Agnieszka Karpowicz*

University of Warsaw

REINCARNATIONS OF THE WORD: MEDIA, GENRES, PRACTICES

Abstract

The text presents the project of study of the multimedia, contemporary verbal environment. It proposes the use of the category of speech genres (Bakhtin). Focusing on the secondary genres (genres of verbal creativity) it justifies the argument that "The word is not dead. It is merely changing its skin" (Dick Higgins), and therefore in the living verbal environment we deal with changing, heterogeneous media of verbal expression that determine, in part, the modes of functioning of particular genres and how they should be described. This paper presents performance, text and hypertext as basic means of functioning of the verbal forms in contemporary culture; means which demand adequate categories of description and research tools in order to avoid textualization of multimedia genres and not to treat them as literature.

Key words: media, speech genres, multimedia genres, practices, performance, text and hypertext

The Word and the snake

"The word is not dead, it is merely changing its skin" (Higgins 1979: 66) – there is probably no better or more accurate response to all kinds of literary discourses of crisis than this one aphorism by Dick Higgins.

Defining modern culture in terms of death of narratives, of the ever approaching waning of stories and books, of the agony of verbal forms, or of painful, fatal convulsions of the verbal art which is being forced out

^{*} Faculty of Polish Studies, Univeristy of Warsaw, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw, e-mail: a.karpowicz@uw.edu.pl

by the havoc wrought by visual culture, audiovisual communication and other forms produced by the domination of the new media, resembles attempts to describe a living communicative environment and a dynamic, flexible and changeable media context with its emerging forms undertaken by someone, who has never taken the risk of actually immersing themselves in this sphere.

Meanwhile merely looking up from the book – in a manner quite different from what Roland Barthes proposed when trying to "star" the text and split its meanings from the inside, and from Umberto Eco who suggested readers should now go to libraries and study encyclopedias – is enough to hear the rumbling modernity, which hardly ever has its mouth shut, and to see the plethora of words that weave into both the everyday and the extraordinary. It is easy to notice then that the contemporary culture is shaped by, among other things, the verbal forms born from individuals' functioning in all kinds of spheres of linguistic activity. Moreover, most of these spheres are impossible without words: without recounting, saying or writing something.

We will then see a vision of a multimedia culture which is changeable, but in which we do not constantly stumble over cadavers of forms that have been exhausted, and over tomb portraits of void, if once noble genres, but rather we will be stunned, dazed and clamored down by the ever emerging new forms: personal webpages go out of fashion immediately and are replaced by social media profiles; slams compete not only with books of poetry but with competitive freestyle; the new media give rise to tweets and hypertextual novels; instead of daily aphorisms we have memes; stories on art of cooking and food history are listened to with bated breath and recipes published in album form cookbooks are page-turners comparable with best novels; advertisement becomes art and its creators play with words just as the most sophisticated linguistic poets did; RPG and MUD players not only read novels that are the basis for their games, but they also tell and write their own stories, while film adaptations of the classic youth literature lead to publishing booms, which are easy to spot in any contemporary bookstore.

All these creative verbal activities of those participating in culture most certainly prove that the word and linguistic expression do not disappear with the growth of the audiovisual and the multimedia, but they are displaced, they find new areas and nest in new media. Consequently, they also change status and aesthetic form. Therefore they require description and judgment, which are different than the ones worked out for effects, artifacts, frozen works. Accidentally, the same applies to contemporary

visual art, which can hardly by properly understood from the perspective of the traditionally sanctioned art history.

In other words: the modes of description, categories and tools for analyzing verbal expression, which have been formed within the perimeter of the print culture, well adapted to study the products and phenomena typical of a typographic culture, will not necessarily apply when surveying and describing a post-typographic culture. Categories such as "text" and "literariness" are not objective, eternal, innocent and ahistorical, but are in fact modes of understanding a linguistic reality closely bound with the typographic culture. At a certain point it led to the emergence of the structuralist textualization of language, within which language is treated as a set of arbitrary linguistic signs. Another consequence was the semiotic textualization of almost the entire human cultural space, through, among other things, the significant and enduring tendency to apply the word "text" to phenomena such as image, gesture, body or space, which after all are not texts in any strict sense.

