



Genres of Journalism Revisited

RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2019. 305 p.
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Ján Višňovský

Despite the fact that Slovak linguistics and theories of journalism currently work with a rather complex body of theoretical and empirical knowledge on genres, the topic of media genres is still 'alive', demanding a considerable amount of attention even in the era of digital media. There are several reasons why it is so; many renowned foreign and domestic theorists specialising in genres, as well as media experts and professionals claim that hybridisation has become the most prominent trend in the development of genres and their theoretical frameworks. In today's media, whether we talk about the press, radio, television or the Internet, it is hard or even impossible to identify pure genre forms. However, this is hardly surprising, since pure genre forms have transformed significantly. The situation is also influenced by various media trends such as multiplatform publishing, media convergence and, last but not least, the ongoing efforts to engage the recipient's attention, which is the basic attribute of advertising and its effectiveness.

On the other hand, genres also evolve in various 'natural' ways, turning into syncretic forms or diverse hybrids. This tendency is highly important in relation to the sector of online journalism. News and opinions published on the Internet are far less reliant on the text, since the core information is usually offered by photographs, videos or other visual elements. Podcasts are becoming more and more commercially important, and that is why practically all newsrooms operated by nationwide or international media organisations create their own audio contents. Even though they once were used rather sporadically, the latest information and communication technologies have become a part of standard journalistic practices, influencing both journalism as such and its preferred genres. The phenomenon of "citizen journalism" now involves various forms of common people's participation in media content creation – including their eye-witnessed contributions and personal recordings. And there are only a few of the development trends discussed in the reviewed publication.

By publishing the university textbook *Žurnalistické žánre* (in English *Journalistic Genres*), Terézia Rončáková has expanded her 2011 work of the same title. The 2019 reedition has been revised quite significantly, now including results of the author's long-term research on genres preferred by various types of media (the press, radio, television, the Internet). However, her attention is still centred on the press. While acknowledging the 'traditional' and generally accepted dichotomy of genre categories (news and rational or emotional opinions), the author focuses on the currently evolving journalistic genres. The theoretical frameworks, remarks and findings included in the chapter titled *Contemporary Journalistic Genres* (p. 141 – 198) aspire to reassess the aforementioned 'traditional' classification of genre forms. A couple of years ago, many of the defined genres did not even exist. The author explains: "*The dynamic evolution of print journalistic production is demanding new genre forms; in the case of Slovakia, this development trend has been obvious since 1989, i.e. after the fall of the totalitarian communist regime and the rise of the free market that followed shortly afterwards.*"¹ We also have to mention foreign formats adapted to our media environment, often called by their original (English) names. The author defines three genre categories that appear in most magazines – short-formats, long-formats and lifestyle formats. However, these genre groups are subject to hybridisation

1 RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2019, p. 141.

as their genre-defining criteria (i.e. formal elements, composition-related characteristics and language-based frameworks) often merge, lacking any clearly defined boundaries. Other remarkable trends shaping contemporary journalistic genres are sensational elements and traits of subjectivity marked by the frequent appearance of statements and opinions expressed by journalists (e.g. "I think", "I cannot wait", etc.).² By doing so, journalists strive to strengthen the interaction with their readers, deliberately reducing their own professional objectivity.

As for the publication's structure, it consists of 305 numbered pages and is divided into nine chapters. The arrangement of topics is influenced by the primary (educational) function of the text, which summarises the available knowledge on journalistic genres. The introductory pages aim to outline the most important terms such as "style", "composition", "genre" or "format". The basic theoretical framework is followed by thorough notes on the development of genres from the historical perspective – in Slovakia and abroad. The most up-to-date feature (and thus highly remarkable benefit) of the text lies in its obvious emphasis on current trends. Today, when the existing genre boundaries are disappearing and genres are merging, the author comments on the hybridisation processes and uses a lot of fitting examples spotted in lifestyle magazines. Her publication is very complex, because she, in contrast with many other theorists, does not limit her thinking to the press. Genres in the electronic and digital media are discussed as well, although to a lesser extent. Slovak readers will most definitely welcome a thorough overview of foreign genre studies (i.e. knowledge on the issue originating in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, etc.). The publication includes two annexes. The first one offers an alphabetically ordered list of linguists, literary critics, writers and journalists mentioned in the text. The second one is based on a list of the most popular rhetorical figures and tropes.

