

## INTRODUCTION

### Rethinking historical genres in the twenty-first century

Jaume Aurell\*

*Department of History, University of Navarra, Navarra, Spain*

In the context of the freedoms inspired by postmodernism and enabled by the development of innovative textual and graphic platforms, new theories of history view genres as flexible living forms that inspire more creative and experimental representations of the past. Creative historical writing is thus challenging conventional genre categorization. New ways of articulating history compete with the traditional model of historical prose. Indeed, the twenty-first century has witnessed a proliferation of new forms of history, including film and documentaries, social media, graphic novels, video games and re-enactments, historical novels and biopics, as well as innovations in first-person narratives such as historical witness, synthetic memories, and travel writing. Acknowledging the current diversity in theories and practices, and assuming the historicity of historical genres, this introduction engages the reality of historical genres today and explores new directions in historical practice by examining these new forms of representing the past. Thus, without denying the validity of traditional and conventional forms of history (and arguing that these forms remain valid), this themed issue surveys the production of what might be considered new historical genres practised today, focusing in particular on experimental forms.

**Keywords:** historical genres; unconventional history; experimental history; postmodernism

A consideration of historical genres is becoming increasingly relevant to our current conception of history.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, while substantial criticism on literary genres exists, this issue has been generally neglected in historiography. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that historians have traditionally tended to conceive of genres and modes of writing as rigid structures within which they locate their texts, and as categories which readers recognize and negotiate as they receive the texts, rather than as epistemic options. Thus, historians generally consider themselves mediators between the past and the present rather than as authors and producers of referential, but narrative, texts. Classifying their texts according to genre was therefore considered a specious exercise.

---

\*Corresponding author. Email: [saurell@unav.es](mailto:saurell@unav.es)

Yet, more recently, in the context of the freedoms inspired by postmodernism and enabled by the development of innovative textual and graphic platforms, new theories of history view genres as flexible living forms that inspire more creative and experimental representations of the past. Historians function not only as authors who write academic texts but also producers who employ available methodologies, which make more direct interaction with audiences possible. Thus, more or less deliberately, contemporary historians deploy a variety of forms in their historical writing, teasing out new meanings and engaging with events of the past in more creative ways.

As a consequence of this new epistemic context, creative historical writing is challenging conventional genre categorization. New ways of articulating history – some of which are discussed in this special issue – compete with the traditional model of historical prose. Indeed, the twenty-first century has witnessed a proliferation of new forms of history, many of which transcend narrative prose, including film and documentaries, social media, graphic novels, video games and re-enactments, historical novels and biopics, as well as innovations in first-person narratives such as historical witness, synthetic memories, and travel writing. By creating new ways to represent the past, today's historians seem to heed Alistair Fowler's suggestion: 'Genre also offers a challenge by provoking a free spirit to transcend the limitations of previous examples' (Fowler 1982, 31).

Acknowledging the current diversity in theories and practices, and assuming the historicity of historical genres, this themed issue has two objectives. First, to engage the reality of historical genres today and ask if we can use this category for a critical analysis of historical practice. What do we mean when we speak of 'genre' in the context of historical writing? Is 'genre' a useful category of historical (and historiographical) analysis? Second, to explore new directions in historical practice by examining these new forms of representing the past. Thus, without denying the validity of traditional and conventional forms of history (and arguing that these forms remain valid), this issue surveys the production of what might be considered new historical genres practised today, focusing in particular on experimental forms.

\* \* \*

Historical genres have varied among ages, spaces, and cultures though certain forms have become hegemonic during particular periods: narrative history, biography and panegyrics in Greek and Rome historiography, and universal histories in late antiquity; annals, memoirist crusades accounts, and autobiography in the Middle Ages; erudite and dietary accounts in the Early Modern; encyclopaedic and cosmopolitan history in the Enlightenment; national narratives in the nineteenth century; organicist history, lengthy monographs, and narrative history in the twentieth century, and the new forms of history developed at the beginning of the twenty-first century which we discuss in this issue (Farrell 2003; Spiegel 1983; Amelang 1998; O'Brien 1997; Berger and Lorenz 2010;

Bisson 2000; Stone 1979). Thus, the historicity and shifting nature of historical writing may be shown inductively.

