



IVO RITZER
PETER W. SCHULZE ED



GENRE HYBRIDISATION

GLOBAL CINEMATIC FLOWS

SCHÜREN

Ivo Ritzer / Peter W. Schulze (eds.)
Genre Hybridisation

Marburger Schriften zur Medienforschung 44
ISSN 1867-5131

Ivo Ritzer / Peter W. Schulze (Eds.)

Genre Hybridisation

Global Cinematic Flows

SCHÜREN

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Schüren Verlag GmbH
Universitätsstr. 55 · D-35037 Marburg
www.schueren-verlag.de
Print © Schüren 2013
eBook © Schüren 2016
Alle Rechte vorbehalten
Gestaltung: Nadine Schrey
Umschlag: Wolfgang Diemer, Köln, unter Verwendung
eines Filmstills aus SUKIYAKI WESTERN DJANGO
(Takashi Miike, J 2007, Universum Film)
Print-ISBN 978-3-89472-863-2
eBook-ISBN 978-3-7410-0041-6

Table of Contents

Ivo Ritzer / Peter W. Schulze

Genre Hybridisation

Global Cinematic Flows 9

(Post)National Cinemas

Tim Bergfelder

Transnational Genre Hybridity

Between Vernacular Modernism and Postmodern Parody 39

Harald Steinwender

Spectacular Bodies and Funfair Attractions

The Italian *Peplum* Cycle from CABIRIA to IL COLOSSO DI RODI 56

Marcus Stiglegger

Sons of Cain

Traditions of Gothic Horror in Antonio Margheriti's Spaghetti Westerns 72

Fernando Ramos Arenas

Towards a Generic Understanding of the *Giallo*

Crime-Horror Hybrids in Italian Cinema of the 1970s 81

Cosmopolitan Agencies

Dimitris Eleftheriotis

The Films of Jules Dassin

Cosmopolitan Hybridity 95

Ivo Ritzer

Sudden Death(s)

Hybridisation, Deterritorialisation, and the Post-Colonial
Imaginary in Transnational Philippine Media Culture 115

Ella Shohat

Cinematic Citizenship in the Liminal Zone

Between Palestine and Israel

142

Transcultural Subjects

Barry Keith Grant

«Extremely useful, extremely adaptable»

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the Two NOSFERATUS

163

Andreas Stuhlmann

The Melodrama

Hybrid Forms, Cross-Cultural Narratives, Global Emotions

177

Florian Mundhenke

«You Can't Stop What's Coming»

Hybridisation of the Western Genre Formula as an

Intercultural Strategy of Meaning-Making

197

Peter W. Schulze

Mexicanidad Meets Americanism

The Circulation of National Imaginaries and Generic Regimes

Between the Western and the *Comedia Ranchera*

215

Glocalising Hollywood

Ute Fendler

African Francophone Cineastes Going «Genres»

Two Examples for (E)Merging Genres

239

Claudia Böhme

Global Horror Meets Local Spirits

The Evolution of Tanzania's Horror Film Genre

250

Andreas Rauscher

Strange Hybrids from a Hong Kong Studio

Wuxia and Hollywood Fantasy in A CHINESE GHOST STORY

265

<i>Irina Gradinari</i>	
From Hollywood to Russia: New Russian Action Cinema around 2000	
Masculinity, Politics and National Identity in the Films of Aleksey Balabanov	281

Undoing Genre

<i>Robert Stam</i>	
Documentary Variations On a Hybrid Theme	297

<i>Richard Porton</i>	
Hybridising Documentary	
Between Fiction and Non-Fiction	314

<i>Oksana Bulgakowa</i>	
The Socialist Hybrid	337

<i>Lúcia Nagib</i>	
The Classical-Modern Hybrid and the Politics of Intermediality	351

Picture Credits	364
------------------------	-----

About the Authors	367
--------------------------	-----

Ivo Ritzer/Peter W. Schulze

Genre Hybridisation

Global Cinematic Flows

«In a given society, the recurrence of certain discursive properties is institutionalised and individual texts are produced and perceived in relation to the norm constituted by that codification.

