

A COMMUNICATION MODEL OF AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP

Sanja Adjaip-Veličkovski

International Balkan University, Skopje, sanjaadzaip@yahoo.com

Sauda Nurković

International Balkan University, Skopje, sauda_nurkovic@hotmail.com

Abstract: Digital technologies have infiltrated all the aspects of our everyday lives, and that we increasingly see the analog technologies taking a step back in retreat, and causing changes within the way we relate to books and reading generally. With personal computers, and e-readers like Kindle, likewise like the ever-larger screens on our digital phones, there's a tangible trend today towards accepting the digital screen because the medium where we do our reading. Digital is thus becoming the medium through which we see, understand, and interact with the globe. It's almost because the Marshal McLuhan's prophecy come true, we already communicate, consume culture, and 'make' friends, etc. through the PC and also the Internet, using these technologies, as they were extensions of ourselves.

The possibility of addressing, and considering, the connection between the author and the reader as a special communication model, and accordingly the attempt to examine that connections between the writer as the author, and the reader as a user, regardless of the medium the text is presented, is the purpose of this paper. It is important to point out here, that in this type of communication model there is a need for consideration of the existence of a field of experience (in the model), which could be seen as based on the symbiotic and experiential harmony between the two communicators, in this case, between the author and the reader (user), in which the meanings of the separate processes are overlapping.

Keywords: author, reader, book, communication model

1. INTRODUCTION

Books are an integral part of people's lives. Since the invention of printing press, books have been dominant and iconic paradigm in any culture throughout the world. They provide the foundation of learning from an early age and continue to grow through their adulthood. Books are the windows for information. Whether the information is intellectually driven, or for personal reasons, books are always going to be inevitable part of people's lives.

During the recent years, with the transition to the digital age, books were no exception, and their appearance has changed. While not so long ago we were familiar only with printed books, today's technologies, that are making life easier and more efficient, brought e-books as a new format of reading. Over the past years, the term "book" has started to make the shift from physical object to the concept of a written work. With the number of gadgets available to read these online books, (iPad, iPhone, Kindle, Kindle Touch, Kindle Keyboard, Kindle Fire, Nook etc.) it is safe to say that the physical book is closer to obsoleting than ever before. This changes the perception and reception of literary works. This electronic and digital media did not bring the death of the book as printed medium, but even expanded the production and dissemination of books.

However, the book that is physical and one can have it in his/her hands, has a different effect on the reader than the one that the reader can perceive only with eyes. In a print book, there are possible worlds, and the reader walks through labyrinths knowing that what they are reading is still selected and written as it is.

2. THE AUTHOR IN THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

People who should know better are, always asking the writer: "Whom do you write for?" The question is, of course, a silly one, but I can give it a silly answer. Occasionally I come across a book which I feel has been written especially for me and for me only. "Like a jealous lover, I don't want anybody else to hear of it. To have a million such readers, unaware of each other's existence, to be read with passion and never talked about, is the daydream, surely, of every author" (W.H. Auden as cited in Bennet, 2008).

Writing of literary work is in itself an art, and the author is an artist; an artist who needs to have a creative personality. Creative individuals, by definition, have a higher degree of knowledge and interests, and they are more relevant in combining ideas from different sources. Open to experience, they accept irrational thoughts and are not inhibited in their senses and fantasies.

Credible individuals enjoy symbolic thoughts, ideas, concepts, and possibilities. They presume truth, form and beauty, before acknowledgment and success. Their creative effort is the ultimate goal (Coon, 1997).

The endeavor of the author is his work. According to Alderfer's ERG theory (Existence, Relatedness, and Growth-ERG), creativity and productivity in relation to themselves or in relation to the given environment are a

prerequisite for development. The development assumes that the person is fully utilizing its abilities, or even that it develops additional abilities (Bates and McGrath, 2013).

The author, besides having this need for development, and knowing how to use his abilities to create the book, must, however, possess a creative potential, in order to succeed in creating a work, a book that will be presented to the reading audience. The author sees the inner self, walks through different experiences, inner uninhibited world, examines his/her imagination, and then gives a report on this self-reading. The author then writes the book, and presents it to the readers. That is what is being called writing (Birkerts, 2006).

However, the inevitable influence of the social environment and culture on the author, cannot be forgotten, nor neglected. The social environment influences the creation of the author as a unique, psychological individual, with own voices that result from living in a particular environment. The social environment also influences the formation of the individual for living in a particular culture. All these elements: the creative personality; reading (in this case, reading the inner self); experiences, the inner world and imagination; the pre-dispositions (sex, level of education, motivation, social environment) that are presumed to affect the work of the author, but are not sufficiently explored in this paper; the creative potential and the need for development make the author a unique creator whose creation will last long after the author.

