





Algorithmic Genre: Platform Logic, Cultural Hybridity, and the Fluidity of Contemporary Film

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Abstract

The rise of digital media and globalization has fundamentally reshaped film genre theory, shifting it from a rigid classification system to a dynamic, negotiable space of meaning. This study addresses the theoretical gap left by traditional structuralist approaches, which fail to explain the pervasive hybridity and fluidity of genres in contemporary global cinema. Its objective is to analyze how these concepts redefine genre boundaries, examine the influence of streaming platform algorithms on genre formation, and explore how non-Western cinemas employ genre as a tool for cultural expression and resistance. Employing a qualitative literature review methodology with thematic analysis, the research synthesizes key scholarly texts. The findings demonstrate that genre hybridity is not merely an aesthetic choice but is structurally linked to the industrial logics of digital platforms and serves as a vital cultural strategy for identity articulation, particularly in Asian and Latin American films. The study concludes that genre must be reconceptualized as a fluid, hybrid, and discursive practice embedded within broader socio-economic power relations. This reconceptualization provides a crucial framework for understanding film in the digital era, where genre functions simultaneously as an industrial mechanism, a narrative framework, and a site for cultural negotiation.

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Introduction

Contemporary film theory marks a significant shift in how scholars understand the concept of genre (Çalışkan, 2023; Decker, 2016). Whereas genre was once regarded as a fixed, stable category functioning as a tool for aesthetic classification, in the landscape of modern cinema it instead emerges as a site of fluid and dynamic negotiation of meaning (Elinwa, 2020). Contemporary films such as *Parasite* (2019), *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), and even globally produced serials on digital platforms illustrate how the boundaries between genres, drama, comedy, thriller, and even fantasy, have become increasingly blurred (Tarvainen et al., 2015). In an interconnected global cultural



context, hybridity has become the new norm in the production and consumption of cinema (Al-Maliki, 2025). This shift demonstrates that traditional genre categories can no longer adequately represent the narrative and aesthetic complexity resulting from cross-cultural, economic, and technological interactions in media (Yurdigül & Gülsün, 2025). Genre theories rooted in classical structuralism are now challenged by film production practices that celebrate uncertainty and the blending of forms (Zhang & Lee, 2013). Furthermore, film genre can no longer be read merely as a textual sign system, but also as a discursive practice reflecting global social, political, and economic dynamics (Gledhill, 2021). In this context, understanding contemporary film requires a new approach to genre theory, one capable of capturing the dynamics of hybridity and fluidity in cinematic practice while opening space for reinterpreting the relationships between form, meaning, and power in modern media culture.

To date, theories and studies on film genre still tend to maintain a rigid classificatory paradigm. Much of the existing research has focused primarily on identifying formal structures and narrative conventions that distinguish one genre from another (Gavilan et al., 2019; Redfern, 2012). This approach can be found in the works of Rick Altman (1999), who emphasizes the importance of semantic and syntactic structures, and Steve Neale (2000), who highlights the relationship between genre and the film industry (Altman, 1984; Fish et al., 2020; Whritner & Wallisch, 2018). However, such perspectives fall short in explaining the increasingly prominent fluidity of contemporary films (Mohammed, 2020; Prasad, 2011). On the other hand, studies emphasizing economic and industrial dimensions (R. T. K. -, 2025; Chan et al., 2018), tend to view genre as a marketing product (Gheli & Prassa, 2024), while reception-based research (Thao & Linh, 2024; Tsfati et al., 2014) focuses more on audience perceptions without uncovering the ideological structures behind genre formation. These three tendencies indicate that most genre studies remain rooted in structuralist approaches that overlook the discursive dynamics and cultural practices shaping them. Yet, in an increasingly transnational and digital global cinema, hybridity is no longer a marginal phenomenon but a central principle in the formation of genre identity (Baschiera & Fisher, 2022; Wang, 2024). Thus, there remains considerable conceptual space to deconstruct how we understand genre, not as a fixed classification, but as a contested and continually negotiated arena of discourse.

This research arises from an awareness of this gap and aims to systematically review the literature on hybridity and fluidity in contemporary film genre theory. Its main objective is to address shortcomings in previous

studies that have not thoroughly explored how social, cultural, and industrial interactions produce epistemological transformations in the concept of genre. In the context of media globalization and digital platform convergence, films no longer operate within rigid geographic or cultural boundaries (M. E. I. - et al., 2024; Biswas, 2025). Hybridity emerges as a form of creative adaptation to global markets as well as a mode of resistance against Western aesthetic hegemony (Kraidy, 2002; Papastergiadis, 2005). Accordingly, this study seeks to answer three main questions: first, how contemporary film theories redefine genre boundaries through the concepts of hybridity and fluidity; second, how industry practices and audience cultures contribute to the formation of fluid genres; and third, how new theoretical approaches enable a reinterpretation of the relationships between genre, identity, and power. By addressing these questions, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how genre functions not only as a narrative structure but also as a cultural practice that is continually negotiated and contextualized within the global currents of modern cinema.

