

TOWARDS THE NEW FOLKLORE GENRE THEORY

JANINA HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA

Janina Hajduk-Nijakowska, PhD., Department of Theatre, Film and New Media at the Opole University, Uniwersytet Opolski, pl. Kopernika 11, 45-052 Opole, Poland, e-mail: jdhn@uni.opole.pl

The rapid development of new media, especially the Internet, triggered major changes in culture and caused a general change in the status of texts. These changes call for a new folklore genre theory. A word is no longer the only element that builds folklore texts when they enter the Internet – the new multimedia space. On the one hand, the phenomena known as e-folklore, combining different means of expression, show similarity to traditional folklore (due to anonymity, collectivity, multi-variant dimension and emphasis on the value of tradition), and on the other – they are radically different due to their unique dynamism. New technologies successfully stimulate creative activity of the network users, showing the signs of folklore activity. As a result, not only are traditional genres subject to progressive modifications and changes (e.g. chain letters, fake warnings against viruses, urban legends, rumours, conspiracy theories, miraculous events, e-revelations), but also new forms and genres (new Internet-based humour, photoshopping, Internet memes, blogs, chats) as well as the so-called visual folklore phenomena are created. The users' activity on social networking websites is also important. It enriches the structure of contemporary folklore messages and at the same time strengthens the power of emotions and imagination of the virtual community. Furthermore, the modern folklore, functioning in the media context, creatively uses the popular culture content. In this situation, it is necessary to analyse the context of contemporary folklore-creating situations, inspiring not only the existence, but also transformations of folklore genres understood as models of specific communication situations.

Key words: folklore genre theory, folklore-creating situations, new genres, e-folklore, visual folklore

The discussion about the specifics of a folklore genre has intensified along with the development of the scientific discipline itself, which has led to a change in the perspective of perceiving the research subject and, consequently, imposed the need to abandon the paradigm of literary studies by folkloristics. As a result, the theory of folklore genres, which is modelled on genre theory of literary studies, is becoming purposeless. Folklore does not use any formulated poetics and the concept of a genre cannot be used in the meaning of literary science. "Folklore does not have any formulated normative poetics;

it has only the immanent normative poetics”, said Czesław Hernas years ago during a discussion on the diversity of folklore in terms of genres (Hernas, 1976: 9), exposing the creative role of the narrator at the same time. Roch Sulima supported him: “The concept of a genre is a research construct, a manner of historical and systematising thinking in folkloristics. There is a cultural model that functions in folklore (not in folkloristics). It assigns various texts (including texts of different genres) to typical existential situations created by a specific world model” (Sulima, 1976: 11).

THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT AS AN ELEMENT CO-FORMING A FOLKLORE GENRE

The basis to determine the specifics of a genre is a repeated number of single texts that are, however, subject to dynamic changes. Therefore, as I concluded a long time ago when analysing the genre of legend (German: *Sage*, French: *légende locale*) (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 1980), in order to determine a genre (material from the typological point of view), one must take into account the whole context of the situation, in which a folklore communication is sent, as well as the creative activity of the narrator and the participation of recipients in a folklore event (feedback when sending the message). Shifting the focus from the very text itself to the context within which it functions, causes the concept of a genre to be perceived primarily as a model of a specific communication situation (the abovementioned ‘cultural model’ of Sulima), in which the major role is assigned to the intentions of the performer (narrator).

The above issue was also raised by Jolanta Ługowska, who formulated theoretical bases to separate the genres of folk tales: “the ability to assume dynamic components of the creative process in folklore is conditioned in genre theory research by the application of the concept of a genre as a model of a specific communication situation popular in the theory of literature” (Ługowska, 1986: 12). In the given situation, a major role in the development of the genre (the way a text is ‘used’) is played by the intention of communication connected with its pragmatic dimension. Ługowska believes that the genres of folklore as such, “due to the high degree of their conventionalisation, simplification and predictability, as well as nearly common occurrence, can be considered the primary genres of speech described by Bakhtin”, in which the ‘expressiveness of intentions’ plays the major part (Ługowska, 2002: 15).

Focusing on the transmission process as such requires that stresses should also be moved towards the folklore functions of communication (productive) situations, their cultural syncretism should be exposed and interactions between the narrator and listener(-s) should be analysed during the text formation. The above was already postulated by Herman Bausinger who stated that the ‘performance (*Performanz*) style’ is subject to evaluation by listeners, and the evaluation “co-decides about the duration and stability of the transmitted stories” (Bausinger, 1975: 326).

I should expand the above statement by saying that the specifics of operation of the direct (natural, contact) transmission was analysed also by Kiril V. Chistov, who perceived the cultural conditions of communication situations and pointed to the creative process during such a transmission, determined by the “synchrony of the process of sending and receiving” (Czistow¹, 1977: 47). On the one hand, this syn-

1 K. W. Czistow is K. V. Chistov in Polish transcription.

chrony reinforces the “so-called co-participation effect consisting in parallelism and concurrency of feelings of the performer and the accompanying listener or spectator,” and on the other hand, it affects by feedback the variety of the transmitted content and simultaneousness when the recipient “at the next stage of the existence of a folklore text can become a performer equally valuable as the first one” (Czistow, 1977: 50). The comments by Chistov, expanded by the previous concept of Piotr G. Bogatyriev² and Roman Jakobson (1973),³ concerning the analysis of folklore as a specific form of literary work (especially the role of preventive censorship), makes us realise that the examination of the specifics of the operation of a text in a ‘natural’ conversation needs a complex look, and most of all considering the narrative activity as a specific creation of the way of understanding and learning the world by a particular social group.

