

Genre Reconsidered: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*

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Abstract

Charlotte Lennox was engaged in a kind of generic transformation, or rather confusion, in the mid-eighteenth century literary scene around her. Romance, novel, satire, and history were not clearly differentiated. The newly emerging novel was challenging the once dominant romance genre and subsuming the traditional forms of verse satire. However, the former genres' influence was so pervasive that writers often could not escape their influence, which made many eighteenth century texts the sites of contrasting literary genres. Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) is a text that captures such mid-century debates between novel as the new genre and romance and satire as older genres. *The Female Quixote* is Lennox's comment on the intersection of literary genres and an experiment with the novel as genre for the woman writer at a time when the male practitioners of this new genre dominated the literary scene. Romance and novel are the dominant genres at play in this text, while satire is a weaker "genre" oscillating between these two and distorting their boundaries.

Keywords: Genre Theory; Charlotte Lennox; *The Female Quixote*; 18th Century Fiction; Feminism

"That different readers may disagree about a text's genre is neither contradictory nor surprising. It merely indicates that a genre is combinatory, not monolithic."
—Ralph Cohen, p. 91

1. Introduction: Genre in Context

Critics have always pointed out fundamental questions about "the genre, value, and meaning of romance" in eighteenth-century literature (Probyn, 2004, p. 264). The historians of the English novel also admit that "there is no clean break, no definite ending and new beginning, between the age of romance and the age of realism" (Baker, 1930, p. 13). Questions about generic construction and the intersection of literary genres acquire special importance in the case of Charlotte Lennox's romance/anti-romance, *The Female Quixote* (1752). Despite the rigorous criticism Lennox's novel has received, the novel's comment on literary genres remains a puzzling one. The novel has been often read as an anti-romance satirizing the French heroic romances of the seventeenth century,¹ which I view as a simplification of a more serious concern. Critics have focused on Arabella's delusions and the absurdities of romance Arabella enacts. The novel, however, bears a complex relation to the genres of romance and satire, which needs to be re-examined. The opposition between novel and romance, critics have always pointed out, can be seen in my reading of the novel as more of a dialectical relationship of interdependence.

M. H. Abrams (1999) remarks that "the emergence of new types of literary productions" during the eighteenth century "helped weaken confidence in the fixity and stability of literary genres" (p. 109). Ian Watt (1957), on the other hand, defines the eighteenth century novel practiced by Fielding and Richardson as "a new kind of writing" that constituted "a break with the old fashioned romance" (pp. 9-10). Romance as a genre characterized by the improbable was being displaced by the realistic novel. Yet, Northrop Frye (1976) points to the close relationship between these two genres by arguing that the novel "had few structural features peculiar to itself" as many eighteenth century novels "use much the same general structure as romance, but adapt that structure to a demand for greater conformity to ordinary experience" (*Secular Scripture*, pp. 38-39). Jane Spencer (1986) takes this close relationship between novel and romance to mean that romance and novel differ in terms of "degree rather than kind" (p. 181). Clara Reeve (1930), writing in the eighteenth century, touches on another aspect of the close relationship between novel and romance and the way each was used to define the other. Reeve observes that "[t]he word *Novel* in all languages signifies something new. It was first used to distinguish these works from Romance, though they have lately been confounded together and are frequently mistaken for each other" (p. 110).

Reeve also captures the sense of the transformation in the eighteenth century from one genre to another when the novel tried to define itself against the romance:

The Romance is a heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen.— The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass everyday before our eyes, such may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to present every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own. (p. 111)

Charlotte Lennox, it seems, was engaged in this kind of generic transformation, or rather confusion, in the mid-eighteenth century literary scene around her. Romance, novel, satire, and history were not clearly differentiated. The newly emerging novel was challenging the once dominant romance genre and subsuming the traditional forms of verse satire. However, the former genres' influence was so pervasive that writers often could not escape their influence, which made many eighteenth century texts the sites of contrasting literary genres. Lennox's *The Female Quixote* is a text that captures such mid-century debate between novel as the new genre and romance and satire as older genres. *The Female Quixote* is, in a sense, Lennox's comment on the intersection of literary genres and an experiment with the novel as genre for the woman writer at a time when the male practitioners of this new genre dominated the literary scene. And significantly, this novel is an imitation of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605; 1615), a novel that left a huge impact on the English novel. The impact of the Spanish picaresque tradition can be seen in *The Female Quixote* in its witty imitations of romance novels and in its employment of a virtuous character and a moral vision. The novel's comic edge, its depiction of the contrast between illusion and reality, and its social message are all emblematic of the influence of Cervantes.