Yet, what has not been explored in depth is which of them were prevalent in each period and why, how and why they were modified, and until what point their changes and transformations are connected with both specific intellectual trends and political/ideological contexts. Although much has been written describing the different historical genres, little has been said about their common or diverse features, the structures of their rise and decadence, their internal functioning, the reasons for their continuities or ruptures, the influence of the audience in their rise and spread, and the circumstances which impelled them to emergence or decadence. What this approach of historical genres may unravel is, for instance, why not so long ago, historians were convinced that Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée* (1966) constituted the culmination of historical studies (the 'end of historical writing,' to paraphrase Francis Fukuyama or Arthur C. Danto) and, only 30 years after its publication, they considered this text an artificial, almost fictional construct, beyond its *appearance* of science. This example not only illustrates how ephemeral historical genres are, but also demonstrates how little historians are interested in the recognition and examination – and re-examination – of the fragility of the endurance of their own work and of their epistemic principles, methodological priorities, and privileging practices.

This lack of interest in the development, transformations, varieties, and historicity of historical genres may simply be explained by historians' reluctance to acknowledge the existence of historical genres, preferring to apply those categories for creative rather than historical literature. In this context, the category of 'history' (the representation of the past) would refer to a unique and univocal genre, unable to generate in itself multiple forms of inscription. This position explains many historians' scepticism towards Hayden White's *Metahistory* and what came next (White 1973; Breisach 2003). Gabrielle Spiegel has recently summarized this attitude, applied towards the existence of medieval historical genres:

Efforts to rehabilitate genre as a concept governing the production of history throughout the medieval period, have been, in my view, equally unsuccessful in sustaining generic differences beyond the labels used to designate specific works. That is, while medieval texts themselves would appear to deploy genre as a useful category for discriminating between different forms of historiography, the actual texts, as in the case of the works studied here, fail to maintain these distinctions in practice. (Spiegel 2010, 209, referring to the collective volume edited by Deliyannis 2002)

Assuming that the categorization of genres may become an artefact of contemporary thought or *moderna simulacra*, I argue that historical genres are not static modes of writing, but living forms that shift and change our definition of the identity of the historian-as-author and the field of history itself. More specifically, I try to note their moment of origins: the analysis of the diversity of emerging historical genres in each period becomes an exceptional observatory of

the general evolution of the discipline and, interestingly, of the eventual future tendencies of the discipline. Approaches such those of Thomas Bisson on the 'La Terre et les Hommes' cycle developed in the 1950s and 1960s (Bisson 2000) and Lawrence Stone's 'new narrative history' built up in the 1970s and 1980s (Stone 1979) are models that set out the 'key historical genres' of each period – or, in Stone's graphic phrase, the 'cutting edge of innovation.' Bisson and Stone were particularly insightful in locating these two approaches' moment of emergence and the fascination both exerted among the young historians who were entering the profession in those decades.

Yet, after this original and creative moment, genres mingle, because they are neither always rigidly nor exclusively compartmentalized, nor are they stratified horizontally (Croke 2007, 580) and are replaced by others that embody and reflect the changing times. In those moments, 'old' genres do not disappear; they are simply reimagined and reformulated as part of the cutting edge of innovation by others. And, in my view, the more prudent attitude of historians towards the old genres is, at least, of respect and deference, as they are assuming the new forms. My point is that we are now in one of these periods, in which the history of historiography is accelerating and assimilating new genres, enabled by the development of new technologies, the enriching effect of the images, the more active presence of the audience in the process of historical production, and the openness of audiences to new forms of representing the past.

Thus, a critical approach to the way historical genres are currently practised might revise our perspectives regarding who might be allowed to represent the past and how this past might be enacted. In particular, a broader and more flexible consideration of historical genres requires us to be more open to unconventional or more popular forms of representing the past (such as memorials, re-enactments, performances, gaming, graphic narratives, or films) that, nonetheless, have a powerful influence on the ways societies remember these traditions and construct their identities. This strategy also facilitates heightened interaction between the producer and audience, and promotes a less selective and restricted range of authorship.

I argue that acknowledging this plurality is compatible with the fact that professional historians are reasonably convinced that historical monographs remain at the centre of the discipline. Yet the richness and variety of the commemorations and representations of the past, which all societies celebrate, cannot be reduced to forms governed by conventional (although legitimate and necessary) rules of an established academic discipline. Notably, most of the proposals I received for this themed issue were sent in by scholars from scholars working outside history. I believe that the ethics of our profession should lead us to recognize *other* creative and original forms of preserving, transmitting, re-enacting, interacting with and representing the past.