A genre, whether or not literary, is nothing other than the codification of discursive properties».

Tzvetan Todorov (17f.)

«We need a corpus of basic studies that do not limit themselves to generalizing from a list of agreed-upon masterpieces. And, crucially, we need to get out of the United States [as a] cross-cultural approach to the topic might help loosen up the current critical logjam».

Alan Williams (124)

1. Film Genres and Genre Films

Genre structures mould the culture of moving pictures. The inventory of patterns manifest in films is provided by generic conventions, which are highly relevant discursive parameters on the levels of both production and reception. Genres serve as a creative organising principle for film productions while also devising expectations on the reception's side. Concepts of genre also affect academic studies by aiding accomplishments in various fields, e.g. classification, cultural history, stylistic analysis, narratology, and ideological criticism. Therefore, genres are of great

importance in the entire media scene. They often shed light on the aesthetic, economic and social dimensions of the particular conditions under which they were made and which they represent respectively. Generic structures also help to observe and analyse complex (inter)medial and (inter)cultural exchanges, because genres correlate with one another and are always subject to transformation.

Although the idea of auteurism predominated in film studies for a long time, by now there is broad consent that filmic patterns cannot be reduced to one creative mind. Their significance exceeds individual autonomy. Instead, they bear relation to generic norms: «Individual artists and filmmakers manipulate signs and meanings, but in contexts which are authorised by communal public consent, and these contexts [...] we call genres» (Ryall, «Genre and Hollywood» 328). The differentiation between generic models is not consistent, but spans specific subject and structure matters or iconographical and visual contexts (western, adventure film, war film, crime film, science fiction film, fantasy film, musical), as well as specific <physically> affective constellations (comedy, horror film, melodrama, pornography). Not only are the genres' specific traits purely conventional, but also their constructed distinctions. Thus, genres hold no definite structure, but– in the sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein – bear certain family resemblances only: «[w]e see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing [...]: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc.» (32). Just like Wittgenstein's language-games, genres do not resemble each other because they have a common feature, but because they share multiple properties. Therefore, they cannot be designated essentialistically, but can be utilised pragmatically to describe a complex of films which – to follow Jörg Schweinitz's approach – «has an effect on both producer and recipient [as an] institution of film culture.» (115). As a set of potential interpretations, genres shape knowledge and experience by systems of representation.

Rick Altman (*Film/Genre* 17) has pointed out the multiple meanings inherent in the concept of genre. Genre functions both

- as a label, as the name of a category central to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors.
- as a contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience.
- as a blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns industry production.
- as a structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded.

Thus, while genres can be seen as such sets of meaning (label, contract, blueprint), individual texts provide textures. Whereas label, contract and blueprint refer to film genres, the genre film is defined by generic structures. As Barry Keith Grant pragmatically notes, genre films «are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations»

(1). Due to the use of heavily coded conventions and modes of seriality, genre films and auteur films are considered to be mutually exclusive categories. The first designates an artistically ambitious, European-influenced cinema which is interested in ethics and insight. The other is characterised as a mass-produced American cinema, a symbol of escapism and the satisfaction of basic needs: «The pure image, the clear personal style, the intellectually respectable content are contrasted with the impurities of convention, the repetitions of character and plot» (Braudy 412). According to this, the European tradition of the *politique des auteurs* opposes the US-dominated *politique des genres*. The belief in the irreconcilability of the generic and the artistic holds persistently: «The belief that popularity and excellence are incompatible [...] survives, particularly in the notion that the cinema offers two distinct phenomena, one important called art, and the other, trivial, known as entertainment» (Berry-Flint 40). Genres are equated with conventionalised formulas which are breached by the artistically motivated «genius» of the director-auteur. But as a matter of fact, Andrew Tudor identified art cinema as a genre in itself as early as in the 1970s: a genre «of films thought by a relatively highly educated middle-class group of filmgoers» (145). However, in addition to the target audience, Tudor neglects to specify any film-intrinsic determinants. To him, genre is not so much a tool of taxonomy, but of prescriptive polemic. His hypostatisation of reception turns a blind eye on the aesthetic differences of genre and art cinema which are proclaimed in film studies since the 1980s. Characteristics like linear causality (concerning interpersonal conflicts) and continuity editing (ergo transparency) are attributed to genre cinema. Art cinema, however, is attested with an off-centre narration (concerning subjective alienation) and self-reflexive commentary (ergo anti-illusionism) (see Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* 156–233). Genre and art cinema are thus considered as mutually exclusive categories. We will not fall into line with this assertion, but instead refer to the pioneering work of Stuart M. Kaminsky whose writings have unfortunately often been overlooked. For Kaminsky, auteurism and genre theory are not exclusive at all: «The concept of authorship in film study is not», he states, «a consideration which should or needs to be set in opposition to the concept of genre». Rather, Kaminsky proposes a dual focus:

«In fact, I believe a consideration of any film should recognise: (a) that it is the creation of a person or a group of persons reflecting the contribution of that person or persons (authorship); and (b) that the film does not exist in a cultural vacuum; that it must, of necessity, have roots in other works which surround it or have appeared before it (genre)».

(16f.)

We propose to see genre and art cinema both as historically specific instances of discursive material, never fully distinguishable by textual properties. In accordance with Ivo Ritzer's more recent work on the dialectic relationship between genre and authorship (2009), several of the essays in this volume deal with the creative agency

of filmmakers. Thereby, we want to stress the hybrid nature of the intersection between genres and their constructive reworking. Attributing significant importance to *genre auteurs* such as Jules Dassin, Aleksey Balabanov, Eddie Romero, Tsui Hark or Sergio Leone, we wish to broaden the limited approach to genre. Along these lines, less logical codifications than the viewers' horizons of expectations are defining, depending on cultural institutions and prevalent systems of legitimisation and meaning potential. Neither fully contingent nor arbitrary, genres may well be analysed in their given historical constellations. Being fluid structures rather than static bundles of artworks, they mediate between text and context.

2. Audiences and the Evolution of Genres

The French term *genre* can be traced back etymologically to the Latin noun *genus* meaning class, group or type. In literary criticism the terminology has been used early on to discriminate between different types of text, but this does not apply to the early years of cinema. Only since around 1910 – because of a surplus of film productions – the term *genre* has been utilised for cinema as well: as a rhetoric criterion of selection which serves the communication between cinema operator and film distributor, and organises the reception and cognition of the audience. This aspect of communication is (with some modifications) still valid today. Thus, genres work as indicators of communication:

«First and foremost, genres are terms of communication. By classifying different films they serve as a way of communication about films, on the parts of recipients as well as producers and between them both. Genres organise knowledge about cinematic composition and regulate the production of films. They provide guidance, create expectations and determine reception.»
(Hickethier 63)

In genre cinema, communication between producers and consumers manifests itself in recursive visual patterns and recurrent standardised situations. But their respective functions differ depending on how they are integrated into the narrative framework which injects the actual meaning into the visual elements. Steve Neale speaks from a psychoanalytical point-of-view of «systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject» (*Genre* 19). The subject in this case is not an individual person, but a hypostatised entity, a fragile network of psychosocial forces, which is constituted through language and participates in the genesis of generic structures. In any case, this is not to proclaim a producer-centred approach. Genres attain stability only by critical audience reception shaping the production process. Far from being only functions of the text, viewers actively negotiate a film's meaning. They participate in interactive processes, directing the constantly proceeding evolutions of a genre. The industry

is not able to exhaustively determine the terms upon which audiences use genres. The success of a genre is always the result of the interplay of economic interests and the cultural gratifications of the viewers. As a consequence, according to Raphaëlle Moine, genre «is not only a classificatory category, but also an interpretive category». She observes that in this regard the concept of genre «only finds meaning in the interactions between works, and between works and their contexts of production and reception» (96). A theory of genre therefore has to be attentive to both filmic texts as well as cultural, social and ideological contexts.