This study is grounded in the argument that hybridity and fluidity are not merely peripheral phenomena, but the essence of how contemporary cinema operates. In the modern film world, genre boundaries no longer function to separate, but rather serve as meeting points for diverse forms of cultural and ideological expression. This phenomenon aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "third space," a space of identity and meaning negotiation born from cultural encounters (Gyulay, 2010; Sajeel Ahmed et al., 2025). Hybrid films operate within this space, blurring dichotomies between the local and the global, the traditional and the modern, the serious and the popular (Zhao et al., 2020). From a cultural theory perspective, genre fluidity can also be read as a form of resistance against singular aesthetic hegemonies imposed by the mainstream film industry (Virginás, 2021). Therefore, genre theory must be expanded to include dimensions of discourse, representation, and identity politics. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining semiotics, poststructuralism, and cultural theory, this study argues that understanding modern cinema does not lie in the ability to distinguish genres, but in the ability to deconstruct their boundaries. Thus, a renewed genre theory must be able to read film as a hybrid practice that not only represents reality but also reflects the cultural conditions of a world that is constantly changing and fragmented by globalization and digital technology.

Research Methodology

This study is grounded in a qualitative approach chosen to ensure rigor and transparency in the processes of data analysis and research reporting (Creswell, John W., Creswell J. David, n.d.). This approach emphasizes the subjective dimension of data, allowing the researcher to understand phenomena from an emic perspective and to capture how experiences and meanings are constructed within specific socio-cultural contexts (Norman K. Denzin; Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2005). Such a perspective is relevant for analyzing film genre theory because the concepts of hybridity and fluidity are deeply intertwined with negotiations of identity, representation, and power relations (Homi K. Bhabha, 2004). The object of the study focuses on the development of ideas concerning hybridity and fluidity in contemporary film genre theory by examining academic texts, journal articles, books, and scholarly publications that discuss the transformation of genres in global cinema. The research design is exploratory, aiming to uncover various concepts, patterns, and emerging ideas without intending to generate quantitative generalizations. The study does not involve human participants; instead, its subjects consist of theoretical ideas, arguments, and scholarly perspectives analyzed through a standard literature review.

Data were collected in the form of secondary sources through a curated selection of literature based on relevance, academic credibility, and diversity of theoretical and geographical perspectives (Snyder, 2019). Data validity was maintained through cross-checking sources to ensure consistency and minimize interpretive bias. Data analysis employed thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes, complemented by discourse analysis to explore ideological dimensions and power dynamics shaping genre theory (Virginia Braun, Victoria Clarke, et al., 2012). Through this qualitative and exploratory approach, the study accommodates the values, norms, and socio-cultural contexts that shape the dynamics of film genre theory, thereby producing a comprehensive understanding of the evolving concepts of hybridity and fluidity in contemporary cinema.

Paradigm Shift: From Classification to Negotiation of Meaning

Contemporary film genre theory has undergone significant development over the past two decades, marked by a paradigm shift from rigid classification systems toward a more fluid and dynamic understanding. To systematically illustrate this epistemological transformation, the following table maps the key theoretical perspectives that have shaped—and continue to reshape—our

understanding of film genre. Table 1 delineates the evolution from structuralist classifications to more dynamic, discursive, and politically engaged frameworks that account for hybridity, fluidity, and the industrial logics of the digital age.

Table 1

Classification of Genre Theory from Different Perspectives

Theoretical Perspective	Key Figures	Genre Characteristics	Film Examples
Classical (Structural)	Altman (1984), Neale (2000)	Fixed categories, narrative conventions	Film noir, Western
Poststructural (Hybridity)	Bhabha (1994), Kraidy (2002)	Genre mixing, negotiation of meaning	<i>Parasite</i> , <i>Everything Everywhere All at Once</i>
Political Economy of Media	Sande & Pallares (2022), Chalaby (2023)	Genre as a commodity, shaped by algorithms	Netflix content, <i>Money Heist</i>
Postcolonial	Raj & Sreekumar (2013), Ortega (2024)	Cultural resistance, local identity	Asian & Latin American films

Source: Developed by the author based on a synthesis of research findings, 2025.

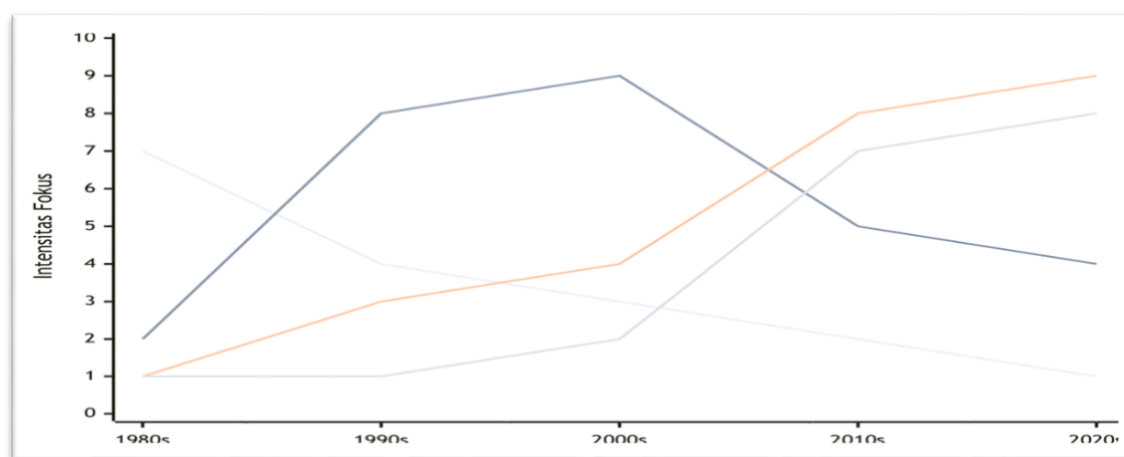
As illustrated in Table 1, the trajectory of genre theory reveals a fundamental shift from a desire to taxonomize and stabilize cinematic forms toward an acknowledgment of genre as a site of continuous cultural and ideological negotiation. The classical structuralist model, exemplified by the work of Altman and Neale, provided a foundational lexicon for analyzing genre conventions. However, its rigidity proves inadequate for interpreting contemporary cinematic practices where boundaries are deliberately porous. The post-structural turn, influenced by postcolonial thinkers like Bhabha, repositions genre as a performative space of hybridity. Here, films are not merely classified but are seen as active agents in the negotiation of meaning, identity, and power—a dynamic clearly embodied by boundary-crossing works such as *Parasite*. Concurrently, the political economy perspective exposes how genre is increasingly molded by the algorithmic imperatives of streaming platforms, transforming it from a textual category into a data-driven commodity. Finally, the postcolonial lens highlights how hybridity is employed as a strategic tool for cultural articulation and resistance, particularly in non-Western cinemas.