Also, the conclusions of Victor Gusiev are interesting; by exposing the ‘obviousness’ of the syncretic character of folklore, he considered a genre as a form important from the typological perspective, susceptible to transformations of genres, “these – let us call them – knots that occur when phenomena continue to transform into others” (Gusiew⁴, 1974: 167). Moreover, what is also important, especially in terms of the contemporary considerations of genre theory: “The process of absorption of strange components is one of the limited features of folklore; therefore, folklore is not an eclectic combination of various factors, but a kind of art that develops according its own rules” (Gusiew, 1974: 125).

THE DIRECTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATION OF FOLKLORE GENRES

All the conclusions referred to above consider obviously the ‘classical’ folklore determined by the paradigm of orality, aestheticism and rural character. This paradigm, as we know, has been recently questioned because, due to the development of media and the expansion of new manners of transmission of cultural contents, folklore as such has changed. However, the conclusions of classical authors show us the direction of interpretation of the contemporary folklore phenomena. If we assume that communication (productive) situations have an effect to a great extent on the operation of folklore, and at the same time the way that genres of folklore operate, then, we cannot analyse folklore phenomena today, neglecting the relationships occurring between media and folklore carriers. The expansion of media in the realm of folklore results not only in their influence on the development of new interactions connecting people with media, but they also direct interactions between people, inspire the occurrence of spontaneous situations, which encourage the telling of stories and cause the transformation of the traditional forms of oral narration (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2007). Today, we face a new type of culture, determined by the occurrence of electronic media (especially the Internet) that has created new relationships between people. Such transformations clearly support the tendencies of capturing folkloristics in the anthropologic dimension (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2011) – also because they lead to a general change of the status of texts, which requires a new folk-

2 P. G. Bogatyriev is P. G. Bogatyriev in Polish transcription.

3 The article was published for the first time in German in 1929.

4 W. Gusiew is V. Gusiev in Polish transcription.

lore genre theory to be developed. The word is not the only component building a folklore message, especially when it lands on the Internet, a new multimedia space. New technological solutions invaded the structure of texts, which in the opinion of Eugeniusz Wilk discloses an important regularity: “a primary scheme of direct conversation is subject to major modifications and changes under the influence of technical factors [...] one cannot read without the breach of the essence of the message, the meanings that are hidden in media conversations if he/she does not interpret the meanings determined by the technological conditions” (Wilk, 2009: 25). The Internet requires that in a way “speech should be made written and at the same time written language should be made oral” (Górska-Olesińska, 2005: 458) and also inspires the active use of iconographic and audio-visual components in e-conversation.

The ‘absorption’ by the Internet (obviously due to the network users) of the contents previously existing mainly in direct circulation (which obviously is connected with the change of the text structure as such) is only one of the aspects of the major changes occurring in contemporary folklore. New forms of creative activity appear much more important in the realm of folklore inspired by the interactivity of the Internet (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2010b). The content, existing so far beyond the network, after entering into the Internet as something quite obvious, successfully ‘surrenders’, at the same time, to the Internet inspiration, which enriches their formula in terms of quality, and co-creates the social dimension of new media, leaving the Internet users unaware of the fact. And this is the most exciting task for today’s research on folklore. The folk tradition cannot do more than “determine one of the possible frames of reference, points of view and approach towards the issues under analysis; however, the basic research paradigms must be provided by the present” (Waliński, 1999: 98).

These days, let us repeat, it is impossible to analyse folklore phenomena without assuming the media context. May it suffice to examine the process of receipt of the contents transmitted by the media, in which we face, among others, the two-step-flow of information phenomenon, as a result of which folklore plays a new function: it promotes contents transmitted by the media, using on the one hand the traditional forms of folklore narration and on the other hand – the models of ‘translating’ feelings and emotions into narration promoted by the media, ‘prompted’ validation formulas, not to mention the promotion of a particular variant of a story (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2012). Therefore, it is hard to discuss the existence of traditional contents and genres in the contemporary transmission, as they are subject to far-reaching transformations. “A text that yesterday was (...) a folk text” – as Jan Kajfosz stated – “does not have to be a folk one today, (...) it becomes nothing more than the representation of a previous status of folklore activity, namely folklorism” (Kajfosz, 2011: 58). On the other hand, the analysis of texts published in the Internet, reminiscent of traditional folk texts, clearly shows technological, Internet-related inspiration of progressing modifications and changes. Nevertheless, they were subject to material qualitative changes in the virtual space, and such changes need other analysis methods to be adopted by researchers. What is more, it is hard to prove that in the virtual environment they continue with traditional genres. Michail Alexeevskiy proved for instance that “in the Internet one can find mainly humorous ‘remakes’ of classical fairy tale plots” (Alekseevskiy, 2010: 155) or chastushkas that are only indirectly connected with folk tradition. The classical genre is used mainly as a parody, it turns out to be one of the instruments to construct a new text the comic effect of which is evoked by the juxtaposition of “the folk form and new contents” (Alekseevskiy, 2010: 156).