3. THE BOOK AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE READER

If literacy is not a prerequisite for rationality and civilization, the question may arise: why are the writing systems invented, and since they were invented, why did they completely scrutinize the place of the existing oral traditions. Writing is seen as an invention that suppressed oral traditions.

When writing is introduced and begins to be used for the same purposes as the oral narrative song, when it is employed for telling stories and is widespread enough to find an audience capable of reading, this audience seeks its entertainment and instruction in books rather than in the living songs of men, and the older art gradually disappears (Lord, 1971).

Adoption and use of writing systems depends primarily on their ability to keep language and information across time and space. One writing system is communicative, if the used symbols are conventional. Meaning that other readers can read the significance of the symbols. In order for one such writing system to have an archival function, it should be conventional to enable decoding and interpretation by readers, who may not even know anything about the writer.

The writing makes the language visible, and in contrast to the speech that is ephemeral, writing is concrete and permanent. Both writing and reading depend on the language structure. Consequently, someone who does not know the linguistic structure of the language cannot read the written. Nevertheless, writing is not just a transcription of speech. Literature testifies this. Writing often includes the use of special forms of language that would not be produced orally, i.e. through speech. It is an expression of the language, and not just the transcription of speech, and it should be seen as a new medium for language expression. As art, literature is an organization of words that offer pleasure; through literature the experience is increased and literature transforms the reader; it functions in the society as a continuous symbolic critic of values. Writing allows the same words to circulate far and remain preserved. It allows readers to scan the text back and forth, and to study, compile and interpret it in their leisure time. Writing has transformed writers into authors, and thus contributed to the recognition of the importance of the thoughts of the individuals and consequently to the development of individualism.

The individualism of the authors is also translated into their books. The book is an artificial creation of man, permanently accessible to other people, where the words find their own places and their function. The book, for the true readers and its lovers, is a way of life. It is a special world, in which the reader is able to enter just by holding it in the hands, or as Birkerts (2006) says, through the book the reader receives "a world in the world, secret and hidden". Through the book, the author transmits himself, and the reader is the one who can experience the "wonderful coding of thoughts and sensations" of the author. Since it encourages the reader to examine, take into account and read the written, the book also carries the principle that refers to writing as a form of reflection.

4. THE READER IN THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

The term 'reader' or 'readership' has often been used to describe audiences for audio-visual as well as print-based media, in this case the book. Hartley (Hartley, 2004:195) refers to readers/readership as the product of media industries. When it comes to reading, the question must be posed, not just how to decode the symbols, but is there an effect of the decoding process and the decoded content the reader. The question arises as to what degree the reader is present in the contents of the book that he reads.

How do readers store what they read, and how do they recall the things that they have read after some time? These questions arise because the book that the reader has imprisoned after reading is different after several months or

years, because even if the words stay the same, the reader himself is changing. According to Sven Birkerts (2006), the reading is not only a process of connection with the expression of another person, that is, with the author. Reading is also a process that leads to the change of the whole complex of the self. The true reading is a mediator in its formation. In view of the fact that the author should also be a reader, it would not be wrong to say that both the author and the reader live in a world that is half of the books, and half of the true-life circumstances.

At the time of reading, the reader is different, and this difference is much more related to the process of reading than the object, that is, the book that is being read. When it comes to reading a book, the reader is in, and the author is guiding him in a completely new world. There is only one difference: it is a world that is fully under the power of one sensibility – the one of the author.

The transition of the reader from one world, to the one of a book is gradual and complex. The readers gradually abandon their boundaries of here and now, in order to find their borders somewhere in the book. The reader is projected in the words, and they are transformed into "mental entities" (Birkerts, 2006:81). Moreover, as far as the reader is concerned, Alderfer's need for growth has nothing to do with expanding the boundaries of the self (Bates and McGrath, 2013). Not so much for the reader to become a figure of the book, or to lose himself, but for the reader to succeed in reaching and connecting the two worlds, the one from the book and the one on the real-life circumstances. Every text is a rusty machine that requires the reader to complete a part of her work. The reading is adapted to the needs of the reader and his / her rhythm. The reader is free to satisfy his subjective associative impulse. They do not only watch the words; the reader dreams his life in their vicinity.