The obvious educational character of the textbook is demonstrated by its structure and composition, but also by presence of various summaries, numerous practical examples referring to Slovak media and systematic partial conclusions following each chapter. We may state that the text is thorough and comprehensible, based on a wide spectrum of available theoretical outlines. As we have mentioned above, the author's ambition is to reflect on the current situation, new trends in the genre development and the related production aspects. The linguistic and journalistic aspects of the topic may dominate the author's line of thinking, but another plus is that the issues in question are placed in proper social and historical contexts, which may be seen as undeniable added value. University students specialising in journalism, media and communication studies, marketing communication, applied media studies or similar study programmes can acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical information based on relevant examples. The publication is thus a valuable addition to the existing set of educational materials on the theory and practice of journalistic genres or similarly oriented courses of study. We may also presume that the textbook will find its readers amongst interested scholarly circles and media professionals.

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ján Višňovský; PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic

2 RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2019, p. 142-143.



A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands. Platforms, Policies, Technologies

Huisman, S., van Mechelen, M. (eds.): *A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands. Platforms, Policies, Technologies*. Prinsengeb.: JAP SAM Books, 2019. 367 p. ISBN 978-94-92852-14-4.

Tabea Lurk

In November 2019, the Dutch publishing house *JAP SAM Books* released the anthology *A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands. Platforms, Policies, Technologies*, edited by Sanneke Huisman and Marga van Mechelen. The 380-page publication brings together 19 essays by 24 authors who describe the artworks and activities of almost 900 artists, collectives, actors, institutions and festivals that have been crucially important for media art in the Netherlands since the mid-1980s. The richly illustrated compendium presents a comprehensive, carefully researched and very readable overview of the Dutch media art scene of the time. The kaleidoscopic view brings together the different perspectives and historical developments in a carefully structured way, thus providing a vivid insight.

Significantly, the multi-layered publication *A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands. Platforms, Policies, Technologies* sets its starting point in 1985. In November of the same year, David Garcia, Raúl Marroquín et al. realised the legendary festival “Talking Back to the Media” (TBTTM) in Amsterdam.¹ It takes up precisely those ‘platforms’, i.e. galleries and off-spaces, theatres, public and telematic spaces, which are particularly important to the editors alongside policies and changes in media technology. Accordingly, Sanneke Huisman and Marga van Mechelen explain: “*The event uses and responds to the Amsterdam cable network. It also includes street posters, radio broadcasts, film nights, debates, lectures and exhibitions in the medium and small-sized venues in Amsterdam*” (Part I, p. 65). Angela M. Bartholomew describes the artistic contributions to TBTTM and their effect when writing about *Television’s Feedback Loop: Talking Back to the Media (1985) and the Stedelijk Museum on TV* (Part IV.1), while Sven Lütticken highlights historical contexts in *Talking Back and Looking Ahead: Talking Back to the Media and Genealogies of Critical Media Art* (Part VI.3). In doing so, he looks beyond the Netherlands.

By occupying and playing with public social fields, TBTTM not only anticipates what Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer (Part VI.2) formulate as a strategic question of net art: “*How can user-generated content transcend the individualized level of the remixing citizen who reappropriates culture, and how can we make sense of it as a co-created but still coherent artwork?*” (Part VI.2, p. 337) But it also shows the tension between the public and the private, which Sandra Fauconnier establishes in a media archaeological manner when focusing on the surface of mobile devices in *Between the Cracks: Art for Personal Digital Screens in the Netherlands* (Part IV.4).

With 1985 and TBTTM, *A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands* alludes to the fruitful interplay between personal, artistic commitment, institutional early adopters and the structure and culture of state funding. Often described as specific to the Netherlands of that time, Josephine Bosma echoes this phenomena when commenting on Constant Dullaart’s much later net-artistic activities by stating: “*Like pirate media have done through their radical accessibility, art funding makes room for a freedom of creation and experimentation*

¹ The festival was organised by the group of the same name, *Artists Talking Back to the Media*, which included Raul Marroquin, David Garcia, Rob Perée, Max Bruinsma, Ulises Carrion, Aart van Barneveld, Sabrina Kamstra and Sebastian Lopez (See: LIMA: *Artists Talking Back to The Media 1985 – 2015*. [online]. [2020-02-26]. Available at: <<https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/news/artists-talking-back-media-1985-2015>>).