THE FOLKLORE GENRES CREATED IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

But in some cases, the traditional folklore genre is subject to such far-reaching modifications that it becomes in fact a new genre and represents a quite new quality. Just analyse the so-called 'chain letters' originating from the 'letters from heaven' popular in the traditional folk religiousness. Some of them still believe in the magic of the word and are clearly of the character of a prayer, but others "contain the moral message of other religions [...]. Others provide a list of pieces of ethical advice (usually known as 'commandments') or a parable of ethical overtone [...]. There are also chain letters that do not teach any lesson but only guarantee happiness to anyone who sends them" (Grębecka, 2006: 209–210). In every case, the purpose of such chain letters is to connect people into a community integrated with one religion or secret knowledge, obviously on condition that a member forwards the given text to further recipients by e-mail. Unsurprisingly, the chain letter formula is used today by advertising companies (creation of the so-called voluntary marketing chain). In exchange for forwarding a promotion letter companies offer trips or gadgets. Therefore, "a person who does not agree to receive and forward chain letters, jokes and information about viruses, who does not use the function *reply to all*, reduces e-mail to the role of quickly-operating mail only. [...] At the same time, he/she voluntarily resigns from a certain new community created by the Internet mail" (Grębecka, 2006: 214). The contemporary chain letters contain, apart from the text, also photographs or drawings; they can also include a multimedia presentation.

The popularity of chain letters on the Internet (Graliński, 2009) is a result of the false authority syndrome. In fear of the consequences that the recipient can suffer in the case that he/she ignores a message, 'just in case' he/she takes the actions expected by the sender. "Along with the development of the Internet, the computer has become a liminal, mystic intermediary that allows crossing the limits of personal perception and to enter the *extra-natural virtual universe* where everything seems to be viable" (Meder, 2001). This in the opinion of the Dutch researcher justifies people's belief in the most extraordinary stories published in the Internet, including false alarms concerning computer viruses. They have the form of e-mail chains. "Whole groups of people let themselves be deceived" – proves Meder having analysed hundreds of warnings received by Dutch computers – "because they believe that computers are not composed of a collection of processors that simply wait for rows of zeros and ones, but they are magic boxes with unknown and incomprehensible capabilities, steered by witch-doctors and magicians known as programmers and hackers" (Meder, 2001). A recipient forwards the information fearing that his/her computer can break down, his/her health can deteriorate or a chance to win can be lost or simply due to remorse. The rich material collected by the Dutch researcher on the one hand clearly proves that false warnings of viruses chasing the Internet users take the form of chain letters and are often enriched with comments of the subsequent senders, and on the other hand they compete in the Internet with electronic chain letters about a deadly sick child and as such can already be considered the urban legend. Nevertheless, Jan Harold Brunvand classified warnings of viruses as urban legends (Brunvand, 2001), including them under the category Computer Folklore.

Although there are theoretical controversies among researchers in respect of the genre of the urban legend used in accordance with the Anglo-American tradition (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2010a), everyone jointly stresses that such new stories are

clearly connected with simple, historic forms (*einfachen Formen*) of narration and traditional genres: mythical stories, fairy tales (e.g. urban fantasy, Grzybkowska-Lewicka, 2005), legends, ballads, news, huckster songs that confirm the justification to use the *homo narrans* category to analyse the creative process of narration in contemporary society. “Urban legends – often referred to as contemporary legends, contemporary myths or gossip – are current, spontaneous, hot communications that spur emotions and make listeners react immediately” (Czubala, 2005: 5). This settles the question of their competitiveness against information in the media. Zuzana Panczová has noticed also that such stories, even if they sometimes are similar to the genres of the ‘traditional’ folklore, especially to the mythical stories (also old, folk issues can be found there), in some cases exist in the memory convention (have features close to memories) or are characterised by clear references to the poetics of pop culture genres: detective stories, movie horrors or thrillers (Panczová, 2013: 143).

Today, however, they exist mainly in the media, especially on the Internet; they exceed cultural boundaries and become a part of the global, modern world. Urban legends have become a fashionable equivalent of the old myths and legends. This explains, among others, the exceptionally impressive explosion of uncountable conspiracy theories on the Internet after 11th September 2001 (Allan, 2008: 74 ff.).

Not only do the media support their direct circulation of urban legends (raise interest in information about a particular event), but they also ‘trigger’ new folklore events, for example with intermediation of journalists who treat various amazing stories as credible relations and publish them in the media and co-create or inspire their new versions. Therefore, we observe a kind of infiltration between mass circulation and folklore circulation, which results in the popularisation of specific issues and stereotypes and to a great extent expands the so-called public domain (the information about a particular event is publicly known, obvious and nothing is to be proved). This is probably the reason why the phenomenon discussed here is also a subject of interest to sociologists, managers and media experts.

