

## ARTICLE

# Planetary Figurations: Intensive Genre in World Literature

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This article surveys the growing attention to genre in the works of Wai Chee Dimock, Rosi Braidotti, Lauren Berlant and Rita Felski, among others. I argue that attention to transnational genres, far from valorising global sameness, offers a way to mark cultural difference, relationality and the specific knowledge of nationally and locally embedded traditions. The influx of new voices and visions, I contend, has changed our view of what literature is and does, moving away from the notion of genre as a classificatory system and towards a new idiom centred on affect, flux and creative invention. The constitutive openness of global figurations lies at the root of our current fascination with genre theory, especially in debates about world literature. Relationality and futurity, I suggest, are what makes genre theory especially relevant to the cultural-discursive matrix of planetarity, which is similarly concerned with processes of becoming.

In an essay published in 2012, comparatist Mariano Siskind deplores the conspicuous absence of genre categories, both historical and formal, from recent critical debates about world literature. Since the close of the twentieth century, he explains, scholarly attention has focused on global patterns of production, circulation, translation and transcultural appropriation, leaving little room for an organizing concept that seems to imply transhistorical sameness at the expense of geocultural diversity. This lack of engagement with genre, for Siskind, marks a problematic break with century-old traditions of learning and leaves theorists without a 'critical tool capable of realizing the promise of order in a world of textual chaos' (Siskind 2012: 345). World literature, according to this American scholar, has given rise to new imaginaries and generic formations, but critics have not, until now, found ways of articulating the creative potential of these phenomena. Instead, genre tends to remain associated with traditional notions of textuality and reception that are no longer perceived as a useful matrix. Siskind concludes: 'We need a new conception of genre as a contingently bound, heterogeneous discursive constellation that provides world literary readers with a ground for comparison' (354).

Siskind's call did not fall on deaf ears. Genre, as I want to show in this article, is in the process of becoming once again a central critical concept in the arts and humanities. This is partly the result of a more general fascination with popular genres. As Theodore Martin has shown, contemporary authors and filmmakers are increasingly drawn to the constraints of recognizable generic traditions, which they explore not in the spirit of postmodern playfulness but in an 'earnest attempt to contribute to the history of a given genre' (Martin 2017: 8).

Such 'legitimated genres' (11) not only cross the boundary between low and high, they also emphasize how aesthetic conventions mutate in response to changing historical, cultural and geographic contexts. For this reason, genre offers a singular view of the contemporary. According to Martin, 'genres lead distinctly double lives, with one foot in the past and the other in the present; they contain the entire abridged history of an aesthetic form while also staking a claim to the form's contemporary relevance' (6). In his thorough scrutiny of contemporary literary forms, Peter Boxall reaches the same conclusion when he contends that literary genres mark a privileged site of cultural encounter – between past and present, and between national, global and diasporic communities – because of their particular attention to the materiality and persistence of historical reference points. The twenty-first-century historical novel, for example, articulates an emergent mode of historiography that stands in sharp contrast with the alleged 'weakening of historicity' in postmodern culture. Alive to its own limitations, it manifests itself as a new form of historical realism 'that lives out of the historical depletion of its own access to the real' (Boxall 2013: 64). Similarly, but with an eye on geopolitical diversity, Caren Irr argues that twenty-first-century global genres such as the migrant novel both evoke and revise assumptions about national specificity by participating contemporaneously in different cultural and regional traditions. We also find this claim in Rebecca Walkowitz's seminal study of the born-translated novel, which maps patterns of global circulation across multiple languages and with a specific attention to the creative shifts within and between popular genres. Not coincidentally, this recuperation and revival of genre as a critical tool occurs at a time when fine-grained divisions of genre (rom-com, sci-fi, horror, real crime, post-apocalypse, Twitter poetry and so on) play a growing role, both socially and commercially.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I argue that attention to transnational genres, far from valorizing global sameness, offers a way to mark cultural difference, relationality and the specific knowledge of nationally and locally embedded traditions. I wish to explore this claim by surveying the growing attention to genre as an important conceptual category in the works of theorists such as Wai Chee Dimock, Rosi Braidotti, Lauren Berlant and Rita Felski, among others. This influx of new voices and visions, I contend, has changed our view of what literature is and does, moving away from the notion of genre as a classificatory system – 'a taxonomic fetishism often belied by actual literary practices' (Siskind 2012: 345) – and towards a new idiom centred on affect, flux and creative invention. As I will show, the current interest in genre is not informed by the emergence of a single, new theoretical paradigm but spans different methodologies and critical traditions and is therefore best understood in terms of what Felski describes as a 'critical mood': 'an overall atmosphere or climate that causes the world to come into view in a certain way' (Felski 2015: 20). My inquiry pertains to the alleged divide between 'high culture' and genre fiction and to the rapidly changing cultural status of popular genres, but I will not be concerned with the defining features of individual genres. Moreover, it is not my intention here to distinguish between generic traditions on the basis of particular textual functions or patterns of reading. This approach to genre, which is exemplified by Theodore Martin's remarkable study, focuses on problems of classification and therefore perpetuates the attention to taxonomy that has characterized genre theory since its earliest beginnings. Before I advance my own understanding of genre, let me therefore address this long and important tradition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bloomsbury's '21st Century Genre Fiction' series, edited by Katy Shaw, offers precious insights. Consider also the 'Post 45' series, edited by Loren Glass and Kate Marshall for Stanford University Press, and the 'Literature Now' series, edited by Matthew Hart, David James and Rebecca L. Walkowitz for Columbia University Press.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive discussion and critique of taxonomic approaches, see Ceserani 1990; Todorov 1990; Bagni 1997.