2. Literature Review: Genre Theory

Genre theorists agree that genre criticism is a useful tool of literary analysis. They also agree that once a genre enters into the text of another genre, "it both acts and is acted upon" (Nightingale, 2000, p. 6). Nevertheless, they often present the question of genre in literary texts as a problematic one. They argue that genres do not "exist" in literary works. Rather, "a given work manifests a certain genre" and a work can have "more than one genre" (Todorov, 1973, pp. 21-22). Moreover, genres are not viewed as stabilizing conventions in literary texts. Each genre, critics assume, acquires some power and challenges the text's own premises. As one genre theorist succinctly puts it:

Does genre constitute the particular or do particulars constitute the genre? Are genres found in texts, in the reader's mind, in the author's, or in some combination thereof? Or are they not "found" at all but, rather, devised and used? Are they "theoretical" or "historical"? Are they "prescriptive" or "descriptive"? ... Can we "see" them or do they hover on the hermeneutic "horizon," always potentially but never actually in view? Can genres be used to explain "literariness"? Or are they the enemy of all that makes literature seem "literary"? Might they be the enemy of the reader as well, a too rigorous constraint on the interpretive act? How many genres are there? ... How, exactly, do they work? And change? (Rosmarin, 1985, p. 7)

Rosmarin also pinpoints the fact that genre "works against the text's exalted stature" and "its power to inquire into the stature and dynamics of its own writing" (p. 7). This is to say that if genres refer to certain common characteristics in a number of texts, then we can also study genres in terms of what resists generic conventions within a text. Thus, if Lennox's *The Female Quixote* has been read as an anti-romance novel, it can also be studied as a romance, or at least as a text manifesting a dialogue between more than one genre. In this light, genres often become the sites of contesting ideological powers within a text, which produces different discourses.² Lennox's *The Female Quixote* incorporates three main genres.³ Romance and novel are the dominant genres at play in this text, while satire is a weaker "genre" oscillating between these two and distorting their boundaries.

The novel as a genre is problematic to define. However, we are safe to assume that, like the romance, the novel is not a monolithic genre. The novel's basic task, as pointed out by Ian Watt (1957) in *The Rise of the Novel*, is "to convey the impression of fidelity to human experience" (p. 13). Lennox's *The Female Quixote* does this by satirizing Arabella's heroic ideals as something in stark opposition to the verisimilitude and morality of the new novel. Satiric realism often opposes the fantasies of Arabella's romances. Besides, Arabella herself, despite her romantic delusions, is a credible character of psychological depth like many other characters in realist fiction. In so far as romance is considered, Northrop Frye (1957) comments in *Anatomy of Criticism* that "[t]he essential element of plot in romance is adventure" (p. 186). Frye samples three main stages of the quest-myth in the romance: "the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not

survive the conflict" (p. 187). It also does not take much effort to see that Frye's model exactly works out when applied to Lennox's *The Female Quixote*. The conflict and adventures, as we will see, revolve around Arabella and Glanville and the obstacles to their union, the climactic struggle is that between Glanville and Sir George, his rival for Arabella's affection, and the recognition is Arabella's recognition of Glanville's worth and her willing acceptance of him in marriage. Thus, the novel fulfils the criteria of romance, at least in terms of its plot structure.

As for satire, Abrams (1999) defines this genre "as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (p. 275). Abrams adds that "satire derides: that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself" (p. 275). The novel also fulfils this generic requirement in that its satire is directed at the heroic romances of the seventeenth century. Thus, for her strange romantic ideas, Arabella often becomes the butt of Lennox's satire. As the main genres in the text, novel, romance, and satire become essentially contestable, for they resist neat dichotomies, wield power, and challenge the neoclassical notions of the purity of genres.

Another genre theorist presents an approach to the study of genre whereby genres are related to "discursive configurations of power: a kind of tectonic plate theory insofar as literary genres are constantly shifting in response to the conditions and forces of discourse" (Snyder, 1991, 4). Snyder argues that genre should not be viewed as "an essentializing presence in the literary work or tradition" and that it "needs to be decentered" (p. 205). Snyder, for example, terms satire as "semigenre" because "it is an unstable genre" that shows "a marked shift into modes of other genres, particularly tragedy and the novel" (p. 15). Snyder accounts for this in that satire "must detour around its perplexity about human nature by constantly seeking its resolutions outside itself" and yielding to "more dominant genres" (p. 101). In the light of this argument, satire as an informal genre aligns itself with both the novel and the romance in *The Female Quixote*. While satire is used in Lennox's novel to expose romances, it is also used in favor of Arabella and against the hypocrisy or wickedness of other characters, which manifests the overlap of genres. Satire functions in the text as a slippery genre, or rather as "a structural principle or attitude, what we have called a *mythos*" in the words of Northrop Frye (1957, p. 310). Both Arabella's romances and the trivialities of life become the butt of Lennox's satire.

Michael McKeon (1988) highlights the social implications of genre shifts and argues that "the instability of generic and social categories" in the course of the seventeenth century was "symptomatic of a change in attitudes about how truth and virtue are most authentically signified" (p. 161). McKeon views this as essential to the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century. As a work that contributes to this debate over literary genres, Lennox's *The Female Quixote* uses multiple genres. Novel and romance manifest themselves within this text in a relation of influence. These dominant genres engage in a shifting dialogic relation, employ satire, and leave the question of genre an unresolved one.