Indeed, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been marked by an increasing level of creativity in historical representation, attested to by the examples studied in this issue. Multimodality, re-creation, interactivity, and

imagination shape contemporary history; images, social media, games, and film bear the information that produces our perspectives on the present and past. Thus, to understand the historical act, we need to acknowledge these new historical processes. A key element in this process also involves recognizing a new *democratization* in historical representation: history is owned by those who experience or engage with it, not only by professional historians. Thus, many of the texts discussed in this issue require us to rethink not only the product we might call history but the *producer* of history—including artists, actors, filmmakers, refugees, anonymous citizens, gamers, social-media actors, and autobiographers. Considering historical genres, thus, also requires us to think about who the historian is in the twenty-first century and what forms of engagement with the past constitute history.

To achieve this aim, genre theory provides useful frames for the interpretation of historical writing, its development and change in time, and a reading of the shifts in historical theory and practice. Some literary critics have emphasized this genre's epistemological interest (Frye 1957, 243–251; Jauss 1970; Bruss 1976; Dubrow 1982; Miller 1984; Cohen 1986; Black 1987, chap. 5; Farrell 2003; Seitel 2003; Frow 2006). Applied to the interpretation of the writing/producing of history, these theories help us to understand that, rather than considering them merely circumstantial or obligatory forms, genre choices reflect historians' decisions on the ways knowledge of the past is organized. This, in turn, embodies their cognitive, aesthetic, ideological, social, political, ethical, and representational aims. By highlighting historians' agency, I suggest that form itself carries meaning. The interaction between agency and the shifting historical context makes historical production a dynamic cultural artefact, able to create, consolidate, and re-enact collective identities and communities, rather than stand as static cultural operations that passively reflect its context – or reduced to a strict conventional rules governed by strict academic or ideological principles.

Thinking about genre becomes a methodological tool for an exploration of the poetics of culture and power, because genre choice is never politically, culturally, or epistemological neutral (Greenblat 1982). At the same time, genres are rhetorical because they are determined by the conditions established between the writer and audience (Cohen 1986, 207; Frye 1957, 247; Bakhtin 1981). Thus, an author's generic choice becomes an ideological and rhetorical decision. Fredric Jameson emphasizes this social and literary dimensions of genre when he notes that 'genres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artefact' (Jameson 1981, 106). In the end, generic developments reveal social and cultural changes in audiences because they confirm, following Nietzsche's intuition, that a new need in the present necessarily opens a new medium of understanding the past (Nietzsche 2006).

This multilayered approach to genres reveals that the key characteristic of historical writing lies in its ability to address not only specific realities but also its

symbolic aspirations, as Michel Foucault and Gabrielle Spiegel have suggested (Foucault 1977; Spiegel 1983). As the latter acknowledges,

My focus on the narrative structure of such histories can be justified on two principal grounds. First, on the pragmatic ground that a history's narrative design is that element of its literary strategy most likely to disclose its ideological intentions and thus to reveal its symbolic nature. Second, because the narrative aspect of a literary text is, as Northrop Frye has repeatedly reminded us, *a recurrent act of symbolic communication*. (Spiegel, 'Foucault', 5)

To argue that genres play a symbolic role implies that the historical narrative of any given text is always already emplotted as a specific genre – in the way that medieval genealogies deploy history as a series of biographies linked by the principle of hereditary succession, or as biography uses the narrative of a life as its central plot. Thus, genres are relevant because the form directs, in one way or another, the content of the stories. In this way, genre provides an internal coherence that helps the audience make specific inferences.

Yet, I argue that if genre expectations served as a catalyst for logical inferences in the past, we can assume that they are also crucial for historical theory and practice in the present. Historians do not generally think in terms of genre because they often understand genre as a 'type' of history, such as the social, the political, the economic, the intellectual, or the cultural. But this perspective elides the complexities inherent to the connection between form and content. Inversely, when they accept the flexibility of historical genres, historians and their audiences do not consider these new forms of historical writing and production as 'unconventional history' (Fay 2002), but rather view them as *other* forms of historical representation. In addition, in the past four decades, historians have attended to form in new ways, mostly based on Hayden White's insistence on 'the content of the form.' Thus, our evolving understanding of the importance of form in the inscription of history makes a discussion of the role of genre and form imperative (White 1989; Spiegel 1997; Munslow 2007).