It seems that the light, effective metaphor employed in Higgins's aphorism is filled by contemporary, multimedia, heterogeneous communicative environment with a particularly concrete and consequential meaning. The phrase "changing its skin" presents the word as a living being, as a nourishing body covered with skin, and thus produces an association with an organism occupying a certain environment, and benefitting from its exterior through a double osmosis of sorts. The metaphor links the word with a snake, which constantly reemerges in a new form, after a period of molting which might seem to be a painful and degrading decay.

The word does indeed – as a flexible, fast, supple and cunning snake – squeeze in everywhere, and in the moments that we tend to perceive as its death all too eagerly, it is in fact shedding its skin, only to be reborn in a new form. As in a snake dance, the word reacts seamlessly to the snake charmer's music, that is to external impulses, movements and trembles of the cultural and media reality, it takes up various forms while interacting with its living, active tissue. If we do not treat the word as referring to reality, but as a form of doing something in it, as communicative being and being together (Godlewski 2003; Karpowicz 2003), we will see that the verbal forms are irremovable and inalienable products of acting in the world, being in it, while the world itself changes.

If there were no urban space with its walls, subway stations, commuter rail and advertising columns, why would anyone create graffiti or sticker art – and what would it look like? If there were no city club culture, for whom, where and what for would slams be organized and created?

Similarly, if there were no Internet, there would be no blogs, just as back in a day there would not have emerged anything like the novel and its legions of readers, if not for the printing press (Watt 1959). That is not to say that the new media and their materiality determine human verbal expression, but that they produce new space, they give rise to varying fields which – as the example of the Internet shows – we immediately want to take over, use in a creative manner, discuss, sometimes talk even them down, either with the forms and uses of language which we are already familiar with, or by transgressing them and producing new forms which sneak in, in a snake's manner, into fissures and empty spaces offered by the new media.

While immersing in the contemporary communicative environment, it is easy to move from one extreme to another and be overwhelmed by the richness of "literature", by the "textual" activity of those participating in culture; and to see – in this plethora of heterogeneous verbal forms – merely texts, a little different, but still texts, slightly deviating from the literary norm. Enough to announce, against critics and grumblers, that "literature is not yet dead!"

One can take precautions against falling into this trap by noticing, for example, that blogs, co-functioning in the net with commentaries and forum posts, only resemble traditional diaries very superficially, that popular novels listened to as audiobooks can hardly be called page-turners anymore, and that slams which please the enthusiastic crowds and the freestyle battles which keep up the tradition of masterly improvisations cannot really be identified with books of poetry. Hyper-textual novel can only be seamlessly turned into a printed book in its most limited versions, and its structure is not identical even with the postmodernist literary "model kits" created by authors who only had a vague dream of a hyper-textual utopia. The very textual, even literate character of these forms seems very problematic, or at least unobvious, not to mention their "literary" qualities.

If one looks closely at these practices, it turns out each of these products of expression can, if the need be, be recorded as a text. Is this, however, the same as saying the participants of culture produce texts and deal with them, and so do the audiences of freestyle battles or those who habitually visit their favorite logovisual blogs every day? Is their experience really analogous to communication based on text? Does a printed blog immediately become a diary, or does a hypertextual novel turn into a novel then? Does writing down the rhymes of freestyle produce simply textual verses and poems? The answer to all these questions is inevitably negative, so

perhaps this means also that reducing living signs of contemporary verbal art to the category of writing, creating literature and texts is not entirely justified.