3. Shifting Genres and Lennox's *The Female Quixote*

A close reading of Lennox's *The Female Quixote* reveals that the novel takes up the issue of genre at the thematic as well as the structural level. The novel presents its satire of the French heroic romances of the seventeenth century in such a way that it is difficult for us to distinguish between novel, satire, and romance. Romance as a self-conscious genre continually asserts its existence as the novel's other. Lennox's novel falls, deliberately perhaps, into the very romance conventions it sets out to satirize. In presenting a romance plot, the novel becomes one. As Langbauer (1990) puts it, "[I]nstead of being in control of romance, the novel is drawn into and repeats it" (p. 67). Langbauer states that the novel "needs romance to set itself up as a novel, but, when prodded, romance deconstructs and merges into the novel" (p. 90). Commenting on the close relation between novel, satire, and romance in *The Female Quixote*, Deborah Ross (1991) observes that the novel owes much to the romance it satirizes:

Despite the anti-romance premise of *The Female Quixote*, Lennox could not write an "anti-book"; to satirize romance one must also write a romance. And to insult something while making such extensive use of it can begin to seem ungrateful and unmannerly—that is, the values of the satirized form can begin to take over. Romance does take over this novel thoroughly enough to introduce a sour note into its closing major chord—the final chapter in which Arabella is cured and, one supposes, happy. (p. 100)

Whether or not this "sour note" Ross speaks of implies a nostalgic return to the romance tradition on Lennox's part is not my concern here. What should be argued is the way romance, novel, and satire engage in a shifting relationship.

James Lynch (1987) observes that Lennox "creates two kinds of fiction: the "romance" world of quixotic delusions and the "real" world in which those delusions are set" (p. 51). Lynch calls the realistic plot "the displaced romance" as opposed to the romance plot of the novel (p. 52). However, we might highlight the instances in which the novel transgresses its borders and merges with romance. Neither genre, after all, exists independently as Lynch would have us assume. Although the critics sampled above tackled the problematic issue of genre in *The Female Quixote*, none has

examined this thoroughly or in a sustained study. Drawing on genre theory and the novel's literary context, I intend to examine the erasure of boundaries between genres in Lennox's text. Of special importance to my discussion of genre play in *The Female Quixote* is the subtle discourse on genres delivered by the divine toward the end of the novel.

Lennox poses the issue of generic parody and literary self-consciousness right from the start. As the romance heroine, and unlike the old ragged Don Quixote, Arabella in *The Female Quixote* is endowed with physical perfection and personal charms that cast a special spell on whoever sees her: "Nature had indeed given her a most charming Face, a Shape easy and delicate, a sweet and insinuating Voice, and an Air so full of Dignity and Grace, as drew the Admiration of all that saw her" (pp. 6-7).⁴ Our heroine is young, beautiful, and wealthy. This at once undermines Lennox's satire of her as a mock romance heroine and initiates a dialectical relationship between the novel and romance.⁵ Lennox dwells on Arabella's Cinderella-like charms and wit. When a stranger named Hervey sees her early in the novel, he is instantly "surprised at her Beauty" (p. 8). Being stared at by Hervey, Arabella covers "her fair face" with her veil (p. 9). Her uncle Sir Charles "was struck with Surprise at her Beauty" (p. 60). This "devoted fair one" exacts admiration from all who see her (p. 272). When the Countess sees her later in the novel, she feels compassion "for the fair Visionary" (p. 323).

Persuaded by Charles Glanville and his son to leave the solitude of her secluded life in the country and mix with people, Arabella journeys to Bath and London—which represents a major generic encounter in the narrative. When Arabella attends an assembly at Bath, "Her noble Air, the native Dignity in her Looks, the inexpressible Grace which accompany'd all her Motions, and the consummate Loveliness of her form, drew the Admiration of the whole Assembly" (p. 272). This focus on the depiction of character is a realistic convention of novels employed in the service of romance. At the same time, it places the novel within the Quixotic fiction organized around a central Quixote figure. Arabella's beauty then saves her from ridicule for the absurdity of her dress. The silence that ensues and the company's whispering "Princess *Julia* to one another" make the novel fall into the very romance conventions it satirizes (p. 272). Arabella becomes, in the words of Miriam Small, "the centre of the stage almost continually" (p. 74). It is as if Lennox fell in love with the creature she intended to satirize. Lennox seems trapped in what Charles Knight calls "the novel's compassionate understanding and the systemic anger expressed by satire," which happens as a result of combining these two genres (p. 232).

Lennox instead saves Arabella and satirizes the world of gossip, dancing, and fashions at Bath. This empowers the romance rather than repudiates it. Arabella satirizes the triviality of the life women lead there. In such generic encounters, the enclosed space of romance in which Arabella lives clashes with the reality of life around her. Arabella's satire spares neither men nor women. Arabella says to Miss Glanville: "What room, I pray you, does a Lady give for high and noble Adventures, who consumes her Days in Dressing, Dancing, listening to Songs, and ranging the Walks with People as thoughtless as herself?" (p. 279). Arabella adds that such men as those she saw at the assembly "with Figures so feminine, Voices so soft, such tripping Steps, and unmeaning Gestures; but might be overcome by their Enemy in Battle, or be false to their Mistress in Love" (p. 279). In such encounters, Arabella, as Frank Palmer (2003) puts it, "serves not as an object but as the agent of satire" (p. 226). Miss Glanville herself who advocates the amusements of life, dressing, and looking in her glass is satirized. Responding to an innocent question by Arabella about her "adventures" and the favors she has granted to lovers, Miss Glanville contends: "Heaven knows, I never granted a Kiss without a great deal of Confusion" (p. 89). Lennox also subtly satirizes Miss Glanville when an acquaintance, Mr. Tinsel, seemingly defends her while she is exposed by the satiric scheme of the novel; Mr. Tinsel says of her: "How sprightly and free her Conversation? What a thorough Knowledge of the world? So true a Taste for polite Amusements, and a Fund of Spirits that sets Vapours and Spleen at Defiance" (p. 281). Satire in such cases aligns itself with romance rather than with the novel. The protean nature of satire makes it exist on the borderline between novel and romance, which enhances the loose generic structure of the text.