Acknowledging the relevance of form in historical production – or, in other words, the impossibility of separating it from its content – leads us to the problem of genre variability and historicity. As Jacques Derrida notes, 'at the very moment that a genre or a literature is broached, at that very moment, degenerescence has begun, the end begins' (Derrida 1980, 66). Tzvetan Todorov described the process of genre generation in different words but similar terms: 'A new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination' (Todorov 1976, 161). As a consequence, historical genres are conditioned by changing historical circumstances and, conversely, shape our understanding of the time that produced it. Contextualist and textualist positions have emphasized through the history of historiography one of the two sides of this equation (Spiegel 1997; Breisach 2003; Parker 2008). Thus, genre is a dynamic rather than static category, and it would be inaccurate or naive to fix texts within a rigid categorization that marks inflexible boundaries between them. As David Baguley puts it, 'every text modifies "its"'

genre: the generic component of a text is never (except in the rarest of cases) the mere reduplication of the generic model constituted by the (supposedly pre-established) class of texts in the lineage of which it can be situated' (Baguley 1992, 5–6; see also Schaeffer 1983, 3–18; Genette and Todorov 1986).

Based in these ideas, recent approaches have emphasized the function of genres in their social contexts and historical specificity, noting, in particular, that genres are historical assumptions, constructed from outside (by the editors, readers, and critics) rather than by the authors themselves (Phillips 2003; Cohen 1986). Nevertheless, I believe that a radical emphasis on the audience rather than the author, and in the context rather than the text, misrepresents the dialectic at both sides of historical authorship. As Todorov argues, shared features make genres identifiable for audiences and allow them to harmonically function both as horizons of expectation for *readers* and as models for writing for *authors*:

These, indeed, are the two aspects of the historical existence for genres (or, if one prefers, of this metadiscursive discourse that has genres as its object). On the one hand, authors write as a function of (which does not mean in accord with) the existing generic system, which they can demonstrate both within the text and outside it, or even, in a way, between the two: on the cover of the book. This demonstration is obviously not the only way of proving the existence of models of writing. On the other hand, readers read as a function of the generic system, with which they are familiar through criticism, school, the distribution system for the book, or simple hearsay; it is not necessary that they be conscious of this system, however. (Todorov 1976, 163)

Developing these theoretical tenets and applying them to historical practice allow us to explore historians' strategic choices of genre and to unravel the motivations of the shifting landscape of historical forms developed by them – as well as the consequences these changes have for our understanding of the field itself. This analysis demonstrates how rhetorical choices reflect the authors' cultural strategies. In addition, because genres do not exist independently, a comparative analysis illuminates the strategies employed in the individual texts. Because each genre must be understood in relation to others, the operation of historicizing and contextualizing them requires not only a rhetorical theory but also a practice.

\* \* \*

These theories have shaped the original impulse of this themed issue, the criteria on the selection of the articles, and, in particular, my desire not to consider the genres produced in the twenty-first century as a 'culmination' of historical writing/producing (a kind of 'end of history') but rather as forms which *complement* rather than *invalidate* pre-existing models.

Perhaps the most imperative task of a volume like this is to fix what we mean by the term 'historical genres.' The contributors to this themed issue reflect on the three meanings of genre applied to historical writing. The most basic level of classification, the most traditional and identifiable by historians, focuses on

thematic approaches and distinguishes among political, social, economic, military, religious, cultural, intellectual history, and so on. Other categories, more methodologically oriented, such as Marxist, ethnocultural, *Annales*, Freudian, colonial, or quantitative history, may be added to the former, but the basic orientation of the genre-themed definition remains, as defined by some critics as 'the varieties of history' (Stern 1970) or 'the houses of history' (Green and Troup 1999). These historical genres are useful tools for approaching the history of historiography, but to reduce the nature of the historical genres to this rather superficial category ignores the complexities of the historical authorship and misunderstands the dynamic relationship between the form and the content that naturally emerges from genre.

