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Creativity and Publicity

1.Introduction

The structures of publishing are rapidly changing: new public spheres of literature in social web changes also the public of writing. My special interest is writing in web, and the new kind of publicity: new public spheres, blogospheres and publicity of networks. When I speak with students of creative writing about how to prepare for the future, we do not know much about writing in the future, but one thing is clear: the writing will be public.

It is often said that everyone can publish in web, but what it means. The social media and the decentralization of public spheres changes the concept of publicity, minor public spheres comes at the side of mass publicity. The time of centralized publicity is over. In minor public spheres, as in social media, the publishing is becoming near public action. This change is not easy for be professional writers, but it is easy for the amateurs, in social web the amateur can find a community to share the text.

I want to show in this article, that the change the nature of publishing from economical at social function, opens the possibilities for more nuanced reader-writer relations. The old idea of ignoring the audience in creative process is problematic in this situation, and the rhetorical strategies of imagining the audience has got new possibilities. The writer can have a creative relation at publicity of her texts.

In creative writing programs there are many ways to improve student's awareness of public text. But teaching print-based publishing has been quite conventional, it has followed the forms of books, anthologies and magazines. The writers will learn to edit and submit their texts for these publications. In general these are practical groups where students are engaged in economical publishing projects. I am focusing on the idea social publicity, of audience, and the methods of foregrounding the audience in the process of writing.

In this article I am asking, how the writer can anticipate the reader I the text and also the audience of possible readers. In the process of writing the audience is not present, but the text is addressed at them. That is why the audience can be ignored or it may become invented or imagined. Publishing in social web opens many possibilities for sophisticated reader-writer relations. But the situation is not totally new: from prose narration we can find strategies of implied reader and fictionalized audience.

Writing in social media, mostly in weblogs, meets not only silent audience but answering readers too. That is why the concept of *public*, as answering and discussing readers, has got its renaissance in social media. So the concept of public connotes at the active and reflective side of reception. But in fiction writers weblogs there are not so much comments and discussion as is in blogs of personal opinions. The implied readers of fiction are not as private persons as in diaryblogs. But the readers and writers of the same fictive weblogs makes their own public sphere, with little discussion and mostly short supportive comments.

The active reception in social web constitutes the public: the reply button is free for audience and it is easy to use. The public reception of narrative texts in weblogs are not only reflexive, they are also moral and emotional. The public of social media has traits of friendly support

and respect, but it can also show open hostility against the values the texts represents. In web there are friendly and hostile publics: the friendly ones are often permanent readers and the hostile readers find their way mostly from search engines.

In general, the social turn in web has brought back the questions of written language and social life. From literary prose we can find a rich social world of language, that is quite else than information with no social nuances. Prose is an art of sophisticated public life. The sophisticated reader-writer relations in prose, opens new possibilities for social aspects of public and publishing.

2. To think audience or not to think

In teaching creative writing the questions of the question of audience is quite ambivalent. The place of creativity is often thought to be only in producing text material. Editing is thought to be the critical and not creative part of writing.

The idea of separating editing from creative part of writing comes from the supposed opposition between creativity and critical reflection. This leads at problematic practice of forgetting the audience in creative process. In teaching creative writing, the question of audience remains often in general level and in a simple conclusion: to think audience or not.

But why exclude the audience in the time of web? It is possible that if the writer would know exactly all her readers, she could not write at all. Sometimes it is quite important not to think certain kinds of readers. If a student thinks for example her teacher as a possible reader of her diaryblog, may be she can't write as she will. She can not write freely if she thinks her uncle, that has totally different values of life, but he can browse with search machine her name and be able to read all her writings. It is important to notice, that this possibility of ignoring the negative audience brings certain freedom at writing.

There can be different kind of audiences, and sometimes the image of audience can be helpful. The student can use pseudonym while writing her diaryblog, so she can write freely. This leads at the practical question: why some audiences are enabling and some inhibiting. The answer is clear: at the writer the audience is always imagined.

The audience is an ensemble of actual readers, they are not in direct contact with the writer: it is writers image of readers. The actual reader has his personal life history, his associations according to experiences and his knowledge. He has images than the writer can not anticipate, so the actual reader is not at the control of the writer.

The concept of implied reader comes at literary theory from Wayne Booths *Rhetoric of Fiction*. He speaks about reader's place the text offers. Later the narrative theories have developed new forms of this idea: the concept of "narrate" as the figure the narration is addressed at. This narrative model assumes also that the real reader seeks to enter the authorial audience in order to understand what the narrative offers. (Phelan 2007, 210.)

The implied reader is created by the writer, it must not be consciously imagined, but it functions as a speech partner of the writer. Writing in weblogs is more interactive than traditional writing, but this does not mean that the will meet real readers. Interactivity means that she has more hints to imagine her implied reader.

The most influential thesis of ignoring the audience in creative process comes from Peter Elbow (2000). When he proposes that it is good to forget the audience in creative process, he supposes that audience is synonym for control.