The narrative slippage into romance begins early in the novel when Lennox's heroine, motherless and alienated, is brought up in a remote castle where she gorges herself, as Lennox's satiric thrust shows, on romances "not in the original *French*, but very bad *Translations*" (p. 7). Arabella draws from these translations "all her Notions and Expectations" and comes to believe that "Love was the ruling Principle of the World" (p. 7). This confusing split between Arabella's notions about the world and the ways of the world echoes the generic confusion in the text. Lennox hints at this by pointing to the dichotomy between art and nature. In the case of the Marquis's garden, the "most laborious Endeavours of Art had been used to make it appear like the beautiful Product of wild, uncultivated Nature" (p. 6). Arabella's "native Charms were improved with all the Heightenings of Art" (p. 7). The kind of order or restraint imposed on nature in each case is a trope for Lennox's generic self-awareness and her attempts to keep the excesses of romance under the control of her novelistic satire. However, romance breaks generic rules and exceeds its limits by making it difficult for the novel to reduce romance to "the romantic" in the novel. After all, the novel is nothing but Arabella's romance story of being loved, falling in love, and marrying a faithful lover. Although the novel's title casts it in the satiric paradigm of a Quixote figure deluded by

reading many romances, the novel's subtitle—*The Adventures of Arabella*—is a reminder of its romantic promise.

On the other hand, the novel and the romance as dominant genres reduce satire to the "satiric" element in the plot. Lennox's satire functions in the typical way of highlighting the split between the real as opposed to Arabella's ideals. Arabella meets an early suitor during a religious service, Mr. Hervey. This incident signals Arabella's first "adventure" and the first encounter between realism and romance as Hervey and Arabella see each other from different perspectives. This incident will be elaborated because the novel will continue with the same satiric contrast between what Arabella desires, expects, or interprets and the way others behave within the limits of novelistic realism.

Arabella's perception of events is the source of this disjunction between novel and romance. The discrepancy between Arabella's belief in romances as historical documents and our knowledge of the falsity of this belief makes her the object of satire. Arabella sees men around her as lovers or ravishers; she believes that she has power over the life of her lovers. She also believes that a lover should not confess his love to her before years of secret suffering and many services. For example, when Hervey sees her he is "no less surprised at her Beauty, than the singularity of her Dress; and the odd Whim of being followed into Church by three Women-Attendants" (p. 8). Arabella, on the other hand, sees in this stranger a despairing lover and welcomes her first adventure/misadventure. After inquiring about her, Hervey meets Arabella's maid, Lucy. Though he is astonished at Arabella's manners and Lucy's speech, he participates in this mock-adventure and bribes Lucy to carry to her mistress a letter from him. This develops the plot as Arabella reacts according to her literary precedents by refusing to read the letter and returning it to her lover. Lucy participates in this "adventure" and plays her lady's game by sending Hervey a letter from Arabella commanding him to live, after news of his illness. When Arabella is riding out, she meets Hervey again. She thinks that this "insolent Lover had a Design to seize her Person" (p. 19). Her servants, believing him to be a highwayman, "laid hold of Mr. Hervey, and forced him to alight; which they did also themselves, still keeping fast hold of him, whom Surprise, Shame, and Rage, had hitherto kept silent" (19).

Arabella exercises her power as a romance heroine on Hervey and expects total submission: "A little more Submission and Respect would become you better; you are now wholly in my Power" (p. 20). Hervey, speechless with astonishment, yields to Arabella's commands, just as the novel yields to the power of romance, and decides to go back to London. As an outsider, Hervey is closer to the novelistic realism that approaches, yet surrenders to, the romance world of Arabella. While the early adventures of Arabella show her romance world approached by realism, the late portion of the novel set at Bath, London, and Richmond reverses the pattern and shows realism approached by Arabella's sprawling romance.

Gordon (1998) calls this space of romance within which Arabella functions a "protective 'mad space'" (p. 512). This space protects her against the realism of the novel. It also endows her with power, for romances, Gordon argues, "whisper to readers that if they position themselves as heroines, they can control the world" (p. 502). This very power is rendered fake in Lennox's satiric scheme when Arabella fears that Edward, a gardener whom she believes is a nobleman with a bad design on her, will carry her away. She leaves her father's house late at night and asks the first stranger she meets for help. What she takes to be her deliverer or a "Generous Stranger" is "extremely glad at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power" and "willing to have her at his own House" (pp. 99, 100). This is another encounter between the satiric novel and romance as contrasting genres. It is a power relation where one form is expected to surrender to the other.

Just as Arabella exerts her romance power on Hervey and confuses him, the romance also confuses the novel and draws it into a similar genre play. Because Arabella controls language, she imposes her discourse on others. Later on, when the divine controls language, Arabella yields. He who controls language controls genre. Lennox's own uncertainty about the language she uses gives space to the generic instability of the novel. It is part of the genre play in this novel that different characters are drawn into Arabella's orbits of influence and often seem reluctant to question her power for the text's genres to exist to the end.