This comparative overview underscores that contemporary genre fluidity is not an anomaly but a logical outcome of these converging theoretical and industrial forces. The following sections will delve deeper into how these paradigms manifest in cinematic strategies and audience practices. In classical traditions, film genre was viewed as a fixed category that functioned to organize the production process as well as shape audience expectations of a film text. However, in the modern cinematic landscape, which is increasingly global,

digital, and interconnected, such a perspective is losing its relevance. Today, genre is no longer understood as a stable entity but as a space of meaning negotiation that constantly shifts, influenced by cultural, economic, and political dynamics of representation. This shift is reflected in contemporary concepts such as genre fluidity and transgeneric narrative, which emphasize that genre is not an ontological entity, but a social construct continually shaped and reshaped by particular social, cultural, and economic contexts (Khosro, 2023; Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022). Within classical theoretical frameworks, scholars such as (Altman, 1984) and (Neale, 2021) view genre as a system of conventions that establishes narrative, aesthetic, and thematic rules within film. This perspective explains why film noir, for instance, carries specific visual characteristics such as sharp light contrasts, crime-driven narratives, and morally ambiguous protagonists.

This demonstrates an epistemological shift in film genre theory, from a classificatory paradigm to one of negotiated meaning (Mittell, 2019; Grant, 2020). This epistemological shift is not a sudden rupture but a historical continuum that can be mapped across decades of scholarly engagement with cinema. The following timeline (Graphic 1) visually charts the pivotal moments in film genre theory since the 1980s, illustrating how theoretical paradigms have evolved in direct response to transformations in cinematic practice, technology, and the global media landscape.

Figure 1
Development of Film Genre Theory (1980–Present): From Structuralism to Digital Fluidity



Source: This figure is developed by the author based on key genre theory literature (Altman, 1984; Neale, 2000; Mittell, 2004; Jenkins, 2006).

Figure 2 illustrates the gradual yet significant transformation of film genre theory from a structuralist paradigm toward a condition of digital fluidity. In the early phase, genre was predominantly conceptualized as a stable classificatory system, grounded in recurring narrative structures and formal conventions. Structuralist scholars treated genre as an analytical tool for identifying patterns and regularities across cinematic texts, emphasizing predictability and coherence as defining features of genre identity.

The subsequent phase marks a critical turn toward poststructural and cultural approaches, where genre boundaries are increasingly understood as porous and negotiable. During this period, concepts such as hybridity, intertextuality, and discursivity gained prominence, challenging the assumption that genres operate as fixed or autonomous categories. Genre began to be examined as a cultural process shaped by institutional practices, audience interpretations, and ideological contexts rather than solely by textual features. In the most recent phase, represented as digital fluidity, genre theory responds to the conditions of media convergence, platformization, and algorithmic circulation. Genres no longer function as stable reference points but as flexible frameworks that adapt to fragmented audiences and cross-media storytelling practices. The figure underscores that genre evolution is closely tied to technological transformations, indicating that theoretical shifts in genre studies are inseparable from changes in modes of production, distribution, and consumption. Overall, the graphic demonstrates that contemporary genre theory has moved beyond classification toward an understanding of genre as an evolving, relational, and technologically mediated cultural practice. This shift provides a critical foundation for analyzing film and media texts in the digital era, where genre operates simultaneously as an industrial strategy, a narrative resource, and an interpretive mechanism for audiences.

According to (Zhang & Olson, 2015), this shift occurs because genre no longer functions merely to regulate film production, but also plays a role in shaping broader social discourse. Genre becomes a space where discursive practices take place: how meanings about identity, power, and ideology are negotiated through narrative and representation. Thus, film is not only understood as an aesthetic product but as a cultural practice that reflects particular socio-historical conditions. For example, Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019) defies singular categorization because it merges social satire, thriller elements, and dark comedy. The film not only blurs genre boundaries but also uses this hybridity to articulate a critique of class inequality within global capitalism. Such phenomena illustrate that genre hybridity is not merely

aesthetic but also ideological, a tool for filmmakers to challenge dominant regimes of meaning.