First it must be noticed that Elbow's idea of ignoring the audience was not about actual readers but about imagined readers who are inhibiting the free play of writing. Elbow (2000, 94) speaks about the image in writers mind, when he says that the writer must ignore "certain people who always make us feel dumb. When we try to speak to them: we can't find words or thoughts". To be able to write freely, it is better to forget this kind of imagined readers.

Actually for Elbow there is no serious concept of implied reader. Even when he mentions Wayne Booth's idea of implied reader (Elbow 2000, 92) he does not think it could have anything positive to do with practical methods of writing.

There is a paradox when Elbow says that "quite often the strength derives from the writer's unawareness of the readers". By saying so, he implies that the strength of the text is readable, and he as a reader can be influenced by it.

When Elbow is speaking about the "unawareness of the readers" the emphasis is on a kind of innocence of critical readers. This comes clear when Elbow presents his examples. Many competent writers in magazines produce mediocre pieces because they are thinking too much about what their readers can receive. Good students can produce bad text because "there is something too staged or planned or self-aware about such writing" says Elbow (2000, 97). This is correct, and in these cases the text is too official, because the student is thinking the teacher or some other actual figures as official reader. But if the imagined reader is something else the writer can relax and text is not so official. Elbow is praising the writer being unconscious of all kind of readers:

"Damn it, put all your attention on what you are saying ... and forget about us and how we are reacting." (Elbow 2000, 97).

In other words the implied reader in Elbow's examples is official censor. But the thoughts that are clear are also addressed at the reader. The writer who really ignores the audience is unclear, because she follows her own associations and does not notice if some relevant information is missing. Clear thoughts and examples are the signs of addressing text at audience.

Linda Flower (1979) has proposed that narrative text can be divided in two parts: writer-based prose (ignoring audience) and reader-based prose (addressed at audience). In this process the writer's expression must be transformed for the needs of the reader. This task of transformation may cause problems, and that is why the ignoring of audience can help. But for Flower the communicative message at reader is most important:

Reader-Based prose is a deliberate attempt to communicate something to a reader. To do that it creates a shared language and shared context between writer and reader. It also offers the reader an issue-centered rhetorical structure rather than a replay of the writer's discovery process. In its language and structure, Reader-Based prose reflects the purpose of the writer's thought; Writer-Based prose tends to reflect its process (Flower, 1979, 20).

The concept of Writer-Based prose is about private writing, but it is not clear enough; there are problems of structure because of the associative process of writing. She says that in Writer-Based prose “main stylistic features grow out of the private nature of interior monologue” (Flower 1979, 26).

But Flower does not think prose fiction at all, she implies only conventional readers of informative prose. She thinks only plain and simple style, in which reader focuses mostly in content of thoughts.

Peter Elbow opposes Flower’s idea of Reader-Based prose by saying that ignoring audience produces always better text. He says “we mustn't think of language only as communication, nor allow communication to claim dominance either as the earliest or as the most "mature" form of discourse. (Elbow 2000,103.) This is, I think, the best point of Elbow’s argument. In poetry and narrative fiction there are a lot of other functions of language than addressing informative messages at the audience. But for Elbow (2000, 104) this kind of creativity is always private, he does not recognize playing with others with mediation of imagined audience. So the private style of public writing as nowadays in diaryblogs could not be freely written. Because of weblogs it is clear now, that the audience can motivate and take its part in creative process. Writers can find their creativity in cooperation with the audience, not directly in contact with real readers, but by methods of imagining readers.

3. Creative relation at the audience

It has been asked: why making illusions of imagined reader, why not writing at the real readers. The writer must imagine the reader because the audience is not present when she writes. Even in weblogs the writer is not in direct contact with real readers. This opens possibilities to imagine the audience in a creative way. The rhetoric of writing considers these possibilities that imaging the audience opens, and interactive writing in the web makes new situation for these old questions.

The strategy of focusing public words at one hypothetical listener is well known in classical rhetoric. In recent media theories the same thing is called *speaking at anyone as someone*. When for example the political speech is delivered in public meeting, this publicity is also implied in the speech. But in writing it is possible to use personal vocabulary, to speak at one person, because the public audience is not present, and the person reads the text alone. The modern publicity is mediated, the public is open for anyone but it can be personalized *for-anyone-as-someone*. It is important to notice that this implies always double way to focus at readers: there is one implied reader, but at the same time there is audience of many readers. (Scannell 2000).

Because the audience is not factual and present, there is an open space between writer and reader. So the writer can create the figure she is speaking at. It is easy to use the word “you” in narration, as speaking at anyone as someone. But there are much more nuanced ways to create implied reader as if sharing common emotions and attitudes with narrated things. The possibility of imagining reader moves in free space that is full of figures created by literary prose. They are figures of readers according the genres of narration. If the writer is also reader her narration can develop unconsciously these figures of readers mixed with her own experience.