The plot itself revolves around the obstacles that stand in the way of Arabella's union with her faithful cousin, which enacts the very essence of the novel as a romance. The plot roughly begins and ends with Glanville's romantic advances to Arabella. What is related in between are the adventures the lovers undergo until they get united. Ambivalently, the plot conforms to the conventions of realism in that it is not a loose, episodic one and neither are Arabella's adventures, which take place in her mind most of the time, really improbable in this sense. Moreover, the marriage that ends the narrative is an attempt to set it apart from the romantic code of romances, in which love is the overriding principle. Arabella's union with Glanville acts as a reminder that the novel became a genre, according to Ian Watt (1957), when "the code of romantic love began to accommodate itself to religious, social and psychological reality, notably to marriage and the family" (p. 136). While Arabella behaves as a typical romance heroine and is converted to reason at the end of the novel, her cousin and suitor, Glanville, reverses the pattern and gradually assumes the role of a romantic hero who throws himself on his knees before his lady, kisses her hands, and is ready to defend her. Glanville's relationship with Arabella

often becomes an open discourse on the relationship between novel and romance. When asked by Arabella to read some of her romances, Glanville adopts a satiric stance; he is shocked at their length and weight:

Arabella having ordered one of her Women to bring *Cleopatra*, *Cassandra*, *Clelia*, and the *Grand Cyrus*, from her Library, *Glanville* no sooner saw the Girl return, sinking under the Weight of those voluminous Romances, but he began to tremble at the Apprehension of his Cousin laying her Commands upon him to read them; and repented of his Complaisance, which exposed him to the cruel Necessity of performing what to him appeared an *Herculean Labour*, or else incurring her anger by his refusal. (p. 49)

Glanville "could not prevail upon himself to read them" (p. 50). These romances, Glanville thinks, were written "upon the most trifling Subjects imaginable" (p. 49). The significance of Glanville's refusal to read Arabella's romances stems from its signaling of what Margaret Doody considers "the new Realism's [sic] usurpation of the major realms of prose fiction" in the eighteenth century (p. 288). Glanville's reaction to Arabella's romances then signals a break with the older romance fiction. However, Arabella's defense of her romances validates her genre and points to the generic confusion between the claims of the novel and those of the romance. Arabella tells Glanville that romances are:

Books from which all useful Knowledge can be drawn; which give us the most shining Examples of Generosity, Courage, Virtue, and Love; which regulate our Actions, form our Manners, and inspire us with a noble Desire of emulating those great, heroic, and virtuous Actions, which made those Person's so glorious in their age, and so worthy Imitation in ours. (p. 48)

It is the same discourse that the divine will use later on to condemn romances in favor of the morality, virtue, and didacticism of the new novel that Arabella is using here. The divine will use Arabella's justification of her romances to recommend the novel as a didactic genre true to life. This new genre which displaces romances is supposed to do what Arabella's romances did, for it should convey, in the divine's words, "the most solid Instructions, the noblest Sentiments, and the most exalted Piety" and teach passions "to move at the Command of Virtue" (p. 377). Once again, this opens a dialogue between novel and romance.

Arabella succeeds finally in converting her suitor to a romantic hero. Glanville's first service to Arabella was saving her romances from being burnt. He also helps her in her attendance on her dying father. From the moment Arabella accuses him of assisting her "ravisher" Edward in carrying her away, Glanville tries to rise up to her conception of a romantic hero. Impressed by her beauty and understanding, Glanville "threw himself on his knees before her" (p. 124). As Arabella's champion, Glanville picks up his sword to defend Arabella when an early suitor, Hervey, ridicules her. Glanville also sees Sir George as his rival and refuses to let her visit the "sick" man, deciding to "die first" if she goes (p. 190). Glanville then asks Sir George to "behave with more Respect to [his] Cousin" and justify insulting Arabella (p. 197). Glanville's gradual transformation into a romance hero is another sign of the intimate relationship between the novel and the romance and the way they keep reshaping and defining each other in the course of the narrative.

The romance plot is complicated and the metafictional genre play becomes apparent when Sir George adds a new layer of fiction to the plot by narrating his "history" before Arabella's guests. Later on, he further complicates the plot by hiring an actress to personate a princess deserted by a lover she identifies as Glanville. Glanville falls out of favor with Arabella and Sir George becomes his rival. At a climactic romantic scene in which the faithful lover defends his lady with his sword, Glanville attacks Sir George mistaking his sister for Arabella:

Transported with Rage at this Sight, he snatch'd up his Sword, flew down the Stairs into the Garden, and came running like a Madman up the Walk in which the Lovers were.... For Mr. *Glanville*, actuated by an irresistible Fury, cry'd out to Sir *George* to defend himself, who had but just Time to draw his Sword and make an ineffectual Pass at Mr. *Glanville*, when he receiv'd his into his Body, and fell to the Ground. (p. 357)

Glanville's attack on Sir George toward the end of the novel shows his complete transformation from the realism of the novel to the excess of romance and attests to what Northrop Frye (1976) calls "the revolutionary quality" of romances which is often clear "near the end of a romantic story, usually at the recognition scene" (*Secular Scripture* p. 163). This lack of restraint on Glanville's part indicates, in metafictional terms, the excessive nature of romance as a genre that defies generic limits and encroaches on the novel, as the latter proceeds toward its resolution.

