

Genre and World

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The point

- Worlds come in kinds
- All worlds are genred
- This has important influence on how we create and interpret worlds

Margaret Atwood

What I mean by “science fiction” is those books that descend from H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds*, which treats of an invasion by tentacled Martians shot to Earth in metal cannisters—things that could not possibly happen—whereas, for me, “speculative fiction” means plots that descend from Jules Verne’s books about submarines and balloon travel and such—things that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the books.

(Margaret Atwood (2011): *In Other Worlds*. New York: Random House. 6)

Peter Seitel

A genre presents a social world or a partial view of one that includes configurations of time and space, notions of causality and human motivation, and ethical and aesthetic values. Genres are storehouses of cultural knowledge and possibility. They support the creation of works and guide the way an audience envisions and interprets them. The idea of generic worlds directs a genre-savvy critic to the dimensions of these collective representations—including time, space, categories of actors and settings, causality, and motivation—and the interpretation they call for.

(Peter Seitel (2003): “Theorizing Genres--Interpreting Works”. *New Literary History*. 2003. 279.)

Atwood – again

[...] hearing a bush speak, especially in such a portentous manner, is not something a Jane Austen heroine would be likely to experience. Such an event might happen in an Ann Radcliffe gothic shocker, but only if there were a sinister count hidden inside the bush. It could happen easily in a fairy tale, however, or a “fable”, something like *Alice in Wonderland*, or in a Greek myth at the point at which some hapless maiden is being transformed into a sapling or other item of vegetation by a god. And it could happen effortlessly on Planet X.

(Margaret Atwood (2011): *In Other Worlds*. New York: Random House. 44f.)

The Disquieting Duckling



Atwood – same s...

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A Clash of Things



The point—again!

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