëtor et al., *Theory of Literary Genres*. Translated by Abdelaziz Chbeil. Cultural Literary Club, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (1st ed.).
- Barthes, Roland (1985). *Writing Degree Zero*. Translated by Taher Hajar. Tlass for Studies, Publishing and Translation, Damascus, Syria. (1st ed.).
- Eagleton, Terry (1998). *Introduction to Literary Theory*. Translated by Ahmed Hassan. General Authority of Cultural Palaces, Cairo, Egypt. (1st ed.).
- Douma, Khairy (1998). *Intermingling of Genres in the Egyptian Short Story (1960–1990)*. General Egyptian Authority, Cairo, Egypt. (1st ed.).
- Wellek, René (1987). *Critical Concepts*. Translated by Mohamed Asfour. National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait.
- Stalloni, Yves (2014). *Literary Genres*. Translated by Mohamed Al-Zakraoui. Arab Organization for Translation, Beirut, Lebanon. (1st ed.).
- Tross, Mohamed (2005). *Argumentation Theory through*

Rhetorical, Logical and Linguistic Studies. Dar Al-Thaqafa, Casablanca, Morocco. (1st ed.).

- Warren, Austin (1991). *Theory of Literature*. Translated by Adel Salama. Dar Al-Mareekh, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (1st ed.).
- Sharaf, Abdelaziz (1974). *Creative Vision in the Poetry of Al-Bayati*. Ministry of Information, Baghdad, Iraq.
- Todorov, Tzvetan (2016). *Theory of Literary Genres*. Translated by Abdelrahman Bouali. Ninawa Studies and Publishing, Damascus, Syria. (1st ed.).
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (1987). *Esthétique et théorie du roman*. Translated from Russian by Daria Olivier. Gallimard, Paris, France.
- Fraisse, Emmanuel (2004). *General Literary Issues: New Horizons in Dimension Theory*. Translated by Latif Zaytoun. World of Knowledge Series, Issue 300. Kuwait.
- Youssef, Ahmed (2007). *Systemic Reading: Structure's Authority and the Illusion of Immanence*. Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria. (1st ed.

Journal article :

- Abbas, Mahmoud Jaber. (2001). *The Kingdom of Voices and the Mirror of Conquests*. **Aalam Al-Fikr Journal**, Kuwait, Vol. 30, July–September.
- Ghanem, Islam Abdallah Abdelghany. (2016). *The Future of Environmental Studies in the Humanities: Anthropology as a Model*. In: Proceedings of the 3rd

International Scientific Conference: Acceptance of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences.

- Amin, Ammar bin Abdulmonem. (2024). *Interdisciplinary Studies – A Vision for Developing University Education*. Department of Studies, Faculty of Arts, King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia.
- Hommam, Mohamed. (2017). *Knowledge Intersections and the End of Specialization in Arab-Islamic Thought: A Study of the Relations Between Sciences*. Nama Center for Research and Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

Seminar article:

- Dillon, Louis. (1986). *Interdisciplinarity in General Education*. International Conference at UNESCO, Paris, France.
- Abdelghany, Islam Abdallah (2016). *The Future of Environmental Studies in the Humanities: Anthropology as a Model*. The 3rd International Scientific Conference: The Future of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Cairo, Egypt.

Internet websites:

- Saleheen, Mohamed. (2019). *Interdisciplinary Studies Open New Horizons in Scientific Research*. Available at: <https://islamonline.net/29363> (consulted on 10/07/2025).

1. Citations:

Referrals And References:

⁴ Abdelaziz Chbeil2001: *Theory of Literary Genres in Prose Heritage – The Dialectic of Presence and Absence*, Sfax, Tunisia: Mohamed Ali Al-Hami Publishing House, 1st ed, p21.
⁵ Karl Viëtor1994: *The History of Literary Genres*, in: Viëtor et al., *Theory of Literary Genres*, trans. Abdelaziz Chbeil, Jeddah (Saudi Arabia): The Cultural Literary Club, 1st ed, pp. 14-47.

¹ Aristotle: *Poetics*1973, trans. Abdel Rahman Badawi, Beirut: Dar Al-Thaqafa, 2nd ed, p26.

² Chafik Al-Bakaa'i1985: *Literary Genres: Schools and Trends (in Comparative Literature)*, Beirut: Ezzeddine Publishing House, 1st ed, p171.

³ Abdel Monem Tallima2013: *Introduction to Literary Theory*, Cairo: Dar Al-Tanweer, 1st ed, p121.