Thus, without denying the interest of this categorization, this issue will not refer to this level of classification, since most previous academic literature has privileged this structure. Rather, this themed issue operates on a second and third level: the epistemic and the formal. Historians working within genres directly influence what and how they write in epistemic terms (or deep narrative strategy) such as constructionist, deconstructionist, experimental, or anti-narrative. This is the focus of the articles by Alun Munslow and Kalle Pihlainen, the two theoretical pieces which open the volume. Munslow defines an historian's genre decision as a *previous* epistemological choice which produces the forms of history we perceive. Indeed, Munslow speaks of *historying* rather than of the genres of history. He defines history genres as 'combinations of epistemological choices and the preferred ontological forms the individual historians believes their epistemic decision produces,' as 'meditations of the epistemological beliefs of historians,' and 'what is created through a set epistemic, ontological *and* associated representationalist decisions made by the individual historian-author as they create a history.' This perspective leads him to reject other positions which tend to consider historical genres as forms of history naturally aligned with connected sets of past events which refer directly to 'themes,' 'labels,' or 'categories' such as political, economic, and social history, or historicist, positivist, structuralistic, and annalistic history. Munslow thus constructs a kind of 'metahistorical genre,' an operation parallel to Hayden White's 'metahistory' (White 1973). His use of White's writings and the interesting autobiographical remarks he includes at the end of his article supports our approach to current historical genres.

Kalle Pihlainen focuses on the process which governs the operation of writing/producing history and the subsequent generic choice rather than on the concept itself. Adapting Roland Barthes' idea of the 'reality effect' and turning to Frank Ankersmit's claims, he alerts us to the complexity of the action of presenting a realistic story and to imposing any kind of organizing form or structure because it

leads to employing a great deal of artifice in the construction process. Even more problematically, to present a story in such a way that it becomes believable and real in the reading experience requires the most intricate strategies of literary truth-creation.



Pihlainen highlights the fluidity of historical genres, which are always culturally specific and invites us to consider the fact-fiction distinction in a more reflective way. This approach may stress the question of 'historicizing *history* itself, simply assuming it to be a fixed category for operating with.' He argues, rather, with Ralph Cohen, that genres function as 'open systems' which change constantly and lead us 'to see *history* as a genre based on shared yet shifting production and reading commitments (as opposed to seeing it as a somehow natural and fixed category).' He finally proposes the concept of the 'materiality' of the historical reference (the resistance that historians' generic and institutional commitments create on the level of the text) that provides historians with 'some ways in which they might make use of this materiality or resistance instead of domesticating it with purportedly realistic forms.'

Having proposed these overarching concepts, the essays offer readings of diverse generic approaches to history that centre on the thematic-methodological, the formal, and the epistemic. This allows us to read beyond the reduction of genres to formal appearances, and opens a new discussion on the nature and development of historical genres. The concept of genre thus implies modes of employment, forms of argument, and ideological orientations, which in turn involve forms of representation. In this sense, this issue re-creates the concept of 'historical genres' concerned with epistemic choices rather than themed or formal perspectives. This perspective reflects on the concept of genre in its deep structure – so history may be defined as genre choices regarding the representation of the past (Munslow 2000, 126).

The six historical genres discussed in this volume (graphic narratives, memoirs of trauma, historical re-enactments, gaming history, social media, and film-history) illustrate the shifting nature of historical genres and illustrate how history is increasingly being produced by non-professional historians. The seven articles may be divided in two groups. The first is composed by three articles that deal with some forms of 'producing' history, engaging the past through a living process, also characterized by the interaction between the producer and the audience. The second collects four articles which deal with images, and which preserve a more traditional authorial voice but use alternative grammatical voices and different media to represent the past.