Lennox presents another twist when Arabella marries Glanville rather than the cunning Sir George who uses the language of romance. After the divine's lengthy discourse on genres and his attack on romances in the penultimate chapter of the novel, the novel ends in the manner of a romance with a happy ending for its heroine to a worthy suitor. The marriage between Arabella and Glanville can be viewed as that between the narratives of the two genres: the novel and the romance. Arabella's suitor is transformed as a romantic hero after her heart before she can accept him. Similarly, Arabella is transformed into a realist heroine who "yields to the Force of Truth" (381). The novel, hence, becomes a romance to recreate itself anew as a novel. Moreover, the novel ends just when Arabella gives up her romantic delusions, which gives an end to the romance plot. Lennox's voice as a novelist gets stifled when that of her romance heroine is

subdued by the divine at the end. However, it is not without bringing that end according to the romance's own terms. Romance, hence, becomes the novel; it is the story of the novel. When it ends, the novel itself ends. Arabella herself "is the heroine of both the novel and of her own romance" (Martin, 1997, p. 53). The novel, thus, forces the reader to reconsider its genre as an anti-romance.

An early attempt to cure Arabella of her romantic delusions was undertaken by her uncle Sir Charles who tells her, in a manner reminiscent of the Countess and the divine later on, that romances "spoil Youth, and put strange Notions in their Heads" (61). Sir Charles asks her not to "be so fond of such ridiculous Non-sense as these Story-Books are filled with" (p. 61). Lennox's satire on romances seems explicit in such cases and functions as an "intrinsic" genre intended by the author (Rosmarin, 1985, p. 29). Arabella, on the other hand, is adamant in her defense of her romances as "the finest Productions in the World" that show "the heroic Actions of the bravest Men, and most virtuous of Women" and praises them for their portrayal of "pure and constant Passions" (p. 62). This validates an assumption that romance becomes an "extrinsic" genre the author did not intend (Rosmarin, 1985, p. 29). Arabella's defense of her romances continually accentuates their example of virtue and chaste feelings. This response echoes what the divine says in favor of the ethical code of the novel, which in the words of Johnson cited by the divine, "Has taught the Passions to move at the Command of Virtue" (p. 377). However, Arabella's romantic ideals never betrayed her. In fact, right to the end, Arabella's virtue remains untouched. The romance rewards her in the manner Richardson, whom the divine praises as the practitioner of the new edifying genre, rewards his virtuous Pamela with marriage. And like Richardson's Clarissa, Arabella maintains the purity of her soul, but with the aid of another genre. It is clear from such encounters that the terms used to define one genre are also used to shape the other. Both genres seem to delineate virtue and improve morals by fulfilling the ethical code preached by Richardson in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* a few years before the publication of Lennox's text. If this generic confusion has a message, it is probably the failure of the newly emerging novel to clearly set itself apart from its older ancestors.

By the time Arabella meets the Countess, a reader of romances in her youth, the encounter between novel and romance takes another turn. It is a clash at the level of language used in each genre. Asked by Arabella about her "adventures," the Countess responds:

Pardon me, Madam, ... if the uncommonness of your Request made a Moment's Reflexion necessary to convince me that a young Lady of your Sense and Delicacy could mean no Offence to Decorum by making it. The Word Adventures carries in it so free and licentious a Sound in the Apprehensions of People at this Period of Time, that it can hardly with Propriety be apply'd to those few and natural Incidents which compose the History of a Woman of Honour. (p. 327)

A woman's life, according to the Countess, should be adventureless because the word "adventures" no more connotes Arabella's values of honor. An adventureless life for Arabella, on the other hand, is a life without a story. Thus, by recommending to Arabella an adventureless life and presenting her own life story as that of a woman born, educated, and married like other women of her class—and like Miss Glanville who has "nothing to tell, that would make an History"—the Countess implicitly advocates a new kind of fiction in which women are stripped of the power they assume in romances (p. 110). However, the Countess must appropriate Arabella's romantic discourse before she can effect a change in Arabella in the same way the novel must be a romance before satirizing romances. The Countess, we are told, receives Arabella's address with pleasure and returns Arabella's compliment "in a Strain as heroic as hers" (p. 325). Arabella is also pleased to "hear the Countess express herself in Language so conformable to her own" (p. 325). Like many other characters in the novel, the Countess appreciates Arabella's wit and charms. The cure the Countess tries to effect is mainly an attempt at historicizing romances as something of the past. The Countess says: "The same Actions which made a Man a hero in those Times, would constitute him a Murderer in These—And the same Steps which led him to a Throne Then, would infallibly conduct him to a Scaffold now" (p. 328). Following the logic of this argument, romance becomes a displaced predecessor that continues to exist within the boundaries of the new genre. The fact that romance is continually negotiated in the text betrays the novel's inability to escape its influence.

We should not ignore the fact that Arabella expresses to the amiable Countess her admiration of her virtues. All the assembled women at Bath also revere her. When the assembled women ridicule the absent Arabella, it is the Countess who defends her. Satire deserts the novel as its host and is directed here at the wickedness and superficiality of the assembled women, and in favor of the romantic heroine. The force of the Countess's "universally acknowledged Merit, and the Deference always pay'd to her opinion, silenc'd every Impertinent around her" (p. 322). This accomplished lady had "no Superior in Wit, Elegance, and Ease" among her sex (p. 322). Her virtue, in other words, was untouched by the romances she read in her youth. Similarly, Arabella's romantic values of generosity, courage, and virtue did not really endanger her. On the contrary, they made a woman of the Countess's stature recognize her merits. Thus, the terms of reference used against romances and in support of the new genre are basically blurred.