This phenomenon was analysed from the perspective of folkloristics by Zuzana Panczová (2005a), who completed a typology of conspiracy theories on the Internet pages and considered such theories as a subgroup of rumour (gossip). Undoubtedly, the concept of rumour (gossip) among the Czech and Slovak researchers was promoted by the work of the French sociologist Jean-Noël Kapferer, entitled *Rumeurs: le plus vieux média du monde*, published in 1987 and translated into Czech in 1992 by Dušan Provazník under the title *Fáma - nejstarší médium světa [Hearsay - the Oldest Medium in the World]*. Since that time, J. N. Kapferer has been dealing mainly with managing gossip and trademarks in business, but their expansion in the Internet made him analyse again the issues of existence of rumours, for example their use to shape the behaviour of recipients.⁵ In his first work, Kapferer formulated the thesis that “considering certain information as true information depends on the system of relationships that emerged in our ancient thinking that we use to evaluate the information. Until the given information conforms to such principles of thinking, it is highly probable that we accept it as true” (Kapferer, 1992: 64). This thesis was confirmed by Zuzana Panczová who conducted research on Internet forums: “in spreading rumours (gossip) and conspiracy

5 A new edition of *Rumeurs...*, expanded with the Internet issues, was published in 2010. Compare also the interview with J. N. Kapferer about rumours in the Internet: ‘Journal du Net’. 28. 02. 2001, www.journaldunet.com/itws/it_kapfere.shtml

theories the main role is played by whether information complies with our existing beliefs and stereotypical ideas” (Panczová, 2005a: 161).

Folk stories on the Internet forums are a hybrid of oral and literary statement: on the one hand the participants use colloquial communication and – on the other hand – lacking in any para verbal components typical of the direct oral communication – they use replacement components, such as emoticons. As Zuzana Panczová concluded the Internet communication can be considered today as “an efficient substitute, i.e. an alternative of an informal, oral story” (Panczová, 2005b: 28).

The use of the options to enrich texts with additional graphical or photographic components offered by computer programmes is especially popular in humorous presentations. It is hard, however, to consider such forms of expression to be a continuation of anecdotes or jokes of the ‘traditional’ folklore, even if we trace in the Internet plots already confirmed in traditional folklore. These are, however, quite different manifestations, new texts in terms of quality. An Internet joke cannot be compared with a joke told in reality, in which case not only the context determines that a laughing community is formed, but predominantly it is the narrator’s skills of verbal expression (story-teller) that make the given story funny. Most concepts and schemes have emerged in particular situations: laugh is caused by an event that suddenly breaks a norm. A joke is always born in the direct communication (among well-known companions). The obvious components are missing from virtual contacts. The Internet changes the mutual relationships between the sender and the recipient of a joke: “the role of the performer weakens and the capabilities of the addressee expand. The addressee is activated and formulates his/her own body of texts that meet his/her needs; they specify the area of interest and ideological opposition” (Frolova, 2009: 171). This is facilitated by the structure of numerous websites (mainly commercial ones, using the need to have fun to attract a potential client) with collections of anecdotes, equipped with special browsers, thematic catalogues, indices, so that the Internet user can find a group of texts that he/she is interested in. A list of nearly one hundred such websites with anecdotes was prepared by Olga Frolova (Frolova, 2009: 128-130).

New jokes trigger the wish to comment, reply or expand narrations and put them into the electronic circulation, mainly by e-mail among friends (accepted to the group of the initiated). “The visualisation of a joke is not limited only to statements included in e-mail attachments; it is seen in films and animations, and sent in the form of presentations, too” (Krawczyk-Wasilewska, 2009: 21). Another issue that must be analysed is the role of YouTube in the development of the visual folklore and the inspiration of the creative activity of the virtual ‘video society’.

An Internet joke has simply developed new forms of existence. Relying mainly on the written word, it exposes puns, dialogues, and ascribes the traditionally known concepts to media characters or politicians. Most of all, it uses funny pictures or film scenes. Nevertheless, on the other hand “funny photos, jokey MP3, demotivators or the so-called PPSs, i.e. multimedia presentations created in Power Point, can have the structure of a joke, caricature, authentic life story, riddle, chain letter, sentence or parable” (Grochowski, 2013: 50).

Rolf Brednich believes that the escalation of the process of transmission of humorist contents in the Internet leads to the occurrence of a new global culture of humour characterised by anonymity and availability of variants (Brednich, 2005). A special place is taken by disaster jokes, usually pictorial jokes, suddenly spreading after the

terrorist attacks on the WTC of 11th September 2001 (cf. Kuipers, 2002). The above is confirmed by the research by Theo Meder: “in a short time, the Internet was swarmed with jokes and rumours [...]; however, they were mainly a manifestation of the visual folklore – a digital successor of Xerox copies. Never before had so many manipulated images been sent” (Meder, 2001: 7). The information about disastrous events play in most cases a therapeutic role; they ‘help come to terms’ with the tragic dimension of the contemporary world. Violetta Krawczyk-Wasilewska, who analysed this phenomenon, using a Polish example stressed also that the terrorist issues, usually transmitted by e-mail, found their place also in the youth folklore and even the child folklore. She enumerated examples of counting rhymes, rhymes, riddles, as well as text messages referring to chain letters (Krawczyk-Wasilewska, 2003: 25–35).