Dawn Spring explores the potentiality of computer and video games to present findings from primary source research, to explore new paths of inquiry and to enhance the fields of digital humanities, digital history, and virtual heritage: 'not historical fiction that sacrifices history for story and not a video game that sacrifices history for gameplay, but a video game that presents original research rivalling any great work of history,' and, crucially for the spirit of this themed issue, which has the ability to transform readers, learners, and viewers into players interacting with history. Katherine M. Johnson challenges the passive roles of receptors of history with her approach to different ways of *experiencing* history rather than only receiving it. She examines the Jane Austen Festival Australia as an ethnographic case study and assesses the potential

of re-enactment as an embodied and performative methodology, one that leads us to readdress what we consider to be history. Cayce Myers and James F. Hamilton explore social media as a genre that promotes a democratization of history, as it serves as a new form of rhetorical action, ‘history from below’, one which ‘critiques authorship itself by dissolving the boundaries of a discrete text that can be said to be authored in the first place.’ Crucially, social media creates history ‘through accumulation and sedimentation,’ in place of the traditional linear argument or thematic coherence. Notably, they deploy Walter Benjamin and Michael Bakhtin’s ideas of historicism and dialogic capability to the potentiality of social media as new form of representing the past, particularly the recent past.

The next section starts with two articles that focus on personal voices based on dramatic experiences. Rocío G. Davis recognizes the proliferation of graphic narratives, ‘which create multilayered and multimodal forms of historical representation, often blended with autobiographical elements, privileging the embodiment of both the narrating subject and his or her memory.’ She discussed how the text she examines, GB Tran’s *Vietnamerica*, the graphic artist foregrounds emotions in his representation of his family’s past, a strategy that multiplies the text’s discursive possibilities, ‘requiring readers to read beyond the verbal, beyond the narrated.’ Davis focuses on the way this text deploys ‘emotions in the act of historical narration, and suggest that emotions and emotional connections to historical events might be considered crucial interventions into historiography.’ In a similar vein, Y-Dang Troeung examines the traumatic testimony of Vann Nath, one of the only seven survivors of the Khmer Rouge’s infamous Tuol Sleng S-21 prison in Phnom Penh. Nath was commissioned to paint a series of scenes depicting the atrocities he had witnessed. He included some of these images into his memoir, which Troeung approaches as a historical genre enjoined to contemporary human rights movement.

Two articles on film history highlight the role of cinema in contemporary representations of the past. Discussing Icíar Bollaín’s *Even the Rain* (2010), Frans Weiser analyses an emergent focus within opposition films in which filmmakers attempt to generate and incorporate contemporary theoretical concerns in their productions. Performing the role of ‘cinematic historian,’ Bollaín fuses both academic and creative preoccupations: ‘*Even the Rain* is not a history film in the traditional sense of mimetically representing past events; rather, it chronicles the production of dramatic historical films, drawing attention to the processes that determine how cinematic history is constructed.’ Weiser argues that rendering the audience conscious of the conventions and contradictions involved in (re)creating the past, the movie makes visible the gap between the theory and praxis within discussions of historical film. If *Even the Rain* represents unconventional history by subverting the generic conventions as well as the subsequent consumption of historical film, Janice Liedl approaches the subgenre of science fiction as a transitional form which bridges history and

fiction. Although this may not be an obvious historical genre, she argues that it can function as such and, more crucially, when it does, it offers an intriguing window onto more than interpretation because it illuminates the entire historical process from concepts of evidence and historical analysis through to persuasive outcomes.

In sum, this issue engages the genres deployed to produce ‘history,’ to define them and explain their structures, strategies, functioning, and possibilities. But I also propose an ethical purpose that moves beyond an epistemic consideration: to make historians more attentive to the new developments and possibilities of historical genres, to better adapt historical form to its content. In this way, some of these new forms may transcend the already constricted rules of academia, as they facilitate a better understanding of the new and changing forms of representation of the past. A more comprehensive approach to historical genres may facilitate the task of those who envision a more creative, innovative, or experimental historical writing – such as this journal has aimed for from its foundation. Thus, creative writing is important because it may reformulate and question conventional genre thinking and historical writing without breaking with the tradition.

Many historians are leading the discipline reconsider the hegemony of traditional forms. Their examination and defence of some ‘unconventional’ genres (such as the film, graphic narratives, gaming history, social media, or historical re-enactments) as a legitimate historical genre was and remains path breaking, such as the work of Robert A. Rosenstone (2006) and Natalie Z. Davis (2000) with film history or an apparently simple graphic narratives such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* have shown. In the end, assuming that genre is not an absolute category which cannot be maintained as the dominant influence on the forms of individual texts, but also that language and genre are indispensable for writing/producing any historical narrative, I hope that this themed issue will encourage a new exploration of the idea of genre as a concept that participates in the production of history, in the present and the future.