The word's skin and the text

The skin that the word is changing is then a cover, a shape it takes in order to continue functioning in the living, changeable communicative environment. This metaphor allows us to imagine all the media in which historically and synchronically various verbal forms have emerged, all connected with the members of a culture's creative expressions present in any medium: from orality, through writing and print, to the audiovisual and multimedia (Mencwel 2006: 57–58).

It seems that in order to describe and understand such a dense and varied communicative environment it will be essential to give up applying the category of "literariness" as it is tantamount in fact to textualization. Otherwise we take away the cultural specificity of these new genres. The aim is then to adapt the analytic tool and the language of description to the mode of being represented by verbal expression in contemporary culture, so that it is studied through the emerging forms as a creative, active environment, far from being in crisis or exhausted.

Some of these verbal forms – such as forum posts or urban poetry written on walls - can only take up the textual form as secondary, while they are primarily "literacy events" (Frankel 2010) or chirographic actions rather than autonomous, closed, static texts as defined by Walter J. Ong (Ong 2013). Other forms – such as slam and freestyle – are characterized by performance, which is defined by Richard Bauman as a form of verbal art which exist in fact only in doing, and is a way of speaking irreducible to text or even to a verbal enunciation because they are verbomotor, spectacular, immersed in situational context and emerging in interaction (Bauman 1975). It is not simply a speech act, more or less performative or fortuitous, however understood; it is not a communicative "enactment" of something prepared in advance, but a very particular type of enunciation closely knit with the particular medium of the word that is orality – primary orality, or the one taken up by the media based on some form of record (analogue or digital). Therefore the individual mode of being rooted in the inextricable medium context is crucial when defining the verbal forms we encounter in the contemporary media environment.

Performance is bound with oral expression, manuscript is a form typical of chirography, text is inextricably bound with the typographic culture, and hypertext, projects of which were being prepared already in the typographic culture, only reached its full development and gave rise to new forms in the new media environment. All these modes of being dependent on the media cannot be ignored when describing audiovisual forms. The last mode of being I have listed is the situation in which there is no coherent founding medium. This is the case of the audiovisual genres which are close to orality (the audio component), typography (visuality and textuality), or they remain very specific in their audiovisuality combining both elements. Even a manuscript cannot be completely innocently translated into a textual form; a diary, written for personal purposes – even if the author considers the option of future publication (Rodak 2011) - is different from a clear, transparent and sterile printed text. Moreover, the type of writing is important here, which, for examples, makes a genre such as haiku possible only in a culture using ideographic writing. Every effort to translate such works into a different environment requires splitting word and image or leaving the original form next to the one written in the alphabet. Of course, this is an extreme case, but it brings to the fore the importance of something as seemingly trivial as the types of medium: ideographic and alphabetic writing. It shows that such translation is never innocent. To use an example closer to our cultural context, we can understand this difference by realizing how it is impossible to translate urban tags into a text - and how this means they cannot be conceptualized through this category, even though they remain verbal enunciations.

The emergence of the new media and the ensuing category of hypertext requires redefining the very notion of text, which the term "hypertext" contains and thus forces us to notice not so much the analogies, but the differences, which are so important and meaningful for the analysis:

Hypertext is [...] an intertext not only in its content and genre (as it is in case of relations described by Barthes and Bakhtin), but also in its construction. Hypertext's intertextuality is not potential, it is inextricable from it. Hypertextuality is also connected with interactivity, which assumes that the reader is an active subject, whose actions shape the reading (Rogozińska, Szewczyk 2014).

Text on the other hand is a closed message, decontextualized, linear, and independent from the author who is a potential reader of his or her own enunciation. It detaches verbal expression from do living, interactive "here and now" in which the message is born:

Printed texts look machine-made, as they are. Chirographic control of space tends to be ornamental, ornate, as in calligraphy. Typographic control typically impresses more by its tidiness and its inevitability: the lines perfectly regular, all justified on the right side, everything coming out even visually, and without the aid of the guidelines or ruled borders that often occur in manuscripts. This is an insistent world of cold, non-human, facts (Ong 2013: 120).