THE NEW FOLKLORE DIGITAL GENRES

Using the potential offered by the Internet to exchange information and comments about contents important and exciting to recipients of media transmissions or particular events becomes natural today. The Internet enables people to take part in various discussion forums, triggers the need to join groups interested in a particular topic. This fosters the creation of strongly emotionally integrated virtual social groups the members of which start conversation via the computer that ensures not only anonymity, but also allows controlling the disclosure of personal data. Simply, “virtual communities have generated numerous new communication models that help the new folklore events” (Burszta, Pomieciński, 2012: 5), which – at the same time – become the new space to create the senses of texts available in circulation. Moreover, the Internet that inspires the need to actively participate in narrating, tell various stories, share thoughts leads also to the “transformation of conversation rituals” (Sulima, 2007: 209).

In the opinion of Robert G. Howard: “New media, however, can be more folkloric than old media because much online communication is more like a process than an object. When these processes occur in dynamic webs of discourse, they give rise to what Appadurai and Breckenridge call zones of contestation, where “national, mass, and folk culture provide both mill and grist for one another” (Howard, 2008: 200). And the above encourages the creation of genre theory conclusions and pays attention to folklore digital genres. Apart from the ‘technologically mediated’ traditional genres of folklore, Robert G. Howard distinguished also the new forms of online communication and considered them to be new digital folklore genres – private pages (home pages) or ‘personal’ pages (vanity pages). When analysing the above, he divided them into numerous subgenres: personal vanity pages of individuals, online diaries, photo album pages, travel pages, pet pages, birth pages, holiday pages, memorial pages (for both humans and pets), missionary pages, political pages and joke pages. Stressing the major influence of new technologies on the creative activity of the Internet users connected with the exchange and edition of digital photographs, he pointed to the popular photo-shopping, the name of which was derived from the commercial software (Adobe Photoshop). Pictures edited with the use of this programme are full of funny comments (Howard, 2008: 193). Manipulated or parodied images (photo and video) circulating in the Internet accompanied by jokes and sometimes vulgar inscriptions or malicious comments that impose new, unexpected asso-

ciations are very popular today in the form of the so-called memes (Kamińska, 2011) that can be easily created by the Internet users on their own thanks to the special websites. The discourse created on the basis of the Internet is called by Howard the 'vernacular web' that due to intertextuality and interactivity is characterised by the hybridity of contents. "While hybridity complicates documenting and analysing of online communication, folklorists are particularly well-equipped for these tasks, because their subject is precisely those expressions that emerge upward from the local, the specific, and the informal to permeate a community's shared expressive meanings." (Howard, 2008: 194). Therefore, a folklorist that has always been between the official and the unofficial and has analysed texts in circulation, has been looking forward to mutual relationships between the mass, institutional and folklore circulation, the unofficial one must, at the time of online communication, expose most of all the processes developing in the web that are a result of the fulfilment of common needs, expectations, experiences and emotions. Howard believes that the best way to analyse the above is to observe the suddenly developing blogs that have become a synonym of the Internet. "Primarily focused on personal content (and the interactive commenting on that personal content), the participatory components of these sites render them dynamic vernacular communication processes" (Howard, 2008: 211).

The Internet simply inspires its users to create quite new phenomena; it triggers the 'bottom-up convergence' (by Henry Jenkins, 2007: 135), e.g. computer games or film scenes are modified, new versions of stories are created, there are discussions on forums and communication about various extraordinary events. Interactivity simply enriches the structure of the contemporary folklore communication (e-folklore). We can also mention the specific "environmental folklores that are 'owned' by particular groups of the Internet users (e.g. players of a particular Internet game or participants of a particular phantom)" (Grochowski, 2013: 51). Thus, the folklore creative activity stimulates the power of the virtual community, liberates the need for them to participate in the process of circulation of the contents of interest to the Internet users who immediately receive a global (unofficial) circulation. It also facilitates making a new guise for new versions or interpretations of events, satisfying emotions necessary to integrate a particular virtual community, among others, due to social online services, such as Facebook, the most popular service of this kind today. "The ease to create groups and discussion topics inside the groups means that apart from the great-scale, attracting masses initiatives on Facebook there are also smaller communities, in which the discussion atmosphere – even if they concern politics – reminds rather of the atmosphere of a pub" (Levinson, 2010: 198). The above enriches the relationships with additional emotions and unofficial character. However, Facebook should be considered as a "kind of a central terminal of our Internet activity, where various forms of our participation in the web are linked up (...) In short, Facebook and Twitter can be for us whatever we make of them", but this requires from the users much competence "that is obtained by performance, with the trial and error method, experimenting with the available tools" (Nacher, 2010: 12).