The theory of the social structure of the public and the theory of individual differences agree that the mass audience (in this case, the reader) is socially defined. Therefore, it is also mentioned the thesis for "predispositions" investigated in 1940 by Waples, Berelson and Bradsho (1940) who studied the motive for reading books. For them, the expression "predisposition" denotes all personal determinants associated with the attempt to read. The authors have essentially explained the readers' difference in reading preference based on the belonging to different social categories, of which our interest is directed at those who correspond to the presumed communication system between the author and the reader:

- First, the readers are classified for various types of literature based on the gender, with the conclusion that gender differences are present even when other factors are taken into consideration (for example, age);
- Secondly, it is concluded that the level of education has an influence on the choice of literature;
- Thirdly, the significance of the environment to which the reader is attached is emphasized, since people are reading what the environment expects from them; and
- Fourth, it is considered that the attitudes depend on what category and group the readers belong to. In addition, motivation is considered a result of social relations.

In his book *Six walks in the fictional woods* (2004), Umberto Eco gives some clues as to how to look at the reader. The wood is a metaphor for the narrative world, and that is not just for the narrative world of fairy tales, but also for any narrative world. Eco is explaining with the Borhes metaphor, saying that the forest is a garden with different paths. Even if there are no grounded paths, each one can make his own, deciding whether he moves left or right from a particular tree, and that at each subsequent tree along the walk, the reader will make a choice again. In one narrative text, the reader is always forced to choose, even unconsciously, to anticipate the choice of the author, or to constantly question what the author's choice will be in the future text. These are so called empirical readers, who can read one text in many ways and there is no law that instructs them how to read, because the empirical reader often uses the text to store on his own passions, which can come from outside the text, or who may accidentally be taken by the text (Eco, 2004). The book enhances the inner world of the reader, and by choosing different paths in the woods, the reader awakens his imagination.

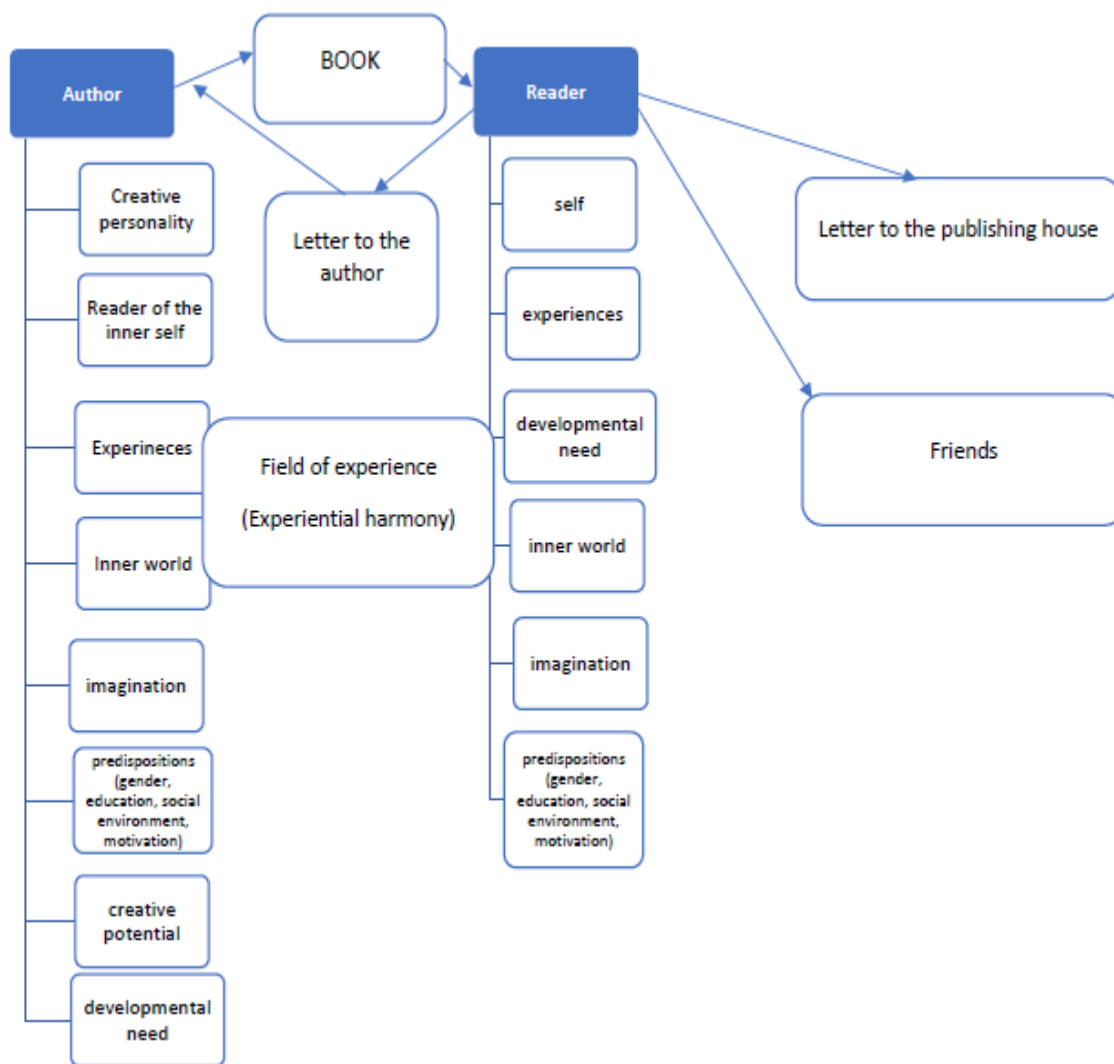
5. THE AUTHOR AND THE READER-COMMUNICATORS IN THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