Such view of the specificity of print as a medium of the word corresponds only to a limited section of linguistic reality of the typographic environment. Mechanicalness and desubjectification of a printed message, detached from human voice, and even of human hand, is unquestionable, but this is merely a model, ideal or dominating mode of typography, which best describes literature closed in a book. It seems that even in the case of typography, seen as one of the constantly changing snake incarnations of the word, looking in between the covers of a book is not a good starting point to understand cultural functioning of any form of verbal expression, and certainly not of the entire communicative environment of contemporary culture.

A linear text is merely one of the possible models here, and precision of definition is crucial, if we do not want to drown the specificity of blogs, forum posts, all kinds of urban "scribbles" and tweets in the textual universe which allegedly takes over the participants of culture: those who act, speak, write and type; if we do not want to trap them in a semiotic net of abstract signs. Seeing the specificity of the medium, in which a given content functions, is necessary, if we do not want to flatten the live performances and online activities, which achieve a similar level of immediacy, performativity and directness as the one characteristic of oral communication - even if it is mediated through writing - and if we do not want reduce it to dead letters of a text. Ultimately, and perhaps paradoxically, such approach will allow us to save the literature itself – the unique and original expression of the print culture and one of utmost achievements of a social formation identical with typographic formation – in the discursive universe, in the stream of chatter, twaddle and everyday communication which is necessary to act effectively in the world and simply to be in it; if it is important to us that we see in this undifferentiated linguistic world the difference between the novels of Dostoyevsky or Kafka and blog posts, the products of e-poetry generators, or even writing love poems in emails - and this is not a matter of difference in quality or artistic merit. These simply are not identical forms of expressions, and threating them all as "texts" or literary forms inevitably implies such identical character.

Even within the typographic culture textuality of some enunciations is troublesome, if we are willing to accept Ong's very narrow understanding of text. Sometimes they cannot be reduced to invisible, ephemeral particles, which serve merely (and solely) as carriers of content. The font is a visual phenomenon, it is visible and seen, even though its ideal type, belonging to Ong's concept of printed text, seems so transparent that it is almost invisible. However, logovisual genres, which are typical of the print medium, transgress this ideal type and hence undermine its textual character. Hence typographic forms go beyond such textuality, which is sometimes done on purpose, as in avant-garde experiments, and sometimes through taking over or mocking official writings and regular lines of majestic letters on city plaques and billboards, as is the case with graffiti and stickers. Text is related to the cultural function of legibility and lucidity of the typographic message, in which the visual is not brought to the fore. This type of visuality is characteristic of texts in the strict sense (meaning closed wholes, usually in form of books), and of textual variants of official writings, announcements, bills, printed law, as well as all sorts of signs prohibiting or enforcing something. This transparency has a cultural function too, for example it brings out the arbitrariness and the authoritative qualities of a message; its being machine-made and its mechanicalness contribute to the power, gravity and strength of what is being communicated through desubjectification: it emphasizes objectivity, universality, inviolability and indisputability. A second type of text's visuality includes signboards, posters, comic books, ads, postcards, magazines, but also visual poetry (with its transmedia and historical forms, among which lettrism and concrete poetry are purely typographic). Clearly, even printed words do not necessarily fulfill the potential of text in its full.

Moreover, as Marshall McLuhan strived to show, reading and seeing are not two separate functions of our minds: "The interiorization of the technology of phonetic alphabet translates man from the magical world of the ear to the neutral visual world" (McLuhan 2011: 21). McLuhan claimed that it is the invention of print that contributed to the hegemony of eye-centeredness and the visual perception throughout the 20th century. From that point of view reading is the beginning of a process of visual conquest, and of copying and popularizing knowledge and it leads to the domination of seeing the word rather than hearing it:

When words are written, they become, of course, parts of the visual world. Like most of the elements of the visual world, they become static things and loose, as such, the dynamism which is so characteristic of the auditory world in general, and of the spoken word in particular. [...] Thus, in general, words, by becoming visible, join a world of relative indifference to the viewer – a world from which the magic "power" of the word has been abstracted (McLuhan 2011: 23).