- ⁶ Roland Barthes 1985: *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Taher Hajar, Damascus: Tlass for Studies, Publishing and Translation, 1st ed, p21.
 - ⁷ Terry Eagleton 1998: *Introduction to Literary Theory*, trans. Ahmed Hassan, Cairo: General Authority of Cultural Palaces, 1st ed, p163.
 - ⁸ Khairy Douma 1998: *Intermingling of Genres in the Egyptian Short Story (1960–1990)*, Cairo: General Egyptian Authority, 1st ed, p29.
 - ⁹ René Wellek 1987: *Critical Concepts*, trans. Mohamed Asfour, Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, p376.
 - ¹⁰ Yves Stalloni 2014 : *Literary Genres*, trans. Mohamed Al-Zakraoui, Beirut: Arab Organization for Translation, 1st ed, p9.
 - ¹¹ Khairy Douma: *Intermingling of Genres in the Egyptian Short Story*, p. 27.
 - ¹² Mohamed Tross: *Argumentation Theory through Rhetorical, Logical and Linguistic Studies*, Casablanca 2005: Dar Al-Thaqafa, 1st ed, p. 46.
 - ¹³ Abdelaziz Chbeil: *Theory of Literary Genres in Prose Heritage*, p. 21.
 - ¹⁴ Austin Warren 1991: *Theory of Literature*, trans. Adel Salama, Riyadh: Dar Al-Mareekh, 1st ed, p. 325.
 - ¹⁵ Abdel Monem Tallima: *Introduction to Literary Theory*, p. 121.
 - ¹⁶ Mahmoud Gaber Abbas: *The Kingdom of Voices and the Mirror of Conquests, Al-Fikr Al-Alami* journal, Vol. 30, July–September, Kuwait, p. 160.
 - ¹⁷ Abdelaziz Sharaf 1974: *Creative Vision in the Poetry of Al-Bayati*, Baghdad: Ministry of Information, p. 85.
 - ¹⁸ Karl Viëtor: *The History of Literary Genres*, p. 16.
 - ¹⁹ Abdel Monem Tallima: *Introduction to Literary Theory*, p. 146.
 - ²⁰ Tzvetan Todorov 2016: *Theory of Literary Genres*, trans. Abdelrahman Bouali, Damascus: Ninawa Studies and Publishing, 1st ed, p. 22.
 - ²¹ Khairy Douma: *Intermingling of Genres in the Short Story*, p. 27.
 - ²² Khairy Douma, p. 28.
 - ²³ Khairy Douma, p. 43.
 - ²⁴ Abdel Monem Tallima, p. 146.
 - ²⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, p. 22.
 - ²⁶ M. Bakhtine 1987 : *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, traduit du russe par Daria Olivier, Gallimard, Paris, p. 445.
 - ²⁷ Khairy Douma, p. 27.
 - ²⁸ René Wellek: *Critical Concepts*, p. 376.
 - ²⁹ Terry Eagleton, p. 163.
 - ³⁰ Roland Barthes: *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 21.
 - ³¹ Khairy Douma, p. 29.
 - ³² Abdel Monem Tallima, p. 146.
 - ³³ Emmanuel Fraisse: *General Literary Issues: New Horizons in Dimension Theory*, trans. Latif Zaytoun, *World of Knowledge* series, Issue 300, February 2004, p. 64.
 - ³⁴ Ahmed Youssef 2007: *Systemic Reading: Structure's Authority and the Illusion of Immanence*, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st ed, p. 267.
 - ³⁵ Khairy Douma, p. 28.
 - ³⁶ Chafik Al-Bakaa'i 1985: *Literary Genres*, Beirut: Ezzeddine Publishing House, 1st ed, pp. 161–162.
- * The principle of "purity of genre" or "genre clarity" refers to the idea that each literary genre should remain distinct, preserving stylistic purity, simplicity of expression, focusing on a single emotion (e.g., laughter or fear), and dealing with one subject and one resolution. This was established by Aristotle in *Poetics* and upheld by both classical and neoclassical traditions.
- ³⁷ Terry Eagleton, p. 163.
 - ³⁸ Abdel Monem Tallima, p. 121.
 - ³⁹ M. Bakhtin, *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, p. 445.
 - ⁴⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, p. 22.
 - ⁴¹ Austin Warren: *Theory of Literature*, p. 325.
 - ⁴² Roland Barthes: *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 21
 - ⁴³ René Wellek: *Critical Concepts*, p. 376.
 - ⁴⁴ Khairy Douma, p. 27.
 - ⁴⁵ Khairy Douma, p. 29.
 - ⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton, p. 163.