When Arabella instructs her maid to tell her history to some guests, she points to the same discourse on genres pervading the novel. Arabella expects Lucy to do the impossible:

you ask me to tell you what you must say; as if it was not necessary you should know as well as myself, and be able, not only to recount all my Words and Actions, even the smallest and most inconsiderable, but also all my Thoughts, however, instantaneous; relate exactly every Change of my Countenance; number all my Smiles, Half-smiles, Blushes, Turnings pale, Glances, Pauses, Full-stops, Interruptions; the Rise and Falling of my Voice; every Motion of my Eyes; and every Gesture which I have used for these Ten Years past; nor omit the smallest Circumstance that relates to me. (pp. 121-122)

In meta-fictional terms, the astonishment with which Lucy receives Arabella's orders echoes Lennox's difficult task as a novelist of keeping a neat border between the probable and improbable, between the realism of the novel and the extravagance of the romance. In this genre play, the confused Lucy assumes a borderline status between novel and romance. Arabella is here "used as the unconscious mouthpiece for a critique of the form she is so anxious to defend" (Bellamy, 1998, p. 101). Conversely, this same criticism directed at the excesses of Arabella's romances can be taken as a metafictional critique of what a realist novel was expected to achieve. In a sense, romantic excesses become one with what Ian Watt (1957) calls the "formal realism" of the novel and enhance the generic hybridity of the novel (p. 32). Arabella's demands become the novelistic convention that "the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience" (Watt, p. 32).

Sir George, on the other hand, uses the language of romance and its conventions to bring about his designs in winning Arabella's body and fortune. He "furnished his Memory," we are told, "with all the necessary Rules of Making Love in Arabella's taste" (p. 130). He then gains Arabella's disfavor when he shows ignorance of romantic love constancy in the history he relates. Once he blunders, Sir George is deprived of the power of the romance genre, a power he tried to appropriate. This echoes the novel's attempts to appropriate the language of romance. Sir George's long fabricated history functions as a displaced romance within the novel in the same way Arabella's history is narrated within the novel. This added layer of fiction grows out of control as an excessive romance. Sir George gets carried away by the excess of romance and breaks a crucial romance rule when he takes a new love object after the loss of the fictional Sydimiris. His history is a comment on romance as a genre that breaks generic limits, for it echoes Arabella's romance history that grows out of Lennox's control and dominates the novel.

The meaning of *The Female Quixote*, then, resides in the interplay between its genres. The quixotic narrative about Arabella allows the romance to function "not only as the satirical object but also as the pretext for a metafictional discourse" (Gallagher, 1994, p. 179). The dialogue between Arabella and the doctor of divinity, as the last "metafictional discourse" on genres, occurs on the borderline between novel and romance and ends when the romance yields to the novel just as the novel yields to romance. The divine adopts a Johnsonian discourse to stress reason and morality on the one hand and constrain the excess of romance on the other. However, it is not easy for the divine to "cure" Arabella by imposing a new kind of fiction to displace her romances, for Arabella resists fiction altogether, as lacking in historical truth, when she retorts:

[H]e that writes without Intention to be credited, must write to little Purpose; for what Pleasure or Advantage can arise from Facts that never happened? What Examples Afforded by the Patience of those who never suffered, or the Chastity of those who were never solicited? The great End of History, is to show how much human Nature can endure or perform. (p. 376)

Arabella's rejection of fiction, or rather the fictionality of the novel as a genre, initiates the divine's heated denunciation of romances in favor of the novel. However, the divine is awed by Arabella's presence. Arabella exacts his respect throughout. For example, he listens to her with mixed emotions of "Pity, Reverence, and Amazement" and is afraid "to give Pain to a Delicacy he rever'd" (p. 369). The divine also beheld her with "Reverence and Affection, and could not offend without extreme Regret" (p. 375). He is afraid to "give Offence to a Person" he does not want to hurt (p. 371). Arabella becomes in this encounter the divine's intellectual double. It is for this reason that Motooka argues that the divine's "rationality and Arabella's quixotism describe identical patterns of thought" (p. 141).

The divine tries to prove that romances are "Fictions," "absurd," and "Criminal" (p. 374). Throughout, he tries to advocate the novel and renounce the romance by pointing out the way romances differ from novels. Significantly, the divine refers to the genre he is castigating as "Books," "Tales," "Fictions," "Narratives," and "Volumes." All these terms, after all, defy clear generic labels. It is only once that the divine uses the word "Romances" in his attack when he refers to their characteristic theme of love. He attempts to define the new genre, the novel, as the romance's other. He attacks romances as "senseless Fictions; which at once vitiate the Mind, and pervert the Understanding" (p. 374). Their "only

Excellence of Falsehood," argues the divine, exposing romances as mere lies with no historical basis, is their "Resemblance to Truth" (p. 378). Romances, he contends, "give new Fire to the Passions of Revenge and Love" (p. 380). The divine adds that "[i]t is the Fault of the best Fictions that they teach young Minds to expect strange Adventures and sudden Vicissitudes, and therefore encourage them often to trust to Chance" (p. 379). He stresses romances' remoteness in time and the remoteness of their events from their writers. This sets romances against the formal realism of novels. As opposed to romances' timelessness, novels use, in the words of Ian Watt, "past experience as the cause of present action" (p. 22). This makes novels true pictures of life as lived by people. Romances, on the other hand, "have instituted a World of their own" in the divine's words (p. 380).