The idea of genre fluidity highlights how genres are flexible and may transform along with social and cultural change (Khosro, 2023; Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022). This fluidity is evident in contemporary Asian and Latin American cinema, where films such as *Train to Busan* (2016) or *Roma* (2018) blend elements of horror, family drama, and social critique to create expressive forms unconstrained by Western conventions. In this context, fluidity is not only an artistic strategy but also a form of resistance against Hollywood's hegemonic aesthetics, which often normalize linear narrative structures and homogeneous cultural representation. For (Khosro, 2023), genre fluidity creates opportunities for forms of cinema that are more open to local experiences and plural meanings, making film an arena where multiple identities and ideologies intersect and negotiate.

Furthermore, the interconnectedness between narrative style and thematic elements across genres reveals the complexity of cultural identity and memory formation. (Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022), for instance, show how hybrid narrative films such as *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) blend action, family drama, and fantasy while exploring intergenerational trauma and Asian diaspora experiences. Here, genre becomes a vessel for expressing fluid identities, depicting how individuals and communities negotiate their positions amid globalization. The emergence of transgeneric narratives marks another crucial transformation in film genre theory. (Khosro, 2023) define transgeneric narratives as the blending of narrative elements, visual styles, and dramatic structures from multiple genres to create more complex and ambiguous stories. This approach not only challenges traditional aesthetic boundaries but also opens space for representing human experiences more authentically and multidimensionally.

In postcolonial cinema, transgeneric narratives enable more equitable representation of non-Western experiences because films can merge local forms (such as traditional drama or folklore) with global cinematic styles. Thus, hybrid genre theory helps shift the center of film discourse from Western paradigms toward more cosmopolitan and polyphonic cultural practices. Discourse analysis of genre theory development shows that genre is not merely an aesthetic construct but also an ideological framework embedded with power. As (Meretoja, 2018; Zhang & Olson, 2015) state, film functions as a social text that not only depicts reality but also negotiates cultural and political meaning. Genre, therefore, organizes how societies understand the world, what is considered "real," "legitimate," or "true." For example, the dominance of the superhero

genre in American cinema can be read as a reflection and reproduction of neoliberal ideologies of individualism and singular heroism. Conversely, the rise of hybrid genres that foreground collectivity or social trauma indicates efforts to challenge such monolithic narratives.

The concept of transgenerational trauma is also central in contemporary genre studies. (Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022), along with Almeida and Wimplinger (2022), explain that film narratives often function as mediums for transmitting cultural memory, connecting past experiences with current generations through visual representations. Films such as *The Farewell* (2019) or *Minari* (2021) illustrate how melodrama, comedy, and social realism intertwine to articulate diaspora experiences, loss, and cross-cultural family identity. In this context, genre fluidity enables films to capture emotional and social complexity without being restricted by conventional boundaries. Thus, contemporary genre theory has shifted from aesthetic taxonomy toward a more inclusive and reflective discourse framework. As (Bönisch-Brednich, 2021) notes, film becomes a negotiation arena where cultural identity and collective memory are formed and interrogated. Hybridity and fluidity are not merely formal features of contemporary cinema but epistemological expressions of an increasingly fluid and plural world. In an era of media globalization, where geographical and ideological boundaries are increasingly blurred, genre theory must be understood as a dynamic analytical tool capable of tracing relationships between aesthetics, power, and culture more contextually.

In conclusion, contemporary film genre theory represents a profound paradigm shift: from classification to negotiation, from stability to fluidity, and from taxonomy to discourse. This transformation underscores that genre is no longer merely a categorical system but an active social process, engaged, reflective, and responsive to cultural change. Understanding genre as discursive practice allows us to see film not only as entertainment or art but as a cultural text capable of shaping collective consciousness, articulating historical trauma, and proposing new forms of humanity. As (Khosro, 2023) asserts, genre fluidity expands aesthetic possibilities while enriching the ethical and political imagination of global cinema. Deconstructing genre boundaries therefore opens space for diverse forms of human expression, ultimately reflecting a world that is increasingly complex, interconnected, and plural.

Redefining Genre: Hybridity as a Cinematic and Cultural Strategy

The interaction of hybrid genre concepts in contemporary film theory has become one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding the development of today's global cinema. In this context, hybridity is not simply

understood as the combination of elements from two or more genres, but as a form of resistance against the rigid and hierarchical classification systems characteristic of classical genre theory. In non-Western cinemas, particularly in Asia and Latin America, this phenomenon stands out as a response to the pressures of globalization as well as an effort to affirm local identity (Calhado, 2016; Ortega, 2024; Pedro José de Oliveira Andrade, 2016). Thus, films from these regions function not only as entertainment products but also as cultural negotiation media that bring local values into dialogue with global market dynamics.

In the context of globalization, cinema has become an arena where dialogue takes place between international influences and local expressions. This process produces what is called transnational cinema, a cinematic practice that crosses national, cultural, and genre boundaries (Guaraná, 2025; Raj & Sreekumar, 2013). One of the clearest manifestations of this hybridity is the emergence of films that blend social realism with elements of horror and political satire. For example, films from Mexico and South Korea often combine social critique with popular genre aesthetics such as thrillers or horror, creating new forms of expression that challenge conventional narrative paradigms. Such hybridity, according to (Ortega, 2024), represents “the aesthetic negotiation between local trauma and global visual language.” Classical genre theory understands genre as a stable and functional classification system. It organizes the production and consumption of films through conventions familiar to both filmmakers and audiences (Neale, 2021). However, contemporary film theory shows that these categories are fluid and always in a process of transformation. (Zhang & Olson, 2015) assert that genre is “a site of discursive struggle,” a battleground where social, economic, and political interests negotiate with one another. Film, therefore, is no longer understood merely as a narrative text but as a cultural practice that produces and reproduces social meaning.