It is common that the writer imagines somebody she knows personally as the implied reader of her narration. When Astrid Lindren created the story of *Pippi Longstocking* by telling the story at her daughter, she had not only her daughter but also the certain genre of children literature in her mind. When Stanislaw Jerzy Lec writes his sarcastic aphorisms, the implied reader is intelligent, ironic and eager to speculate with paradoxes that these aphorisms presents. The figure of implied reader have its background in the genre of narration, and certain kind of audience is implied as its discursive community.

4. The image of strange world and hostile audience

One special form of implied friendly readers is created by humoristic writing. It is often said that the comics is easy if you have a real contact with audience. Humour and comical style implies the social and laughing audience, by making a comical contract with imagined readers it takes the audience at foreground. Playful and humoristic attitude has also been important part of new social web, humoristic replies may function then as creating the sense of social nuances between participants.

Writing comics is difficult if you don't know the audience. There is always a risk that the readers are not playing the same game, and then image of friendly reader changes at hostile audience. There are a lot of hostile audiences: a lot of images of hostile readers in internet: browsers that are searching something private, or searching possibilities to humiliate the writer. Peter Elbows idea of ignoring this kind of audience can be productive, but it is also closing the eyes from the world.

Samuel Beckett's dramas do not play the comical social game with audience, even when the situation seems to be comical, and the audience is ready to laugh. This is possible because imagined audience in these plays is hostile. In Beckett's plays there are comical figures, but without imagined support from the side of audience. For example in *Waiting for Godot* (1953) the characters are as clowns but without humour. The emptiness that Beckett brings at dramatic situations are difficult for audience to digest. The real audience may try to laugh of course, but it does not last long, because Beckett disturbs the comical contract. This creates a situation as if the audience is hostile. When Vladimir says "At me too someone is looking..." (78)

The imagined hostile audience is written in parenthesis of the *Waiting for Godot*.

VLADIMIR: We're surrounded! (*Estragon makes a rush towards back.*)
Imbecile! There's no way out there. (*He takes Estragon by the arm and drags him towards front. Gesture towards front.*) There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go! Quick! (*He pushes Estragon towards auditorium. Estragon recoils in horror.*) You won't? (*He contemplates auditorium.*) Well I can understand that.
(55)

In general, if the writer is frightened by the publicity of the text, she can also bring this fear in to the text. The implied audience can be imagined as hostile, as in some Kafka's stories. It is common knowledge that Kafka wanted all his text destroyed, so that the hostile audience wouldn't get their hands on them. His fear of readers can be seen also in his diaries. When Milena has read his diaries, Kafka asked: 'Have you found anything decisively against me in the diaries?' (Kafka 1954, 202). One reason for Kafka's bad conscience about readers was that he felt he is to blame about something. That is why his text has to be perfect, as

successful as possible.

The hostile audience is only implied in Kafka's texts: being afraid of going to the court, hesitating before the door and in many gestures of turning away while speaking. So if the writer is afraid of audience and publicity, it is also possible to bring this fear in the text. Kafka was afraid of public. In the end of Kafka's *The Trial*, the death scene of Joseph K, the presence of hostile audience comes forth when all that was left after the process was "shame".

In weblogs there are two kinds of audience, these who the writer knows as members of blogosphere and these browsers with search engines who the writer doesn't know. Their image of audience consists mostly of friends, because the comments they get are mostly support. But the writers do not know the audience who are not permanent readers. (Viégas, 2005.) These strange visitors have found their way by search engines. Often these search words have nothing to do with the subject of the text or the intentions of the writer. The most common targets of searches are personal names and sexual words. So they can be regarded as hostile readers, because they seem to be searching personal information with names or sensations by sexual words. The writers are often totally surprised these words has quite little to do with the subject of their story.

The strange reader must not always be hostile. The theory of public speaking and writing, there is a principle that the story must be understandable by the stranger. The topics of diaryblogs have no public interest, because they are mostly telling about personal but common things with no names and facts for the hostile searchers. These diaryblogs are mostly for relationship maintenance, but still the writers want their blogs to be open for the visitors. So it can be said that these blogs are not public, but they are open for visitors. In the narration of these blogs there seems to be nothing interesting for the outsiders. The principle of hospitality for the strangers may be the only public intention, and possibility to present the writers life.

Conclusion

In general we can return to the question of imagining the audience, but now with questions of friendly or hostile readers. Quite often the writer may believe, as Elbow earlier suggested, that the real audience may be hostile, and it is better not to think about it. But this kind of audience can also be revealed by the narrative, as part of the writer's world and modern life. In this case the writer uses double strategy: the implied reader that gets fascinated by the narration, and the hostile spectators whom she turns away in order to speak with the fellow reader.

The hostile audience is an important part of our psycho-social imagination, and it is substantial that there are narrative ways to make it present. The writer, who is not imagining only positive audiences, can reveal something about internet culture and social attitudes.

Notes

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