The blurred distinctions between the novel and the romance in the divine's lecture on genres are then apparent in that the books the divine recommends to Arabella as "an Antidote to Example" is entangled with her conception of romances, which she used to read as "Copies of Life, and Models of Conduct" (pp. 380, 377). It is in the way of reading, it seems, that the riddle of Lennox's metafictional genre play can be solved. The generic vagueness of the divine's discourse becomes clear when the divine, in trying to dismiss Arabella's romances as "contemptible Volumes" and fictions "which at once vitiate the Mind, and pervert the understanding," confesses that his words "imply an Accusation very remote from [his] intention" (pp. 373-374). His discourse equates books with readers and becomes inherently flawed even when applied to the novels he recommends to Arabella. The divine's attack on romances culminates in his distinction between truth and fiction. The divine advocates not reality but another form of fiction, the novel practiced by Richardson and theorized by Johnson:

Truth is not always injured by Fiction. An admirable Writer of our own Time, has found the Way to convey the most solid Instructions, the noblest Sentiments, and the most exalted Piety, in the pleasing Dress of a Novel, and, to use the words of the greatest Genius in the present Age, 'Has taught the Passions to move at the Command of Virtue.'" (p. 377)

This attack on romances makes it clear that, unlike novels, they are mere fictions lacking in truth. The "truth" the divine refers to is not historical accuracy. It is novelistic verisimilitude or mimesis lacking in romances. While the novel is privileged by virtue of its truth, it is also privileged by subduing excessive passions and promoting virtue. The divine's argument captures the essence of the rise of the novel, what Michael McKeon sees as the "epistemological crisis" that relates to truth and the "moral crisis" that relates to virtue (p. 161). Interestingly, the novel is defined in terms of its differences from the romance, which means that its lack of generic purity makes it always look for the romance to demarcate itself as a novel. To complicate things further, Arabella's romances fulfilled the didactic ideals the divine speaks of, for she read romances "without Injury to [her] Judgment, or [her] Virtue" (p. 357). The disparate generic discourses are solved when Arabella gives up what Linda Warren calls her "self-isolating discourses" of romances to accept the dominant male discourse of the novel (p. 378). Arabella's discourse of fantasy surrenders to the divine's discourse of truth. However, the narrative does not end here. The last chapter brings us back to Lennox's satiric scheme and marks a special feature of satire as a genre that, in the words of Dustin Griffin (1994), is "open...both in its formal features (particularly in its reluctance to conclude) and in its more general rhetorical and moral features, in its frequent preference for inquiry, provocation, or playfulness rather than assertion and conclusiveness" (p. 186). Lennox resorts to this "playfulness" characteristic of satire and thrusts satire's moral precepts of praising virtue and ridiculing vice by highlighting the contrast between the marriage of Arabella and Glanville and that of Sir George and Miss Glanville. The latter couple "were indeed only married in the common Acceptation of the Word; that is, they were privileged to join Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expence." Glanville and Arabella, on the other hand, "were united, as well in these, as in every virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind" (p. 383).

If Patricia Spacks (1988) writes that the novel's "construction chastens Arabella's foolish desire," as a romance heroine, we can also argue, by the same logic, that it exposes Lennox's ambivalent desire to write a romance and an anti-romance at the same time (p. 533). Romance is present in the novel as a fantasy of desire like Arabella's fantasies of female power. Arabella's fantasies end when she is brought to the power of truth, which also brings Lennox's fantasy to an end. The best note on which to end this argument is probably Frye's (1957) assertion that romances are the "nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream" (*Anatomy* p. 186). Following Freudian logic, the romance becomes a repressed genre functioning at the unconscious level. This means that it returns or resurfaces in other genres even against the writer's conscious intention.

4. Conclusion

All in all, Lennox's novel is essentially the product of the writer's age. If the novel has a message to convey, it is probably that by the time it was written the distinction between novel, satire, and romance was not clear. Generic boundaries were not yet clearly demarcated. The ending attests to a close relation between two dominant genres, for the novel ends

metafictionally as both a satirical novel and a romance. Lennox seems more engaged in a discourse on generic distinctions than in a satire of romances. While William Warner (1992) argues that "the elevation of the novel" attempted by Fielding and Richardson in the 1740s "is founded in an antagonistic, but never acknowledged or conscious intertextual exchange with the earlier novel," I would say that Lennox was consciously redefining this "elevated" new genre. Romance and novel need not be viewed as essentially antithetical. Though the novel began as a reaction against romances, romances were the novel's ancestor. And had Lennox not read many romances, she would not have written a fine romance to an audience already familiar with romances.

Notes

¹ For example, Katherine Green argues that "as an antiromance published within the same decade as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, *The Female Quixote* implicitly reinforces the new paradigm for fiction" (p. 47).

² For this association of power with different kinds of discourses, see Foucault (p.61).

³ Elements of other genres like fairy tale, comedy, history, and burlesque cannot be discussed in an article of this length.

⁴ Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote or The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); all citations will be from this text.

⁵ Elyssa Warkentin views this relationship between satire and romance in the novel as essentially a "dueling" and "antagonistic" relationship rather than a dialogic one. The novel, she argues, ends "with the defeat of romance by satire."

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