This idea develops further through the concept of genre fluidity, which rejects the notion that genres are fixed and autonomous entities (Khosro, 2023; Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022). According to (Khosro, 2023), genre fluidity marks a new era in film studies in which films are no longer produced within a single aesthetic category but negotiate their identities through a mixture of styles and themes. A film may move from one genre to another within a single narrative structure, challenging audience expectations while expanding interpretive possibilities. In this sense, film becomes more than an art form, it becomes a discursive arena where ideological, identity-based, and power-related struggles take place. One of the most compelling aspects of genre hybridity is its ability to articulate political resistance against dominant Western narratives. In

Latin America, for example, (Guaraná, 2025) shows how Brazilian films often combine elements of horror and melodrama to expose issues of race, class, and gender. This approach demonstrates how filmmakers use popular genres to highlight social realities often ignored in mainstream discourse. Thus, genre hybridity functions as a form of cultural agency, allowing directors and audiences to participate in the deconstruction of hegemonic narratives (Ledesma, 2014; Raj & Sreekumar, 2013).

Hybrid approaches also create spaces in which audiences play an active role in shaping meaning. (Decker, 2016; Friedland, 2016) explain that “genres are instances of repetition and difference,” meaning that genres operate through repeated conventions accompanied by small deviations that generate new meanings. In non-Western contexts, these deviations often take the form of narrative localization, for example, the use of traditional cultural symbols within modern aesthetic frameworks. This turns viewing into an interactive process in which audiences combine local knowledge with global references to construct unique interpretations. Beyond narrative elements, hybridity can also be observed on visual and performative aesthetic levels. East Asian cinema, such as the works of Bong Joon-ho in South Korea or Apichatpong Weerasethakul in Thailand, often breaks genre boundaries by blending elements of magical realism, social satire, and existential horror. (Khosro, 2023) emphasize that such forms are not merely artistic innovations but cultural strategies for negotiating local identity within the structure of global cinema. Hybridity, in this context, becomes a strategy of aesthetic decolonization, in which non-Western films no longer simply imitate Hollywood models but create narrative forms that reflect the social complexities of their own communities.

Several theorists, including (Göktürk, 2003; Pedro José de Oliveira Andrade, 2016)(2003), call for a redefinition of genre categorization in response to this phenomenon. They argue that traditional classification systems based on “national genres” are no longer sufficient to understand postcolonial cinematic forms that are transnational in nature. Instead, genre must be seen as an open space that allows for mixture and transformation. In doing so, hybrid films can be recognized not as deviations from dominant genres but as autonomous forms that assert the uniqueness of their own cultural contexts. In this regard, (Ledesma, 2014) introduces the notion of “cultural hybridity as narrative agency,” highlighting the idea that cultural blending within genre serves as a tool for marginalized communities to negotiate their identities. (Raj & Sreekumar, 2013) add that hybrid cinema functions as a transcultural space in which cultural differences are not only presented but negotiated through complex aesthetic strategies. This phenomenon is highly relevant to Indonesian and Southeast

Asian cinema, where films often merge elements of local spirituality with global narrative structures, creating forms of cinema that are simultaneously modern and traditional.

Another significant aspect of genre hybridity theory is its connection to collective memory and social trauma. (Suganya, V. and Padmanabhan, B, 2022), along with (De Almeida & Wimplinger, 2022), highlight how hybrid films frequently serve as mediums for representing transgenerational trauma. Through the mixing of genres, filmmakers can convey complex traumatic experiences, such as colonialism, war, or social violence, in forms that are both communicative and aesthetically rich. In this sense, genre functions as an “emotional archive” that stores and transmits collective memory to subsequent generations (Bönisch-Brednich, 2021).

Theoretically, these developments signify a paradigm shift from genre theories rooted in aesthetic taxonomy to those rooted in discourse and cultural praxis. Film is seen not merely as representation but as an arena of meaning negotiation (Zhang & Olson, 2015). This is where discourse analysis becomes relevant in genre studies, as it helps reveal how film texts produce structures of meaning related to ideology, power, and identity. As (Meretoja, 2018) states, “narrative genres function as interpretive frameworks through which societies make sense of themselves.” In other words, genre is a social mechanism that allows communities to reflect on their collective experiences. In contemporary cinema, particularly in the Global South, genre hybridity becomes an essential strategy for resisting the cultural homogenization produced by global media industries. (Khosro, 2023) assert that hybrid cinematic forms create alternative spaces for negotiating meaning outside dominant power structures. Meanwhile, (Guaraná, 2025) emphasizes that hybrid practices not only enrich a film’s aesthetics but also open new discourses on social justice and identity diversity. Thus, hybridity can be read as a politics of representation that challenges both formal genre boundaries and global power relations.