McLuhan shows the knot that ties the written word with image, referring to the mental level of perception, which means it is print that gives rise to the contemporary visual culture and it contributes to the shift from the auditory to the visual (and still verbal) mode of being in the world. From that perspective, it is difficult to understand why the growing importance of videocentrism should in any way pose a threat to the print culture and typographic cultural formation, rather than is simply its consequence.

Robert Bringhurst tried to convince his students who designed typography that printed letters should be a visual response to invisible ideas and thus chirography – "the dance of the living hand" (Bringhurst 2004: 11) – always remains the heartwood of typography. In doing so he compared the new devices, technologies and media of the written word to new leaves growing out of the branches every year. There can be new media and new technologies almost every year. A snake changes its skin cyclically, too. In both cases, however, these are situations not of waning, dying, but of changing shape and of verbally inhabiting ever-new areas, media and fields of social, communicative and creative action.

Of course, old forms are not immediately pushed out, they do not disappear. They are simply subjected to rules of remediation (Bolter, Grusin 1999; Bolter 2001), they can receive a secondary textual form, as was the case with myths, songs, epics in the typographic culture, to use the more archaic examples, which show that the process discussed here is not a unique, contemporary phenomenon of pressure from the new media. In the typographic and posttypographic cultures there are still niches of orality, constituted by various genres, which cannot be fully described apart from their roots in the oral medium, which is best illustrated today by phenomena such as freestyle, slam or a concert. There are also genres which would never have appeared or would never have acquired their current shape if it was not for the processes of change in the media. Other genres receive their second – and longer – life due to the new media (e.g. novel). If the word did not change its skin, it could certainly die out, because the skin needs to be thin, sensitive and flexible enough to allow for communication and interpersonal exchange.

A snake with hands and genres of verbal creativity

In the Chinese tradition there is a parable about painting a snake with hands. A rich man decided once to offer one bottle of alcohol to his guests. It would go the person who would paint a snake on the floor the fastest and the best. When the first of the contenders finished, he saw he still had enough time and decided to add hands to his snake. And so he did. As can be imagined, he did not win the competition and never had the chance to enjoy the bottle.

Painting snakes with hands resembles operations such as analyzing freestyle or blogs in textual categories, and describing rhyme, rhythm and language games as if live performance was nothing but a meaningless bonus to the words and their content. The very act of classification, when we call a comic book or a blog "literature", endows these forms with qualities and functions they do not have in our culture at all. It is similarly misguided to claim that, let us say, oral cultures have their "literature" in form of myths or songs, except it is "oral literature". This retroactive textualization has its counterpart in the tendency to call hip hop or comic books "popular literature", or to call freestyling producing "an oral text", or to say that webpages are full of "texts" and "literature" only because what we see on the computer screen are letters.

The parable about painting a snake with hands warns against such attitude and it also shows that while trying to achieve a goal and be first, one must still be sensible and take into consideration the goal itself. Therefore the first condition is to diversify the language of description, to go beyond the textual limitations, so that finding orientation in this dense media environment does not imply reducing everything to a text, which is only one of the forms verbal creativity can take.

All these phenomena – which I have so far called forms or verbal expressions – can actually be named genres of verbal creativity (Karpowicz 2013), alluding – and not accidentally at all – to the thought of Mikhail Bakhtin, or at least to its part which is particularly concerned with "verbal creativity" and the notions of primary and secondary "speech genres" (Bakhtin 1986). Most broadly speaking, the idea is to use the redefined and elaborated Bakhtinian category to study genres of linguistic forms which function in the multimedia environment of contemporary culture. Without going into detail and contexts of the concept here, the choice can be justified by recalling that the speech genres have already been used for analogous goals on numerous occasions by linguistic anthropologists, eth-

nographers and other scholars trying to analyze the social environments through their verbal productions. However, their research was conducted not in their own cultures but on territories distant in time and space. One of such scholars, William F. Hanks, studies the Maya culture, combining the speech genres with Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*. He writes:

[...] speech genres are seen as both the outcome of historically specific acts, and themselves among the constituting dimensions in terms of which action is possible. Genres then, as kinds of discourse, derive their thematic organization from the interplay between systems of social value, linguistic convention, and the world portrayed. They derive their practical reality from their relation to particular linguistic acts, of which they are both the products and the primary resources (Hanks 1987: 671).

Other scholars pointed to a similar possibility of operationalizing this category, including Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, who showed how it can be applied to oral cultures and folklore, which can be an additional valuable suggestion, when we want to describe genres related to urban folklore or the ones we are dealing with on the internet (Rogozińska, Szewczyk 2014):

[...] the concept of genre (with or without the label) has played a role in linguistic anthropology since at least the time of Boas. Generic classifications helped set the agenda for research on Native American languages. The study of genre was later boosted by ethnoscience, structuralism, the ethnography of speaking, and the performance-centered approach to verbal art. The recent popularity of Bakhtin's translinguistics and new perspectives on emotion and gender have similarly accorded new cachet to generic investigation (Bauman, Briggs 2009: 214).

It is a matter of just such anthropologically oriented understanding of speech genres. These scholars have also been inspired by Bakhtin's distinction between two basic types of speech genres: primary genres and secondary genres, which, too, can be operationalized for the sake of studying contemporary communicative environment and the emerging specific, heterogeneous forms rooted in the media.

It seems that listing all speech genres in all media known to the contemporary culture would have been an impossible task and it would be in vain. Their changeability, the fact that new forms emerge incredibly fast, could lead either to a failure of research and a conclusion that the environment is limitless and indescribable, or – which would almost constitute a failure too – to describing them all, despite their diversity and the heterogeneous character of contemporary media, as "literature-like",

or as varieties of text, or simply as normal, democratized, common and less institutionalized continuations of existing genres. However, there is a solution to this double deadlock.

Accepting that it is impossible to list all genres, so that each of them separately fulfills the criteria and categories of description, and admitting from the start to a failure in trying to keep the description up to date with the everyday growth and overgrowth of new forms of communication, it is in fact enough to focus on secondary genres, the definition of which, however, ought to be transformed from the original Bakhtinian inspiration. A primary (simple, originary) genre can be seen as one that does not absorb other primary genres and does not modify them. It is usually reduced to one function; its role is limited to a functional situational context, because its sole task is doing something in the social reality. Genres with a direct communicative function serve as examples here: their aim is to communicate something or to make one remember something, and they can be found both in oral communication and in the medium of writing, e.g. shopping list made before heading to a grocery store or a prescription given by a doctor which is a means of fulfilling a certain type of action. Such forms do not require any transgression of algorithm, even if it might happen due to individual intentions. However, breaking the convention can make fulfilling the action difficult or impossible, thus neutralizing its fortuitousness in the particular area. It is enough to imagine a prescription written in verse or in a form of concrete poetry, or as an elaborate first person narrative.

Secondary genres, to which the category of genres of verbal creativity applies, are rooted in the cultural context too and cannot be separated from it, especially as they are made of primary genres, directly linked to social situations of communication. Secondary genre is a complex form, absorbing at least one primary (simple) genre, transforming and modifying it. In that sense a genre of verbal creativity is a multifunctional whole which cannot be reduced to one role played in the functional context of a given situation. For example, a shopping list is not a secondary genre, even if it can be written in verse, because the individual intentions behind the use of a given genre of verbal creativity do not qualify as generic features. It would be a simple written genre, which can be absorbed by a different verbal form and hence constitute a multifunctional, complex whole, which becomes a secondary genre and transforms its aims and functioning, as is the case of one of the poems by Stanisław Barańczak. Similarly, phone text messaging has been absorbed, producing the complex form of tweets, which perform multiple functions (from self-promotion and self-presentation to spreading gossip or commenting on events to produce a positive

image of oneself, or even to serving as aphorisms) and cannot be reduced to the primary function of conveying a message or simply informing.