Genres are «sets of cultural conventions» (Tudor 139), rhetoric agreements for producers and consumers of films to communicate indirectly via semantic indicators. Hence, as institutions, genres organise frameworks of expectations. Fredric Jameson concurs with this in regard to literature: «genres are essentially contracts» (*Marxism and Form* 135). To define these contracts more precisely, it is necessary to explore the structures within which the film is produced, merchandised and received as a genre. Just like the auteur has a function for film, so has genre. This indicates «a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilisation» (Foucault 107). Following Foucault, the same inquiry has to be undertaken as in regard to the function of the auteur:

«What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking?» (119)

The association of a film with a genre is always defined by practices of interpretation. Therefore, questions of formal classification are much less important to us than issues of historical analysis of discourses.

Inspired by Foucault, Malte Hagener has contrasted a formalist and unhistorical approach to genre with a discourse analytical perspective that is descriptive and non-normative, allowing a more dynamic understanding of genres. Whereas formalist genre critics have long asked for clear definitions as well as selective criteria of inclusion and exclusion, discourse analysis looks for uses and stakes of genre classifications. The latter approach is of particular importance because every subsuming of a film under a specific genre always already performs an operation of standardisation, not only on the film but also the genre itself. In other words, genre is never a neutral category given in advance; the act of addressing every instance of genre rather generates a particular understanding of it. Hagener proposes the concept of a genre «cluster» (19–20) in his argumentation, making a case for the recognition of intersections between generic elements that have to be seen as unstable, temporary, and contingent configurations. From this point-of-view, not only

the «development of genres» (20) mentioned by Hagener can be seen as diverse processes of clustering, but also hybridisations of different generic elements. Every cluster bundles up various parameters that may stem from very distinct contexts but form a new compound in every new film.

According to Martin Seel and Angela Keppler, it gets problematic, though, if «products and categories are minimised to mere effects of the communicative exchange» (58). Indeed, it seems important that the potential understanding between producers and consumers must be implied in the film itself. Otherwise, communication would not even be a possibility: «Genres may be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films and which supervise both their construction by the film maker and their reading by an audience» (Ryall, «Teaching through Genre» 28). Thereby, Ryall adds a descriptive dimension to the question of communicative aspects and broaches the issue of filmic forms itself. Ryall is the first to regard genre as a criterion of classification which both evaluates semiotic characteristics and carves out fundamental correlations between individual films in order to assign single artefacts to a collective. By doing that, he gives special regard to recursive visual patterns and recurring standardised situations. But Ryall's pioneering research did not receive a strong response until the 1980s, when a more broadly perceived discourse about the concept of genre came up. Especially Rick Altman criticised the process of simply registering or describing conflictive visual elements instead of analysing them with regard to their function within the narrative framework, which integrates them and charges them with meaning. Alongside analysing the semantic order (like the followers of Claude Lévi-Strauss did), the syntactic structure of the order must be investigated as well. Referring to Vladimir Propp, Altman thus demands a semantic/syntactic approach:

«we can as a whole distinguish between generic definitions that depend on a list of common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, sets and the like – thus stressing the semantic elements that make up the genre – and definitions that play up instead certain constitutive relationships between undesigned and variable placeholders – relationships that might be called the genre's fundamental syntax. The semantic approach thus stresses the genre's building blocks, while the syntactic view privileges the structures into which they are arranged».

(«A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre» 30)

But a sharp differentiation between the semantic and the syntactic, i.e. the linguistic and the textual dimension in Altman's model, remains precarious. Is the final shoot out in the western a semantic or a syntactic element? Or is it both? Similar questions arise with regard to vocal numbers in the musical and sex-scenes in a pornographic film. Besides, not even Altman can avoid the danger of a circular approach, criticised as the «empiricist method» by Janet Staiger (186). Films are chosen for their representative function in regard to a genre to begin with, just to later tauto-