In conclusion, genre hybridity in contemporary film theory reflects the complex interaction between aesthetic strategies and political representation. On one hand, it enables creative freedom that transcends conventional boundaries; on the other, it becomes a tool for articulating identity, memory, and cultural resistance. Through hybridity, Asian and Latin American cinemas demonstrate that film is not merely a medium of individual expression but a field in which societies negotiate their positions within an increasingly interconnected world. By transcending traditional boundaries, these filmmakers enrich genre theory conceptually while expanding our understanding of cinema as a dynamic, reflective, and political social practice.

Genre Fluidity and the Dynamics of the Global Media Industry

The dynamics of genre fluidity in the digital era are substantially influenced by the proliferation of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime Video. These platforms not only reshape traditional genre categorizations but also introduce a data-driven ecosystem that prioritizes audience preferences and consumption patterns over established narrative conventions. In this context, genre is no longer understood merely as an aesthetic construction or a stable textual category, but as a field of negotiation between industrial logics, algorithms, and audience behavior. As explained by (Sande & Pallares, 2022) genre fluidity becomes a reflection of “industrial fluidity,” a condition in which genre boundaries become flexible and responsive to market performance rather than to the aesthetic norms or narrative conventions that once formed the foundation of classical cinema.

This transformation can be seen in the ways streaming services employ advanced algorithms to continuously analyze viewer behavior. These algorithms learn from data such as viewing duration, pause frequency, actor preferences, and even the time of viewing. Such information is then used to curate content suited to audience tastes while simultaneously steering the production of specific genres deemed to have high commercial potential. The control exercised by major platforms like Netflix over content production is heavily mediated by data analytics that inform audience preferences and demand (Fiaz, 2024). Thus, the logic of digital capitalism reshapes our understanding of genre, not simply as a narrative category, but as a commodity measured through data performance. This shift in orientation leads to the emergence of an increasingly commercialized and segmented market, where unique genres may arise from consumption behaviors rather than artistic intent. Genre becomes a product of interactions between audience preferences and algorithmic decisions, resulting in film and television production that depends less on directors’ or producers’ creative intuition and more on user engagement statistics. Under these conditions, genres can evolve from marginal trends into mainstream phenomena, such as the “true crime documentary,” once considered niche but now one of Netflix’s most popular categories thanks to algorithmic recommendations that tap into audience interests in real-life narratives (Benson et al., 2025).

Such a landscape opens vast opportunities for diverse forms of film and television genres, ranging from traditional drama to experimental forms that blur the boundaries between mainstream and independent cinema. Netflix, for example, produces content like *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018), which merges auteur cinema with a global digital platform, or the series *Black Mirror*, which

crosses the boundaries of science fiction, thriller, and social drama. Streaming platforms thus function not only as distribution channels but also as laboratories for continuously evolving genre expression. This creative space reflects the complexities of contemporary digital capitalism, where creativity and commodification intersect and reinforce one another (Benson et al., 2025).

In addition, the rise of more specialized streaming platforms such as Shudder demonstrates how streaming services can create holistic experiences around specific genres. Shudder, for instance, exclusively curates horror, thriller, and supernatural films while cultivating an online community that allows audiences to discuss, review, and share interpretations. In this context, viewing becomes an active form of participation involving affect, identity, and community. Balanzategui and (Balanzategui & Lynch, 2022) describe this phenomenon as a “distributive logic,” a distribution framework that not only disseminates content but also builds an interactive ecosystem around specific genres. Thus, streaming platforms serve not only as sites of media consumption but also as social spaces that mediate the formation of cultural identities through genre.

This approach expands our understanding of genre as a social practice. (Muchitsch, 2023) explains that when audiences actively participate in online communities, through forums, reviews, or social media, they contribute to redefining the meaning of genre itself. Genre, in this case, becomes the result of a collective process involving producers, algorithms, and consumers. For example, the horror genre in the digital era is no longer defined solely by narrative elements such as tension or fear but also by audience interaction with the content, through memes, reaction videos, or fan communities. This affirms that genre fluidity results not merely from technological innovation but also from cultural transformations in how people interact with media. This phenomenon enables the development of experimental narratives that challenge conventional forms. (Çalışkan, 2023) highlights how genre fluidity opens opportunities for narrative experimentation unbound by traditional aesthetic limits. This can be seen in digital anthology trends such as *Love, Death & Robots*, which combines animation, science fiction, and philosophical reflection, demonstrating the flexibility of genre in mediating the complexities of contemporary themes. Such fluidity creates avenues for new artistic expression while strengthening the economic competitiveness of the digital creative industry, making innovation part of its business strategy.

However, genre fluidity also carries significant commercial implications. (Dastidar, 2021) notes that in the ecosystem of digital capitalism, media consumption is increasingly driven by algorithmic recommendations designed

to maximize viewing time and economic profit. This creates a cycle of content production that prioritizes marketability and profitability over artistic originality. Streaming platforms often produce variations of formulas already proven successful in the global market, such as crime dramas, teen stories, or novel adaptations, because they are perceived as lower-risk investments. Consequently, while genres may appear more diverse on the surface, beneath them lies a narrative homogenization driven by market logic. This tendency raises important questions about the impact of data-driven approaches on cultural diversity and the authenticity of artistic expression. (S.Fil. I Bachtiar Dwi Kurniawan et al., 2025) warn that algorithms may reinforce particular cultural biases, especially when the data used to determine audience preferences are sourced from dominant global markets such as the United States and Western Europe. Thus, even though streaming platforms promise global access, they may narrow cultural representation by standardizing audience tastes according to the logic of global capitalism. This poses a major challenge for film and television industries in non-Western countries striving to negotiate local identity within a digital landscape dominated by global algorithms.