that, especially in combination with the Internet, allows for a near anti-institutional attitude” (Part VI.1, p. 253).² Even if the changing nature of funding policy has led to the rise and fall of various institutions and festivals that exhibit, produce or preserve media art (Part I and Part II), the carefully researched contributions in the anthology show that the Netherlands has become the meeting place and hub of a broadly networked and international community at very different levels during this period: “*a vivid counter-cultural environment and a cosmopolitan artistic and intellectual scene, [in which] the Netherlands hold a unique position in regards to the development of media art*” (Editors’ Statement).³

The extensive spectrum ranges from (early) video art (Marga van Mechelen – Part III.1, Suzanne Wallinga – Part III.2, Domeniek Ruyter’s Part III.3) to computer graphics (Darko Fritz in Part II.1), and from CD-ROMs and (interactive) computer games, from computer-based to net art forms (Josephine Bosma, Part IV.2). It considers object-based single-channel works as well as complex installations, performances, collaborative settings and interventions in (semi-) public spaces, which continually soften or shift the boundaries of art. While Marina Turco specifically emphasises the hovering of VJing cultures on the border to mass culture (Part V.2), Martijn van Boven with *Live Cinema* catches the expansionist tendency and leads it back to more artistically connoted fields (Part V.3). Furthermore, scientific settings from the context of artistic research in the broader sense find their place, as Arie Altena illustrates in his own way with *Research in Technological Art at V2_* (Part II.4), David Garcia with *The Strange Persistence of Tactical Media* (Part IV.2) and Anne Nigten with *Robotics in a Technology-Based Society* (Part V.1). All these contributions lead into a ‘Now’ that reaches up to the present day of the publication in 2018 and is written from a current point of view.

What the editors’ essay alludes to when it briefly and systematically introduces the rich types of artistic articulation and players is then continued in the other texts: although they focus on their own specific themes, they also highlight points of contact with their surroundings, as in the contributions to important institutions such as STEIM (*Evolution Towards a Network Lab*, Dick Rijken, Part II.2), the V2_ (see above), the *Sonic Acts and the Changing Role of Festivals* (Arie Altena, Lucas van der Velden, Part II.5). Staying with the institutions, the changing establishments and alliances are to be mentioned, that have been involved in the preservation of media art since December 1992, at that time in MonteVideo / TBA (Time Based Arts, Amsterdam), as Gaby Wijers (Part II.3) precisely explains.

A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands contains many illustrations that document both individual works and their embedding in exhibition contexts. Thus, the publication functions as a compendium, which as a whole fulfils clear documentary requirements and is extraordinarily valuable for artistic, scientific and possibly even strategic interests (e.g. regarding funding and its benefit). Works, exhibitions and (institutional) contexts are sometimes named systematically in a dense sequence and references are touched upon without being subject to interpretation. The discipline of brevity, the structural design in six parts and the balance of many different ways of looking at things make it easy to forget the closed nature of the printed book. Rather, the anthology becomes a thoroughly and critically commented reference work which, while offering a wide range of suggestions for further research and investigation, first collects facts and contextualises them and thus secures them for the future. The anthology does exactly what the title promises: it spans light-footedly, but on a high qualitative level, *A Critical History of Media Art in the Netherlands*.

Dr. Tabea Lurk, Academy of Art and Design, The University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, Freilager-Platz 1, 4142 Münchenstein, Switzerland

² Remark by author: Funding policy is also addressed in an interview with Melanie Bühler (*Lucky to Be Part of It*, Part VI.1, p. 316-325), which she conducted with Katja Novitskova, Jan Robert Leege and Karen Archey, and was later enriched with Dullaart’s comments.

³ Remark by author: Sanneke Huisman, Marga van Mechelen, Blurb.



In What Society Do We Actually Live?

KELLER, J.: *Společnost věčného mládí (Society of Eternal Youth)*. Prague : SLO (Sociological Publisher), 2020. 260 p. ISBN 978-80-7419-286-9.