Neoclassical accounts of literary genre, premised on the supposedly universal validity of explicit, formalized and durable rules, prevailed in Europe until the early nineteenth century, and have continued to play an influential role in more recent times.<sup>3</sup> As Alastair Fowler has shown, the common misapprehension that generic types are by definition prescriptive and inveterate stems largely from a reductive, but pervasive attention to such traditional, systematic accounts of genre (Fowler 1982: 20–36). In modern genre theory – from Romanticism to the twentieth century – taxonomic approaches are repudiated but not superseded. A widespread critique of taxonomy, which may be traced back at least to the works of Benedetto Croce, has drawn attention to the ways in which generically shaped knowledge is bound up with the exercise of power, embedded in editorial practice, reading habits and curricular structures in secondary and higher education. This is also the premise of Jacques Derrida's influential essay 'The Law of Genre' (1980), which argues that every taxonomy contains within itself the vital principle of contamination that marks the only way of honouring the law. Derrida's aporetic account of genre thus seeks to expose the inherent contradictions of any desire for conceptual purity and rhetorical stability, contending that generic identity is always predicated on difference. The point here, as Jonathan Crimmins has shown, is not only that every definition of genre must be thought of as permeable, but also that this impurity – the mixing of genres – presupposes the possibility of a law of genre: not as a conceptually stable *a priori* truth but as a particular form of impurity that still posits its own sovereignty. Derridean theorists of genre – from Amy J. Devitt to John Frow – have thus advanced our critical understanding of the problematic universalism of neoclassical genre taxonomy while at the same time repudiating the mystifying illusion of complete generic openness. Their rejection of established hierarchies, however, risks producing quasi-tautological definitions of genre, which arguably do little to advance our empirical understanding of emergent global genre formations, or of the robustness and continuing resonance of popular genres.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, because of their characteristic diffidence towards systematic classification, poststructuralist approaches to genre share some of the conceptual limitations that Rita Felski associates with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion: a spirit of critical questioning, which assails the alleged neutrality of 'the law' and thereby exposes the ideological bias that others fail – or wilfully refuse – to see.<sup>5</sup> As Felski has shown, much recent work in literary studies is premised on the assumption that 'critique', or suspicious reading, is by definition oppositional and transformative. This emphasis on vigilance and detachment, however, proves a poor guide to the thickness and richness of our aesthetic experience: it leads critics to overlook the fact that 'works of art do not only subvert but convert, they do not only inform but transform' (Felski 2015: 17). The social importance of literature, for Felski, is hence not primarily a matter of ideological critique but of 'affective realignment [...] (a shift of mood, a sharpened sensation, an unexpected surge of affinity or disorientation)' (ibid.). In this context, it is easy to see how a poststructuralist critique of genre taxonomy, pace Derrida, may develop into what Felski calls an 'antinormative normativity': 'eternal vigilance, unchecked by alternatives, [that] can easily lapse into the complacent cadences of autopilot argument' (9).