On the other side of this phenomenon, new spaces of cultural resistance emerge, where independent or regional creators use digital platforms to assert their identities. Several productions from Asia and Latin America, for instance, blend local elements into more fluid formats that are easily accessible globally. Films such as *Kingdom* (Netflix, South Korea) and *Money Heist* (La Casa de Papel, Spain) demonstrate how genre can be used as a tool of cultural diplomacy that transcends national borders while retaining local characteristics. In this way, genre fluidity becomes not only an industrial strategy but also a cultural-political arena where negotiations between global and local identities unfold simultaneously. From the perspective of the political economy of culture, the phenomenon of genre fluidity in the streaming era illustrates the interdependence between market logic and creativity. (Sande & Pallares, 2022) assert that these changes affect not only production and distribution structures but also the ways audiences identify themselves through media preferences. Audiences are no longer mere consumers but participants in the data infrastructure that determines production trajectories. Thus, the relationship between producers and audiences becomes functionally more symmetrical, though still asymmetrical in terms of power, since control over data and algorithms remains in the hands of global corporations such as Netflix or Amazon.

In conclusion, genre fluidity facilitated by digital streaming platforms represents a fundamental transformation in the political economy of media. It

reflects the complex interrelations between market dynamics, audience behavior, algorithms, and creative possibilities. This evolution not only signifies a shift in consumption patterns in the digital era but also reveals the broader socio-economic frameworks shaping contemporary media production and reception (Chalaby, 2023; Sande & Pallares, 2022). Genre fluidity, with all its contradictions, becomes a symbol of an era in which the boundaries between art, data, and capital have merged into a cultural ecosystem that is fluid, adaptive, and deeply ambiguous.

Genre, Identitas, dan Kekuasaan: Politik Representasi dalam Sinema Global

Genre, Identity, and Power: The Politics of Representation in Global Cinema

The politics of representation in global cinema reflects the complex interplay between genre, identity, and structures of power. Cinema, as one of the most influential forms of cultural media in the modern era, functions not only as a mirror of social realities but also as an active instrument that shapes perceptions of the world, the self, and the “other.” (Abdulayeva et al., 2022) highlight how visual imagery in genre cinema plays a vital role in constructing collective identity amid the currents of globalization. In this context, visibility is not merely an aesthetic element but a political field of representation where ideology, power, and culture continually negotiate. Through their analysis of Russian cinema, Abdulayeva et al. reveal how global influences can be absorbed and reworked into local narratives that reinforce national identity while simultaneously exposing tensions between imitation and resistance to Western dominance. In other words, representation in global cinema is always an arena of contested meanings between the center and the periphery.

This idea resonates with (Baschiera & Fisher, 2022) analysis of German director Christian Petzold, who is known for his ability to blend genre conventions with explorations of global and personal identity. Petzold often engages genres such as film noir, melodrama, and horror not merely for entertainment, but to illuminate the psychological and social tensions born out of modernity and globalization. For instance, in (Fichtner & Barcroft, 2019; Fisher, 2013) Petzold adapts classical melodramatic conventions to highlight individual alienation under authoritarian rule and the ways in which the female body becomes an ideological battleground for control and resistance. In this way, genre serves not only as a narrative structure but as a cultural language that articulates experiences of identity and belonging in an increasingly fluid world. This cosmopolitan approach challenges traditional expectations of genre by blurring the boundaries between entertainment, social reflection, and political critique.

To systematically analyze the complex interplay between narrative form, social position, and structural hierarchy, this section employs a triangular conceptual framework (Figure 2) that positions genre, identity, and power as mutually constitutive dimensions of cinematic representation.

Figure 2
The Representation Triangle in Global Cinema



Source: Developed by the author, 2025.

This model illuminates three key dynamics: (1) how genre conventions provide, but also police—the narrative possibilities for identity representation; (2) how identity positions are negotiated within and against existing power structures; and (3) how power relations shape both generic evolution and representational access. Each vertex continuously influences the others: new identity politics pressure genres to adapt (Identity→Genre), changing industrial conditions create new generic opportunities (Power→Genre), and genre innovations open new spaces for identity articulation (Genre→Identity). The triangle thus rejects simplistic causal models in favor of understanding representation as a field of negotiation where aesthetic choices, social identities, and structural constraints are constantly reworked. In the analyses that follow, this framework helps unpack how specific films—from *Campion's* revisionist Western to diaspora cinema to streaming platform productions—navigate these triangular dynamics in their representational politics.

The relevance of genre in shaping identity becomes increasingly apparent in the works of various contemporary filmmakers around the world. One

example is Jane Campion's *The Power of the Dog* (2021), which uses the classical Western format to critique constructions of masculinity and patriarchal power in modern America. Campion revises the aesthetics and narrative patterns of the Western, long associated with violence, freedom, and white male dominance, into a meditation on vulnerability, trauma, and the repression of sexual identity (Kuznetsova, 2022). Through such reinterpretation, Campion demonstrates that genre is not a static form but a flexible container that can be refilled with new meanings according to its social context. This aligns with (Altman, 1984) concept of "double semiosis," where genre simultaneously articulates inherited values and opens space for subversive reinterpretation.