Dušan Pavlů

In the history of the development of human society the leading spirits often asked pressing questions examining the characteristics, structure, profiling and fundamental direction of our society. They needed to know the precise diagnosis of the time and possible developmental trends because such knowledge was the basis for their political, managerial, economic, cultural, personnel, communication and other strategic decisions supposed to form the desirable directions of social and societal development. Just like our predecessors, we ask the same question and look for a relevant answer: *What society do we actually live in now? What future awaits us and how we can form it?*

Sociologists, political scientists, economists, psychologists and journalists are all trying to find the answer to the same question at a level of general analysis, and those following up on their findings at more specific functional levels are, for example, various communication specialists – market researchers, media experts, advertising copywriters, marketing communication strategists, market psychologists, etc. We can find several dozens of more general characteristics describing and naming the current stage of our societal reality, which in the professional discussion reflect its diverse aspects; typically, with an accent on global phenomena. Sociologist Jan Keller offers an original concept of the socio-cultural analysis of the underlying trend: *“The simple fact we proceed from is that one of the major socio-cultural changes which happened in the Euro-American civilisation during the 20th century was an unprecedented increase in one new social category – young people, adolescents.”*

The second half of the 20th century is characterised by an unprecedented increase in the category of adolescents – according to Jan Keller, the young people typical of the infinity of life choices. They are at the borderline between childhood and puberty and adulthood. The formation of this huge social group in the post-war era causes significant demographic changes which already influence the life of society and signal major shifts in our understanding of socialisation, education, willingness to take up executive responsible positions in the management of economic and social processes and, in reality, transform the previous changes and trends in culture and, more generally, in the way of life.

Jan Keller opts for a non-traditional analysis of this new social reality on the background of the formation and strengthening of the cult of eternal youth associated with hedonistic self-indulgence, desire without limits and the illusion of unlimited individual choice, usually without adequate responsibility. *“The carefully created cult of the youth changes the actual relationships in our society. It helps cover the fact that the characteristics of the young generation are, in reality, demands coming from the outside and caused by the logic of the functioning of companies, politics and media.”*

Jan Keller’s rich factual analysis is based mainly on French scholarly literature (e.g. on Baudrillard, Dubet, Fourastié, Le Goff, Lipovetsky and others). The book is structured into two parts and four chapters. In the first chapter, the author pays attention to the characteristics of postmodern society and its defining feature – eternal youth as the idol of generations X, Y, and Z. He examines what has formed a society of eternal youth and comes to the conclusion that it was mainly the certainties of high growth and economic prosperity, mass-scale access of the post-war generations to education and the dynamic development of mass consumption with the highlighted attribute of the function of free time in the

sense of well-being, feeling fine, relaxation – laziness. The following section analyses the main features of these generations; particularly, the creation of the myth about generational opportunities with no limits, casting doubt on authorities: professionals, parents and schools. The creation of an illusion of the absolute freedom of human choice also plays an important role.

The second part of the book examines the changes in the sociology of consumption – a change from the demonstrative role of consumption for the other to consumption for oneself (in accordance with Lipovetsky’s views). It is not a coincidence that current marketing communication emphasises an easy-going, hedonistic lifestyle, the element of absolute freedom – being yourself. The topic of eternal youth is significantly disturbed by natural demographic changes in advanced countries, where the share of seniors aged 60+ is constantly growing. The author watches the main changes in the run of our society through the prism of demographic changes leading to capital redistribution, formulation of different society-wide priorities and change in the use of social capital in the young generation, etc. The ageing society needs to address very different challenges than those in the last third of the 20th century, challenges related to unemployment, necessity to newly define the structure and role of social security; the young generation faces deeper and deeper inequalities in the area of education, work, housing and access to social security. The chances of upward vertical mobility become distant; particularly, for the offspring of lower income classes and more than before it is downward mobility that threatens them. Jan Keller points out some phenomena of the polarisation of our society by using an example of the new phenomenon in urbanisation – the formation of large metropolises and megapolises (today, there are 150 cities with over three million population and 24 megapolises with over 10 million population), which leads to a change in the concentration of institutions of a globalised society exactly in these settlements and the poorer classes moving to the countryside with fewer opportunities for a good job, good schools, etc. He pays attention to consumption – consumerism as an illusion of eternal youth and the creation of cultural values as consumption goods are not predetermined to permanent existence anymore. They are meant for immediate consumption. In other words, society is not creating more constant cultural values that could be a basic compass for the cultural orientation of the coming generations. He discusses in detail the feeling of happiness as one of the main values in postmodern society associated with feelings of the absolute autonomy of an individual in society. *“Individuals meet each other on the market and alone determine their fate and that of the whole society,”* says Jan Keller (p. 230).