My own approach departs from this tradition. I will not focus on problems of generic classification, either in historical or in transnational and comparative terms, but shall assume that genres, as Lauren Berlant has argued, are inherently relational (Berlant 2011: 51–94). Attention to genre, I suggest, helps us conceive aesthetic form as a process of constant unfolding, revision and adjustment to different spatiotemporal contexts. Genres shape our

<sup>3</sup> See Fido 1989; Fishelov 1993; Beebe 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Consider, for example, John Frow's claim that 'genre, as I use the term here, is a universal dimension of textuality' (Frow 2015: 2).

<sup>5</sup> See Felski 2015: 14–51 and Ricoeur 1969. See also Scott-Baumann 2009.

expectations and perception of specific works of art, but they do not function as transcendental categories, independently from the particular. Rather, they may be understood, in Braidotti's terms, as *navigational tools*: ephemeral cultural practices that are transformed and defined over and over again by every new articulation. Braidotti's definition of 'intensive genre' – which informs my own approach – emphasizes the productive, creative force of such experiences of transformation:

The processes and flows of becoming, and the heightened states of perception and receptivity which they both assume and engender, defy the canonical genre classifications and install a sort of parallelism between the arts, sciences and conceptual thinking. The point of convergence is the quest for creativity, in the form of experimenting with the immersion of one's sensibility in the field of forces. (Braidotti 2008: 46)

Literary genres, according to Braidotti and Berlant, are immanent, ever-modulating force relations. Their infinitely multiple iterations 'negotiate our path across sets of material coordinates' (Braidotti 2008: 47) by stressing both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, across space and time. From the perspective of the comparative literary critic, then, the idiom of genre provides a dynamic vision of culture as an assemblage of heterogeneous forces and practices: it allows us to explore diverse texts and cultural contexts not only in terms of their history, geographic specificity or contemporary relevance, but also as figurative openings and projections of futurity.<sup>6</sup> Global genres, in this broader, less prescriptive sense, are best understood as *figurations*: a term that I take from Claudia Castañeda's cross-disciplinary research on childhood. 'Figuration', writes Castañeda, 'entails simultaneously semiotic *and* material practices' (2002: 3). Otherwise said, the concept of figuration allows us to behold both the cultural force of multiple iterations *and* the specificity of each particular version they bring into being. Exclusive attention to either phenomenon, for Castañeda, would be inevitably reductive. If we treat genre as a stable class, of which each specific text is a member, the problem is how to account for creative freedom. If we begin with the individual faculty of artistic invention, the problem is how to explain the constitutive influence of social context. Castañeda's theory of figuration overcomes this dilemma by placing its emphasis on potentiality, or, as she puts it, the 'economy of mutability' (5). Invocations of the child, according to Castañeda, accrue power and value across multiple figurations: their cultural force is only partly located in their particular discursive and geopolitical context and must be understood 'as a potentiality rather than an actuality, a becoming rather than a being' (10). The same, I suggest, holds for global genres, whose open-ended, transformative trajectories cannot be fully addressed through universalizing categories. Genres, like the growing child's ever-changing body, need to be understood in terms of virtuality, or, as Wai Chee Dimock explains, as 'the sum of the not yet realized, with no actualized shape, a kind of general solvent out of which particular entities can acquire particular features' (2007: 1379). I believe that this constitutive openness lies at the root of our current fascination with genre theory, especially in debates about world literature. It also explains the burgeoning of a scholarly field that was, until recently, dismissed as inherently reactionary on the grounds of its alleged essentialism, but which is now associated with a range of new affective styles and modes of argument. Relationality and futurity, I further suggest, are what make genre theory especially relevant to the cultural-discursive matrix of planetarity, which is similarly concerned with processes of becoming.

<sup>6</sup> As Amir Eshel explains, 'futurity marks the potential of literature to widen the language and to expand the pool of idioms we employ in making sense of what has occurred while imagining whom we may become' (Eshel 2013: 5).