It is worth recalling in this place the following philosopher's reflexion: "The occurrence of virtual worlds does not mean a simple 'supplement' to reality but a transformation of reality. It is a dynamic process, in which the virtual modifies the real and the real shapes the virtual. Reality and virtual reality penetrate each other. In our experience, the boundaries between them are liquid, and in some cases they even disappear" (Wilkoszewska 2005: 9). Thus, it is hardly possible to assume that the theory

of folklore genres should not take into account this context if theoreticians of literature themselves see the need to create multimedia genre theory, understood as “a division of semiotics that analyses and systematises the genre theory consequences of existence of various transmitters in the area of culture” (Balcerzan, 2000: 88), which resulted among others in the concept of the multimedia theory of the genre by Edward Balcerzan. The concept assumes that a genre “is a repeated combination of measures that decide about the composition (morphology) of a text, directed in terms of communication and determined by the material and transmission technique (medium).” This manner of understanding a genre in fact takes into account any creative activity of man; it stresses its features such as repeatability, direction towards the recipient and close connection with the specific features of the means of transmission that decides about the ‘kind of the inter-human connection’. The latter component was in the opinion of Balcerzan stressed by Roman Jakobson, who “commenting upon his scheme of the act of communication stated that the ‘contact’ should be understood as ‘a physical channel and mental contact between the sender and the receiver’” (Balcerzan, 2000: 92). What is more, Balcerzan’s concept of the quasi-genre multimedia triad, a typological order of the contemporary genre theory, concerns the forms “existing between the art and non-art” distinguished due to the three constitutional features – the qualities of report, essay and column. The given features are based by the researcher on the intention (manifested or hidden) that is the text’s substance focused respectively on three ‘germinal forms’, such as message, sentence and joke.

CONCLUSION

The far-reaching changes occurring in the contemporary culture under the influence of expansion of new electronic means of transferring content, have delineated – which is what I wrote to prove – directions of transformation of folklore genres, both the “traditional” and new ones, rising in a spontaneous manner. This requires then also working out a new folklore genre theory which will take into account the specifics of modern communication situations that inspire the establishment and transfer of folklore phenomena. This entails indeed some determined consequences of genre theory which should be the object of researchers’ interest. Communication models and conversation rituals are undergoing changes under the influence of new technologies and this forces us to shift the focus away from analyses of the very context itself to analyses of the context in which it functions. What is more, it imposes also the need for carrying out such an analysis in the anthropological dimension, since – as a matter of fact – man’s creative activity, including that of folklore character, is dominated by modern multimedia cultural space which provides us with new research paradigms.

REFERENCES

- Allan, S. (2008). *Newsy w sieci. Internet i dziennikarstwo [Online News: Journalism and the Internet]*. Transl. A. Sadza. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Alekseevskiy, M. D. (2010). Internet v folklorze ili folklor v Internete? (Sovremennaya folkloristika i virtual'naya real'nost') [The Internet in folklore or folklore in the Internet. (The contemporary folklore and virtual reality)]. In: *Ot kongressa k kongressu. Na vstrechu Vtoromu vserossijskomu kongressu folkloristov. Sbornik materialov*. Moscow: Nauka p. 151-166.
- Balcerzan, E. (2000). W stronę genologii multimedialnej [Towards multimedia genre theory]. In: W. Bolecki, I. Opacki (Eds.), *Genologia dzisiaj [Genre Theory Today]*. Warszawa: IBL, p. 86-101.
- Bausinger, H. (1975). Alltägliches Erzählen. In: K. Ranke (Ed.), *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*. Vol. I. Berlin-New York.
- Bogatyriew, P. G., Jakobson, R. (1973). Folklor jako specyficzna forma twórczości [Folklore as a specific form of creativity]. Transl. A. Bereza. In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 3, 28-41.
- Brednich, R. W. (2005). *www.worldwidewitz.com. Humor im Cyberspace*, Freiburg - Basel -Wien: Verlag Herder.
- Burszta, W., Pomieciński, A. (2012). E-folklor - wstęp [E-folklore - an introduction]. In: *Kultura Popularna*, 3.
- Brunvand, J. H. (2001). *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends*, New York, London, W. W. Norton.
- Czistow, K.W. (1977). Specyfika folkloru w świetle teorii informacji [Specifics of folklore in the light of Information Theory]. Transl. E. Kosowska, In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 6, 42-52.
- Czubala, D. (2005). *Wokół legendy miejskiej [Around the Urban Legend]*, Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo ATH.
- Frolova, O. E. (2009). Anekdot kak otrazhenie interesov polzovatelya [The anecdote as an expression of users' needs]. In: *Internet i folklor. Sbornik statei*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi respublikanskiy centr russkogo folkloru, p. 117-130.
- Górska-Olesińska, M. (2005). Trwałe konwersacje. Wirtualne realia Sieci jako rzeczywistość w konwersacji [Lasting conversations. The virtual reality of the Net as a reality in conversation]. In: M. Ostrowicki (Ed.), *Estetyka wirtualności [The Aesthetics of Virtuality]*. Kraków: Universitas, p. 455-473.
- Graliński, F. (2009). „... i wyślij to wszystkim znajomym” - o listach łańcuskowych w Internecie [“...and send it to all your friends” - about chain letters on the Internet]. In: G. Garczarczyk, P. Grochowski (Eds.), *Folklor w dobie Internetu [Folklore in the Era of the Internet]*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, p. 101-113.
- Grębecka, Z. (2006). *Słowo magiczne poddane technologii. Magia ludowa w praktykach postwojewódzkiej kultury popularnej [The magical word subjected to technology. Folk magic in the practices of post-soviet popular culture]*, Warszawa: Nomos.
- Grochowski, P. (2013). Folklorysta w sieci. Prolegomena do badań folkloru internetowego [A folklorist in the net. Prolegomena to studies on the Internet folklore]. In: P. Grochowski (Ed.), *Netlor. Wiedza cyfrowych tubylców [Netlore. The Knowledge of Digital Natives]*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, p. 41-64.
- Grzybkowska-Lewicka, D. (2005). Miasto, Magia, M... czyli urban fantasy. Krótka charakterystyka i wątpliwości [A city, Magic, M, that is urban fantasy. A short characteristic and doubts]. In: J. Ługowska (Ed.), *Baśnie nasze współczesne [The Contemporary Fairy tales of Ours]*. Wrocław: PTL, Uniwersytet Wrocławski, p. 277-288.
- Gusiew, W. (1974). *Estetyka folkloru [The Aesthetics of Folklore]*. Transl. T. Zielichowski. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (1980). *Temat śpiącego wojska w folklorze polskim. Próba typologii [The Theme of the Sleeping Army in Polish Folklore. An Essay on Typology]*. Opole: Wyd. WSP.
- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (2007). *Podania kultury masowej [Legends of the mass culture]*. In: M. Jakimowicz, V. Wroblewska (Eds.), *Podania - legenda w tradycji [Legends - the Legend in Tradition]*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, p. 99-115.

- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (2010a). Teoria spiskowa jako gatunek legendy miejskiej [Conspiracy theory as a genre of urban legend]. In: K. Łeńska, M. Sztandara (Eds.) *Zmowa, intryga, spisek. O tajnych układach w strukturze codzienności* [Conspiracy, Intrigue, Plot. About Secret Agreements Within the Everyday Structure]. Opole: Wydawnictwo UO, p. 285–305.
- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (2010b). E-folklor. Rola Internetu w powstawaniu zjawisk folklorystycznych [E-folklore. The role of the Internet in the rise of folklore phenomena]. In: W: P. Francuz, S. Jędrzejewski (Eds.), *Nowe media i komunikowanie wizualne* [The New Media and Visual Communication]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, p. 201–213.
- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (2011). Druga młodość folklorystyki – wprowadzenie do dyskusji [Folklore studies are back in fashion – an introduction into a discussion]. In: J. Hajduk-Nijakowska, T. Smolińska (Eds.), *Nowe konteksty badań folklorystycznych* [The New Contexts of Folklore Studies]. Wrocław: PTL.
- Hajduk-Nijakowska, J. (2012). E-folklor jako subkultura sieci [E-folklore as a subculture of the Net]. In: M. Górka-Olesińska (Ed.), *Liberata, e-literatura i... Remisy, remediacje, redefinicje* [Liberata, E-literature and Draws, Re-mediations, Redefinitions]. Opole: Wyd. UO, p. 205–217.
- Hernas, C. (1976). [głos w dyskusji:] Co to jest język folkloru? [(a voice in the discussion:) What is the language of folklore?]. In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 4/5.
- Howard, R. (2008). Electronic Hybridity: The Persistent Processes of the Vernacular Web. In: *Journal of American Folklore*, 121(480), 192–218.
- Jenkins H. (2007). *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów* [Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide]. Transl. M. Bernatowicz, M. Filiaciak, Warszawa: Wyd. Akademickie i Profesjonalne.
- Kajfosz, J. (2011). Folklor jako tekst w obiegu i jego potencjał konstruowania rzeczywistości [Folklore as a text in circulation and its potential of constructing the reality]. In: J. Hajduk-Nijakowska, T. Smolińska (Eds.), *Nowe konteksty badań folklorystycznych* [The New Contexts of Folklore Studies]. Wrocław: PTL, p. 53–77.
- Kamińska, M. (2011). *Nieczne memy. Dwanaście wykładów o kulturze internetu* [Vile Memes. Twelve Lectures on the Culture of the Internet], Poznań: Wyd. Galeria Miejska Arsenał.
- Kapferer, J.N. (1992). *Fáma – nejstarší médium světa* [Hearsay – the world's oldest medium]. Transl. D. Provazník, Praha.
- Krawczyk-Wasilewska, V. (2003). Po 11 września, czyli folklor polityczny jako wyraz globalnego lęku [After September the 11th, i.e., political folklore as an expression of global fear]. In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 3.
- Krawczyk-Wasilewska V. (2009). E-folklor jako zjawisko kultury digitalnej [E-folklore as a phenomenon of digital culture]. In: G. Garczarczyk, P. Grochowski (Eds.), *Folklor w dobie internetu* [Folklore in the Era of the Internet]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, p. 15–22.
- Kuipers, G. (2002). Media culture and the Internet disaster jokes: Bin Laden and the attack on the World Trade Center. In: *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 5(4), London, 450–470.
- Levinson P. (2010). *Nowe, nowe media* [New New Media], Transl. M. Zawadzka, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.
- Ługowska J. (1986). Teoretyczne podstawy wyodrębnienia gatunków opowieści ludowych [The theoretical foundations of distinguishing genres of folk tales], In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 1.
- Ługowska J. (2002). Tekst a gatunek [The text and the genre]. In: A. Moniecki, V. Wroblewska (Eds.), *Genologia literatury ludowej. Studia folklorystyczne* [The Genre Theory of Folk Literature. Folklore Studies]. Wydawnictwo UMK Toruń, p. 11–19.
- Meder, T. (2001). *Viruspaniek. E-mail-lore van Good Times tot Polleke den Hacker*, [accessed on 27.10.2008 z: <http://www.meertens.nl/medewerkers/theo.meder/viruspaniek.ttml>]
- Nacher A. (2010). Web 2.0: między wikinomią a kontrkulturą – przypadek Facebooka [Web 2.0: between wikinomy and counter-culture – the case of Facebook]. In: A. Ogonowska, Z. Bauer, B. Skowronek (Eds.), *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis* 88, Studia de Cultura I. Kraków, p. 7–19.