From the aspect of examining the natural relations between the impact and effectiveness of marketing communication, we can find many common topics in this publication, accompanied with the findings of sociology, psychology and economy – Jan Keller evaluates in a way the marketing community cannot always accept with pleasure or agree with. Nevertheless, the author names the analysed phenomena sociologically exactly and puts them in relations with the massive influence and impact of advertising on the formation of consumer lifestyles defined by the constant hedonistic experience, feeling of happiness, branded demonstrative consumption and other characteristic attributes. These trends are, to a certain extent, balanced by the growing activity of a part of the young generation working for society in the *modus pro bono*; however, the feelings of instant happiness and consumer satisfaction clearly prevail. It is worth reading Jan Keller’s book and thinking about the intended and non-intended consequences of our own activity in a broader context.

Prof. PhDr. Dušan Pavlů, CSc., University of Creative Communication, Na Pankráci 420/54, 140 00 Prague 4, Czech Republic

Danuša Serafínová – An Interdisciplinary Expert in the Field of Mass Media and Journalism

Anna Sámelová

It is not customary for a person to be reviewed through a fragment of her scientific, research, publication, and pedagogical practice exceeding four decades of professional activity. Neither is it customary to generalise one's professional and personal profile based on such a fragment. In the field of mass media and journalism, this is usually unprecedented. This is hindered by the very scope of the disciplines and their multi-layered approach to the issues. From historical transformations of media (from the penny press, broadcast media to the semantically based media of Web 3.0), theoretical reflection on the benefits and negatives of these media on human and social life to a practical grasp of the issue through analyses of contemporary periodicals as well as through specific journalistic praxes within particular stages of modern and postmodern society. Nevertheless, such a fragment exists in the life and work of Danuša Serafínová (born 1950). It is embodied in two words – *Journalist Boutique* – and represents the publication heritage of Danuša Serafínová as a linguist, philologist (French, German), theorist of media and mass communication, theorist and historian of journalism, and a pedagogue.

The Journalist Boutique (later renamed to *Reminiscence* and then to *Memoirs*) is one of the regular sections of the journal for the theory, research and practice of mass communication titled *The Questions of Journalism* – a section tailored to the versatile interdisciplinary expert, within which Danuša Serafínová has been visible as a well-educated authority, as an experienced, independent author with a great sense of interpretation, historical accuracy and balance of political, cultural and artistic elements in the text. *The Journalist Boutique* allows her to induct a comprehensive historical-social story of diverse periodicals from their beginnings to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918). This is conducted extensively and in great detail, yet simply, engagingly and illustratively. Even for those who do not understand or do not want to understand the history of periodicals. By the way, it is in *The Journalist Boutique* – *Reminiscences* – *Memoirs* where current students might find a first-class information source for dreaded exams in the history of journalism.

Danuša Serafínová, however, does not even hide the fact that she writes her studies also for her students, and even becomes inspired precisely if one of them does not understand the specific period context. The aim and purpose of her submission is the teacher's interpretation of topics to the student. She also provides a comprehensive interpretation of the then journalism – the salon, political, communication as well as commercial – in the then world using our current language. But this seemingly amusing practice documents the seriousness with which Danuša Serafínová approaches teaching students and honing their ability to understand the realities of the times. Because she knows that this understanding is the cornerstone of their future successful journalistic careers. She knows that it is difficult to grasp the information context of the

event without understanding the era and society about which the journalist is informing their reader, listener or viewer. For not all democracies are the same democracies as well as not all totalitarianisms are the same totalitarianisms. Thus, journalistic hermeneutics should also be included in the interdisciplinary academic work of Danuša Serafínová.

In *The Journalist Boutique*, she captures breakthrough historical events using the language of the present day, such as liberalisation of press laws, industrialisation and diversification of the press, the beginnings of broadcast media, and the gradual professionalisation of journalism. The style of her interpretation is naturally captivating and her textual information is always complemented by a number of illustrative pictures carefully selected from the periodicals since their inception, up to the present day. *The Journalist Boutique* documents that the author – a French and German philology graduate – has chosen the narrative elegance of French novels rather than the difficult clarity of German tractates for her own interpretation style. The collected work of Danuša Serafínová published over the years within *The Journalistic Boutique* presents her as a lettered scientist, well-informed researcher and experienced lecturer in all the complexity of her historical, linguistic, philosophical and socio-political approach to the interpretation of facts in journalism.

In this calendar year, Danuša Serafínová completed not only the seventh decade of her personal life, but also the fourth decade of her teaching and publishing activities at the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. Without *pathos* and exaggeration, it might be summed up that her professional career has been successful, creatively fruitful, modern in style, accessible, interdisciplinary, in short, comprehensive. And we really have presented just a fragment.