My argument here rests on a particular understanding of the relation between the global and the planetary, both as world-views and as practices of scholarly inquiry. I contend that capitalist globalization in its numerous aspects – economic, financial, political, technological, cultural and environmental – has created new, transnational chains of social and political interdependence but has not given rise to more egalitarian global maps. Visions of a ‘borderless world’ underlain by vast, transnational networks of communication, mobility and exchange remain, for most people, an intangible fantasy. More than twenty years after their first articulation, optimistic forecasts by Anthony Giddens, Manuel Castells and others stand in sharp contrast to everyday experiences of state violence, involuntary migration or forced immobility, especially among those who are construed as aliens on the grounds of their class, race, ethnicity, gender or nationality.<sup>7</sup> The rapid, global spread of digital information technology, for instance, has not empowered democratic resistance to powerful actors – government bodies and corporate multinationals – but has enabled these actors to reach more widely and directly into the lives of others, where they can control access to information and mould and manipulate habits and preferences. Digitalization has also increased inequality between the increasing billions of internet users and those who remain excluded, thus cementing existing patterns of privilege. While the modern era was largely defined by blunt forms of coercion and constraint, associated with unprecedented levels of state violence, more recent decades have seen the emergence of less palpable but similarly pervasive, ‘quieter’ registers of power: dissimulation, enticement, seduction. Nonetheless, as Brian Massumi explains, older disciplinary forms have not disappeared in the wake of new technological possibilities (Massumi 2015: 30). On the contrary, policing powers proliferate and have become more vehement, as integral parts of a never-ending, movement-processing loop: what Massumi calls our collective social function as ‘checkpoint triggers and co-producers of surplus-values of flow’ (ibid.). Likewise, territorial authority is not abolished but profoundly transformed by the emergence of new geographies of power.<sup>8</sup> As geographer John Allen has shown, the *intensive* reach of political and corporate agents cannot be fully mapped ‘in terms of lines of connection etched on a flat surface across measurable spans of the globe’ (2016: 18). Traditional accounts of institutional power, according to Allen, were mostly informed by the idea that authority radiates from a stable centre – a political capital, the headquarters of a business corporation, a financial centre or an entire ‘global city’ – and this power is exercised outwards and downwardly, within the limits of a clearly defined territory. Such familiar ways of thinking about space, however, are increasingly out of synch with the radical social and technological changes brought about, globally, since the beginning of the twenty-first century:

The measured times and distances of the modern era no longer quite capture the felt experience of being on the receiving end of a so-called ‘distant’ corporate or financial power, or the intensive reach that states can have over the lives of migrants far removed from territorial borders. (Allen 2016: 2)

According to social scientist Saskia Sassen, the nation-state remains ‘the prevalent organizational source of authority’ but its political power is increasingly detached from its ‘exclusive territory’ and embedded in a ‘multiple bordering system’ (2006: 419–20). Porous boundaries mark a potential challenge to state sovereignty, but also enable new forms of collaboration between international actors and the state, frequently against the interests of local communities. Border control remains a tangible and controversial manifestation of state authority, but

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<sup>7</sup> See Giddens 1990; Castells 1996–8; Friedman 1999. For a succinct overview, see Steger 2013.

<sup>8</sup> See Brenner 2004; Sassen 2006; Jessop 2007; Elden 2009.

also functions as a propagandistic trope that may be evoked to disguise the real social and environmental costs of global connectedness.<sup>9</sup>