### Note

1. This introduction owes much to the my scholarly conversations with members of the editorial board of *Rethinking History*, particularly with Alun Munslow, Robert A. Rosenstone, James Goodman, and William Gallois, and with my colleague at the University of Navarra, Rocío G. Davis.

### Notes on contributor

Jaume Aurell is Associate Professor at the Department of History in the University of Navarra (Spain). He is the author of *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia* (University of Chicago Press, 2012) and *La scrittura della memoria. Dai positivismi ai postmodernismi* (Aracne Editrice, 2011). He has edited some volumes of the series *Rewriting the Middle Ages in the Twentieth Century* (Brepols).

## References

- Amelang, James. 1998. *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Aurell, Jaume. 2012. *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Baguley, David. 1992. "'Genre' and 'Genericity': Recent Advances in French Genre Theory." In *Poetics of the Text: Essays to Celebrate Twenty Years of the Neo-Formalist Circle*, edited by Joe Andrew, 1–16. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Bakhtin, Mijail. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Berger, Stefan, and Chris Lorenz, eds. 2010. *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bisson, Thomas. 2000. "La terre et les hommes: a programme fulfilled?" *French History* 14: 322–345.
- Black, Edwin. 1987. *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1966. *La Méditerranée et le monde Méditerranéen a l'époque de Philippe II* [The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II]. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Breisach, Ernst. 2003. *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bruss, Elizabeth W. 1976. *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cohen, Ralf. 1986. "History and Genre." *New Literary History* 17: 203–218.
- Croke, Brian. 2007. "Late Antique Historiography, 250–650 ce." In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, edited by John Marincola, 567–581. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Davis, Natalie Z. 2000. *Slaves on the Screen: Film and Historical Vision*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Deliyannis, Deborah Mausekopf. 2002. "Introduction." In *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, edited by Deborah Mausekopf Deliyannis, 1–16. Leiden: Brill.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1980. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry* 7: 66.
- Dubrow, Heather. 1982. *Genre*. London: Methuen.
- Farrell, Joseph. 2003. "Classical Genre in Theory and Practice." *New Literary History* 34: 383–408.
- Fay, Brian. 2002. "Unconventional History." *History and Theory* 41: 1–6.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 139–164. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Fowler, Alistar. 1982. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frow, John. 2006. *Genre. The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge.
- Frye, Northrop. 1957. *The Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Genette, Gérard, and Tzvetan Todorov, eds. 1986. *Théorie des genres* [Genre Theory]. Paris: Seuil.
- Green, Anna, and Kathleen Troup, eds. 1999. *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 1982. "Introduction." In *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, edited by Greenblatt Norman, 3–6. OK: Pilgrim Books.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1981. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Jauss, Hans-Robert. 1970. "Littérature médiévale et théorie des genres." [Medieval Literature and Genre Theory.] *Poétique* 1: 79–101.

- Miller, Carolyn R. 1984. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70: 151–167.
- Munslow, Alun. 2000. *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Munslow, Alun. 2007. *Narrative and History*. New York: Palgrave.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life." In *The Nietzsche reader*, edited by Keith Ansel Pearson and Duncan Large, 124–141. Malden: Blackwell.
- O'Brien, Karen. 1997. *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parker, Robert Dale. 2008. *How to Interpret Literature: Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillips, Mark Salber. 2003. "Histories, Micro- and Literary: Problems of Genre and Distance." *New Literary History* 34: 211–229.
- Rosenstone, Robert A. 2006. *History on Film: Film on History*. New York: Longman.
- Schaeffer, Marie. 1983. "Du texte au genre. Notes sur la problématique générique." [From Text to Genre. Notes on the Genre Problem.] *Poétique* 53: 3–18.
- Seitel, Peter. 2003. "Theorizing Genres: Interpreting Works." *New Literary History* 34: 275–297.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. 1997. *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. 1983. "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography." *History and Theory* 22: 43–53.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. 2010. "Introduction." In *Representations of History. Art, History, Music*, edited by Robert Maxwell, 1–18. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Stern, Fritz. 1970. *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. New York: Meridian Books.
- Stone, Lawrence. 1979. "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History." *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 85: 3–24.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1976. "The Origin of Genres." *New Literary History* 8: 159–170.
- White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- White, Hayden. 1989. *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.