Looking for genres of verbal creativity in media other than print is never simply about finding equivalents of literature or genres that have similar features or functions. The important reformulation of literary and theoretical text-centered perspectives lies in renouncing the tendency to treat literature as the model of all verbal creativity and replacing it with the approach that sees literature as only one of the possibilities, rooted in the particular medium. A literary work does not have any necessary features (such as language patterns, or narration), which would be an argument for treating all other genres of verbal creativity, rooted in other media, as secondary to it. It is also not about searching for secondary genres that can be described as literary or artistic. The notion of secondary genres as genres of creativity is an alternative to the categories mentioned above, as they are too closely bound with the definition of literature and literariness based on formal criteria, on criteria related to the interior organization of text, or on distinction (sometimes undermined in literature) between fiction and fact. All these categories are products of the humanities focused on texts and having sources in them.

Any attempts to distinguish and clearly classify genres of verbal creativity in this dense environment require reflection on how they are related to literature and text. The aim is not to find marginal genres, which could be labeled as "literature" - such approach only superficially ennobles other genres (which thus receive the status of verbal art), while in fact it degrades them, depriving them of their media or cultural specificity, as is the case when we call a song or a comic book "popular literature". In the first case it is an act of textualization, which reduces the genre to the text of the lyrics, which can very well be of minor importance or in fact have no meaning, as the sang words themselves have none. In the second case it is all too easy to ignore the logovisual character of the genre, while focusing on its narrative, treating it merely as a "story"; not to mention that the word "popular" carries a pejorative meaning, despite years of efforts to show the value this area of creativity. It is clear that such approach – and such a net of categories serving as a tool to grasp and describe various forms of creative verbal activity - would disfigure the research and the collected facts, would impoverish them, blurring their specificity and depriving them of it. Genres' mode of functioning is dependent on their medium. Particular works fulfill certain potential of the medium, to which the genre belongs, even though ultimately the medium does not determine their form and the limitations of the medium can be overcome. Attempts at designing a hypertextual novel before the real hypertext came to being, undertaken by, among others, authors of postmodern and experimental prose, are a point in case. In any media environment – due in part to the creative acts and practices of those participating in culture – there are both standardized primary genres serving the purposes of direct communication, and secondary genres, rooted in the media context, usually not simply fulfilling its potential, but actually transgressing it, going beyond the features and limitations of a particular medium of the word. Moreover, literature has a special place in this process, as it is often one of the most accurate and alert detectors of changes in the communicative environment, frequently the first to detect shifting thresholds of the logosphere (Rutkowski 1987), and it has a special social position as an independent, autonomous (artistic) sphere, which produces utopias and projects of future media environments, as was the case with the avant-garde and postmodern literature, bored to death with text and the abstraction of the word reduced to letters.

Apart from everything else, the media-centered perspective makes it clear that what is usually treated as literature, was not always literature (myth, epic), and is not always literature today (song, lullaby, radio play, blog). It also allows us to understand that such alleged deaths and crises of the word, narrative, text or language, that one hears about nowadays in context of the new media, have occurred in abundance throughout the history of culture, but none of them turned out to be a real agony: neither when writing "killed" the spoken word, nor when the printing press "wrought havoc" in the high art of the noble word and the lithography democratized both words and art, nor when TV soap-operas were giving the "fatal blow" to novels and stories. All these cyclical "deaths", "falls" and "wanings" do is they are a testimony to the fact, that the snake does indeed regularly change its media skin for a new one; that even today the repetitive process of remediation-reincarnation is underway; that: "the word is not dead, it is merely changing its skin".

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