Planetary thinking, as defined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ursula K. Heise and others, unfolds within the same historical moment as transnational capitalism, but views its interdependencies and inequalities from a substantially different perspective.<sup>10</sup> As a theory of knowledge, planetary discourse rejects the abstract, interchangeable, autonomous individual of liberal moral-political theory and urges us to stretch the limits of imagination towards responsible and responsive local sensitivity – ‘situated knowledge’, in Donna Haraway’s terms (Haraway 1988). As a political movement, it acknowledges the importance of our species’ single, shared habitat, not as a mere backdrop or context for human action, but as a constitutive presence that must be included and accommodated in all our deliberations. Planetary thinking, in other words, does not conceive human action as distinct from the nonhuman world, but views it as a major geological force that intersects with other environmental phenomena in a single, volatile temporal force field. Capitalist processes impinge upon climate patterns, drought zones, species evolution and extinction, the ocean conveyor system, glacier flows and so forth, which in turn condition and compromise the future of human and non-human life on the planet. As Timothy Morton points out, our entanglement with such vast temporal and spatial phenomena triggers a sense of insecurity and powerlessness that affects our lives no less profoundly than the encounter with conventional, geographically located centres of power. Planetary thinking, according to Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru, thus amounts to a radical critique of globalization, both in concrete, political-economic terms and, at a more philosophical level, by questioning the supposedly universal explanatory power of global perspectives: ‘If today’s planetary life consists in an incessantly thickening, historically unprecedented web of relations among people, cultures, and locales, to comprehend the planetary must entail grasping the relationality embedded in it’ (Elias and Moraru, 2015: xii). Like Allen’s and Sassen’s critiques of conventional cartographies of power, planetary discourse places a crucial emphasis on relationality. It contends that centres of power are not fixed and that they *compose* the spaces of which they are part. Where globalization views the earth as a networked, virtual surface, planetary thinking sees ‘historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features’ (Nixon 2011: 17) and conceives our shared habitat as an unpredictable multitude of entangled, threatened and threatening life forms.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars of world literature have long grappled with similar questions. Early, important inquiries into transnational literary culture – by Franco Moretti, David Damrosch and Pascale Casanova, among others – highlighted the historical role of globalization as a socially and culturally unifying force, while paying little attention to enduring patterns of social and political inequality. World literature, as Aamir R. Mufti points out, functioned in these approaches as a powerful normative system that articulates cultural multiplicity in relation to a purportedly unitary interpretative practice – ‘the seamless and traversable space of the literary’ (2016: 11). More recent contributions, by contrast, have sought to expose the political shortcomings of a debate that viewed world literature primarily in terms of the circulation of commodities, and therefore as a product of global market exchange. The long and productive controversy triggered by Moretti’s ‘Conjectures on World Literature’ (2000), for example, may be read, through the claims of his most pertinent critics, as a critique of top-down and centre-out views of cultural influence (cf. Prendergast 2004). Moretti’s analysis of the global fortune

<sup>9</sup> See Brown 2010; Nixon 2011; Mezzadra and Nielsen 2013.

<sup>10</sup> See Spivak 2003; Code 2006; Heise 2008. See also Masao 2001; Jazeel 2011; Connolly, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> On the virtual globe, see Cosgrove 2001, ch. 9. On entangled multitudes, see Haraway 2016 and Latour 2017.

of the Western European novel, it has been suggested, pays insufficient attention to other historically important contexts (Beecroft 2015) and conceals the patterns of domination and subjugation on which this fortune was predicated (Orsini 2004). Moreover, Moretti has been criticized for treating directionality of influence between metropolitan centres and peripheries as irreversible:

It is not only that cores do not always remain cores, or peripheries peripheries (the world-system is the site of a ceaseless struggle for power). It is also that in the literary and cultural spheres, at least, 'incorporation' of foreign forms – accommodation, assimilation, even indigenization – is altogether routine in 'core' sectors also: literary forms and models developed in (semi-)peripheral locations are often pirated by core writers. (WReC 2015: 56)

The subversive force of stylistic contamination, evoked in this passage, also features in a number of influential studies that explore the significance of translation, beyond its linguistic origins, as a powerful metaphor for cultural and artistic exchange. Ranging from Michael Cronin's numerous contributions to Emily Apter's reflections on untranslatables, these timely studies focus on style, which has recently emerged, like genre, as a central category of aesthetic analysis.<sup>12</sup> They also remind us that fiction and creative critical writing in the twenty-first century function as a locus of 'folding' or 'distorting' power relations which Sassen and Allen, among others, see as characteristic of our post-territorial present. Dramatic shifts in the common perception of distance, proximity and scale are not only a persistent feature of our planetary habitat in times of anthropogenic crisis, they also define our aesthetic experience.