- Panczová Z. (2005a). *Konšpiračné teórie na stránkach internetu* [Conspiracy theory on webpages]. In: *Slovenský národopis*, 53(2), 152-170.
- Panczová, Z. (2005b). *Súčasné povesti a fámy vo svetle folkloristických výskumov* [Contemporary tales and hearsay in the light of folklore studies]. In: E. Krekovičová (Ed.), *Folklór a komunikácia v procesoch globalizácie* [Folklore and Communication in Globalization Processes]. Bratislava: SAP, p. 7-66.
- Panczová, Z. (2013). *Humor a strach v poetike súčasných povestí* [Humour and fear in the poetics of contemporary tales]. In: *Slovenský národopis*, 61(2), 142-154.
- Sulima, R. (1976). [głos w dyskusji:] *Co to jest język folkloru?* [(a voice in the discussion:) What is the language of folklore?]. In: *Literatura Ludowa*, 4/5.
- Sulima, R. (2007). *Telefon komórkowy – busola codzienności* [The mobile phone – the compass of the everyday]. In: W. Godzic, M. Żakowski (Eds.), *Gadżety popkultury. Społeczne życie przedmiotów* [Gadgets of Pop Culture. The Social Life of Objects]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, p. 197-214.
- Waliński, M. (1999). *Folklor człowieka zindustrializowanego, czyli czarna wołga jeździ po Polsce* [Folklore of the industrialized man, that is a black Volga is cruising around Poland]. In: Smolińska T. (Ed.), *Folklorystyczne i antropologiczne opisanie świata. Księga ofiarowana profesor Dorocie Simonides* [The Folklore and Anthropological Describing of the World. The Book Dedicated to Professor Dorota Simonides]. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, p. 95-109.
- Wilk, E. (2009). *Wokół kinetycznych i technologicznych aspektów werbalnej komunikacji medialnej* [Around the kinesic and technological aspects of verbal media communication]. In: H. J. Sobeczko, Z. W. Solski (Eds.), *Słowo i gest*. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictwo Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, p.15-25.
- Wilkoszewska, K. (2005). *Wprowadzenie* [Introduction]. In: M. Ostrowicki (Ed.), *Estetyka wirtualności* [The Aesthetics of Virtuality]. Kraków: Universitas, p. 7-10.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JANINA HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA, PhD with a postdoctoral degree, a folklorist, a cultural expert and an associate professor in the Department of Theatre, Film and New Media at the Opole University. She deals with the issues of social memory and popular historical consciousness, folklore genre theory, functioning of folklore in the era of mass and new media, and e-folklore. She has written over 80 papers and theses. She has published the following monographs: *Temat śpiącego wojska w folklorze polskim. Próba typologii* [The Theme of Sleeping Army in the Polish Folklore: An Attempt at a Typology] (1980), *Żywioł i kultura. Folklorystyczne mechanizmy oswajania traumy* [Element and Culture: Folklore Mechanisms of Getting over a Trauma] (2005), a volume entitled *Nie wszystko bajka. Polskie ludowe podania historyczne* [Not Everything Is a Fairy Tale: Polish Folk Historical Tales] (1986). She is a co-author of the following publications *Folklor Górnego Śląska* [Upper Silesian Folklore] (1989), *Księga humoru ludowego* [The Book of Folk Humour] (1981), *Nowe konteksty badań folklorystycznych* [New Contexts of Folklore Studies] (2011), *Praktykowanie tradycji w społeczeństwach posttradycyjnych* [Practising traditions in post-traditional societies] (2014).