A similar phenomenon can be found in contemporary queer cinema. (Zhu, 2024) argues that within the mainstream global film industry, queer cinema faces significant pressure to conform to widely accepted heteronormative frameworks. This pressure often compels queer filmmakers to "tame" the political and sexual radicalism of their films in order to gain access to global markets. As a result, the radical essence of queer cinema, which historically sought to challenge power structures and normative sexualities, becomes diluted. Yet, at the same time, strategies of resistance also emerge, in which queer directors use popular genre languages, such as romantic comedy or family drama, to subtly insert subversive discourses. Thus, the tension between adherence to genre and the authenticity of representation becomes a productive dialectical space for the exploration of identity on screen.

Furthermore, identity construction in cinema cannot be separated from broader socio-political dynamics. (Stelmach, 2024), in his study of the Polish film industry, employs a world-systems approach to demonstrate that national cinema production is always entangled in an asymmetric relationship with the global capitalist system centered in Hollywood. On the one hand, Hollywood's dominance imposes aesthetic and economic standards that smaller film industries struggle to compete with. On the other hand, this pressure fosters local creativity in shaping distinctive and authentic cinematic styles. In this regard, cinema becomes a site for negotiating national identity, where filmmakers strive to balance global aspirations with local realities. Similar patterns appear in the contexts of Galician cinema (Colmeiro, 2018) and Tibetan cinema (Tian, 2025), both of which use film language to assert recognition for marginalized cultural identities within the global system.

Another dimension enriching this discourse is the representation of masculinity and nationalism in cinema. (Kıbrıs, 2025) study of Turkish Cold War-era films illustrates how cinema was used to construct myths of national identity through depictions of heroism and militarism. Propaganda films such as *The*

Valley of the Wolves serve not only as entertainment but also as vehicles for instilling narratives of national pride deeply tied to state ideology. Such representations reveal that identity in cinema is often performative, constructed through repeated images and narratives that eventually solidify into collective imagination. In a parallel context, (Khatun, 2024) research on Bollywood shows that the representation of Muslims in Indian film is ambivalent: on the one hand, filmmakers attempt to project interreligious harmony; on the other, these films frequently reinforce stereotypes that situate Muslims as the “other” within India’s national narrative. These portrayals reflect broader negotiations of ethnic and religious identity within an increasingly globalized cultural arena.

(Tumanov, 2021) argues that national cinema plays a dual role as both a reflection and a producer of collective identity. It acts as a cultural archive that records social values and historical narratives, while simultaneously serving as an ideological apparatus that revisits the past in service of contemporary agendas. In this sense, film is not merely visual entertainment but a discourse that shapes how societies understand history, nationhood, and difference. (Moura, 2022) extends this argument through an analysis of post-9/11 Hollywood representation, showing how genres such as action and science fiction capitalize on collective anxieties surrounding “terrorism” and “the foreign” to reinforce national security narratives. Films like *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper* translate geopolitical tensions into heroic narratives that justify U.S. military interventions and reinforce Western hegemonic imaginaries. The evolution of genre within such contexts demands a critical understanding of its socio-cultural implications. Genre can no longer be viewed as a neutral artistic form; it is an ideological arena where social, economic, and political values interact. From Westerns to melodramas, from queer cinema to nationalist films, each genre contains representational dynamics that connect aesthetics with power. Cinema, in this regard, is not merely a medium of cultural communication but a mechanism of knowledge production that shapes how societies perceive themselves and others.

In conclusion, global cinema serves as a powerful medium for exploring and contesting identity through genre conventions. The interaction between representation, power dynamics, and cultural exchange highlights the essential role of filmmakers in navigating these complexities. Through genre, filmmakers negotiate with hegemonic systems, adapt global influences, and creatively express local identities. In an increasingly interconnected world, the politics of representation in cinema mirrors broader struggles, between cultural homogenization and diversity, between power and resistance, and between globality and locality. Thus, understanding the fluidity of genre and the politics

of representation in global cinema means understanding how the modern world rewrites its identities on screen.

Conclusion

Based on a comprehensive analysis of contemporary developments in film genre theory, this study concludes that the hybridity and fluidity of genre represent an epistemological transformation in understanding modern cinema. The key findings reveal that genre has evolved from a rigid classification system into a dynamic arena of meaning negotiation, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity and power relations within the global media landscape. This transformation is evident not only in aesthetic practices but also in how films from non-Western regions such as Asia and Latin America employ hybridity as a strategy for articulating identity and resisting cultural homogenization. The scholarly contribution of this study lies in expanding conventional genre theory through the integration of postcolonial perspectives, political economy of media, and digital platform studies. The resulting conceptual synthesis not only enriches the discourse of film studies but also paves the way for interdisciplinary approaches to analyzing identity representation in the era of globalization.

However, this research has limitations related to its reliance on sources primarily drawn from Scopus-indexed publications, which may overlook important discourses from non-indexed journals or non-English-language publications. Its literature-based nature also restricts the analysis of the direct empirical impact of genre fluidity on audience reception practices. For future research, several topics warrant deeper exploration, including the influence of streaming platform algorithms on genre construction in the Global South, audience reception analysis of hybrid genre narratives, and comparative studies on the politics of representation in Southeast Asian cinema. These questions remain open for empirical investigation, which may further deepen our understanding of genre as a socio-cultural practice that continues to evolve alongside transformations in society and media technologies.

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