A planetary perspective on literary genre, beyond established temporal and geographical coordinates, demands new structures of awareness. The multiple processes of transformation that define genre over time are neither simply variations on a given theme nor should they be viewed, in Braidotti's terms, as 'the unfolding of an essence in a teleologically ordained process supervised by a transcendent consciousness' (Braidotti 2008: 46). Rather, intensive genre is best understood as a process of creative expression, composition and selection that displays and at the same time displaces established poles of institutionalized power. This, of course, is precisely what comparative literature also wants to achieve through its foundational, interpretative gesture: comparison. As Rey Chow reminds us, comparison does not denote an exhaustive methodology, but consists in 'a violent yoking together of disparate things', which leads to the production of an 'unfinalizable event' (Chow 2006: 81) whose meanings are always and constantly open to renegotiation. It is not surprising, then, that one of the most influential approaches to genre in recent years has emerged from comparative literature. First coined in 2006, Wai Chee Dimock's definition of deep time offers a good illustration of the complex affective underpinnings of genre, and of its planetary transformative power. 'Deep time', according to Dimock, denotes 'a set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric' (Dimock 2006: 3). In other words, genre extends beyond the individual text or discursive context to encompass vast and diverse temporal schemes: it reflects our sense of linear history but also captures the cyclicity of everyday life and the unpredictable experience of 'proximity' across the ages, through reading and writing. Deep time thus marks a challenge to the idea of literary history as a sequence of discrete periods and national expressions. As Bruce Robbins explains, it reminds us that 'our institutional commitment to historical periodization is both much stronger and much narrower than we

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<sup>12</sup> See Cronin 2012, 2013 and 2016; Apter 2013; Cassin 2014.

might on reflection prefer it to be' (Robbins 2007: 1644). Nevertheless, Dimock's call for an enlargement of temporal scale must not be viewed simply as a celebration of cultural simultaneity across languages and periods, prompted by the belief in a transhistorical universal human nature. On the contrary, deep time also subverts traditional ideas of the autonomy of the literary, because it underscores the importance of creative-critical agency in the present: comparison. In a recent summary of her position, Dimock captures this idea in the following image, which suggests both futurity and a sense of planetary entanglement:

Epic and lyric, familiar and stable-seeming, are not hidebound for that reason. It is more helpful, in fact, to think of them as swimming in a pool, a kind of generic wateriness. This medium not only allows for capillary action of various sorts, it also suggests that the concept of genre has meaning only in the plural, only when that pool is seen as occupied by more than one swimmer. After all, it would make no sense to refer to anything as a lyric if lyrics were all we had, if there were not other genres whose shadows gave definition to the one that happened to be in the foreground. (2007: 1379–80)

The study of genre, Dimock contends, is always motivated by a desire to rethink familiar scales of literary history and established principles of cultural belonging, not on the grounds of simultaneity of language or historical period but on the basis of formal and ideological correspondence.<sup>13</sup> Her understanding of global genre as 'a remote spectrum of affinities' (Dimock 2006: 86) not only reveals the significance of changing cultural contexts, but also, crucially, opens up the discipline to a wider range of affective styles and modes of argument: expressions of 'kinship' rather than attempts at classification, as Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen surmises (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016: 522). What characterizes global genre, we might say, quoting Brian Massumi, is the 'play between constraint and room to manoeuvre' (2015: 12–13); the effort to capture a complex phenomenon that codifies and normalizes experience and makes it communicable, but that at the same time enables creative responses that are entirely situation specific.

Discussions about global genre, as I have shown, are no longer focused on questions of classification, but reflect a dynamic, open-ended vision of culture. The advent of world literature and, more recently, of planetary thinking, has produced a surge of interest in relationality. Both trends, I suggest, are driven by a more general shift away from established hierarchies of knowledge and towards a growing interest in situated knowledge. The fascination with popular genres, across artistic media, has brought about what Steven Vertovec describes as a 'fluidity of constructed styles and practices: syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation and hybridity' (2009: 3). The field of modern languages, I suggest, is emerging as a particularly apt context for the transnational and transdisciplinary study of these phenomena, because of their attention to self-perceived cultural peripheries, which, as Emma Bond points out, are capable of 'queering' fixed notions of national sovereignty and cultural hegemony (2014: 417). From Scandi noir and Italian real crime to Latin American autofiction, genre has long been a crucial concern of literary scholars in modern languages, vital for new theoretical conceptualizations of world literature and central in collective efforts to open and diversify the curriculum.<sup>14</sup> Attention to genre reveals a heightened awareness of international audiences and a potentially global market for literature, especially in the context of less widely spoken languages. But the dynamics of global genre have also transformed practices of

<sup>13</sup> See especially Dimock 2006 and 2007. See also Dimock and Buell 2007.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Pieri 2011; Pezzotti 2014; Blejmar 2017; Stougaard-Nielsen 2017. See also Damrosch, D'haen and Nilsson 2017.



creative invention itself, reminding us that any dividing line – between epic and lyric, South and North, human and nonhuman – is always in flux.

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