The author writes, and the reader reads, or maybe it just looks like it. Reading and writing can be understood if they are considered in the terms of the continuum. "A writer is, after all, only half his book. The other half is the reader and from the reader the writer learns." (Travers, 1978:5). On one end, the author, the individual of blood and flesh is found; on the other side is the reader - the individual of blood and flesh. At the center, you are choosing, the pages that rotate, and the decoder intelligence. Writing is a monumentally complex operation through which experience, inner world, and imagination are distilled into a language; the reading is an equally complex operation that disperses these distilled elements into the lives of another person. The act begins with the active de-encryption of these symbols, and ends (if the reading can be said to be finished) where their significance cannot be easily detected, where the atmosphere of the self-condensed in thought and action (Birkerts, 2006).

The author and the reader are two communicators who communicate through the books. This communication model (see Figure 1) is based on the Wilbur Schram's model of communication (Littlejohn, S. W., Foss K. A., 2009). Wilbur L. Schramm was a forefather in the development of a basic model of communication. His model is a derivation of the Shannon - Weaver transmission model of communication (Littlejohn, S. W., Foss K. A., 2009). The Shannon - Weaver model proposed six elements of communication: source, encoder, message, channel, decoder and receiver. Wilbur Schramm's 1954 model expands on this thinking by emphasizing the process of encoding and decoding the message. Schramm envisioned this process as a two-way circular communication between the sender and receiver. Where the Shannon-Weaver model is a more mathematical and technological one, Schramm incorporates the study of human behavior in the communication process. In addition to the six elements above, Schramm has included these concepts:

- Feedback- information that comes back from the receiver to the sender and tells him how well he is doing.
- Field of Experience- an individual's beliefs, values, experiences and learned meanings both as an individual and as part of a group (Littlejohn, S. W., Foss K. A., 2009).

Figure 1. A Communication Model of Author-Reader Relationship (Adjaip-Veličkovski, 2020©)¹



¹ This model is published for the first time in this paper.

In the presented communication model, the two communication partners, are found in separate fields of experience that partially overlap. The signal is found in the area of covering the joint parts of these two fields, and the two communicators, in this case, the author and the reader must be in an experiential harmony or symphony. Since the types can override their communication: different cultures, languages, education level, etc., the source of i.e., the author must encode in a code that can be read for the purpose, i.e. the reader. The goal of the mass communication, according to the program, is the individual, in the cases of readers. Mass communication does not provide direct feedback, but only through readers' letters. It indirectly concludes that a specific content is added to the publication. According to the basic postulates of the theory of individual differences, human beings are very different in their psychological organization. These differences are partly the result of the different biological characteristics, partly due to differences in the world's recognition. As an indispensable element in the creation of one individual are the different environment, and the attitudes, values and beliefs that form the psychological structure of that individual. Hence, it would be inconceivable to think that someone who grew up in an environment in which religion has a strong influence, would be condemned to write novelties with sexual content. Also, a very important element in the definition of a book, and its reading is the author, and his reputation. "We cannot read an author for the first time in the same way that we read the latest book by an established author. In a new author, we tend to see either only his virtues or only his defects and, even if we do see both, we cannot see the relation between them. In the case of an established author, if we can still read him at all, we know that we cannot enjoy the virtues we admire in him without tolerating the defects we deplore. Moreover, our judgment of an established author is never simply an aesthetic judgment. In addition to any literary merit it may have, a new book by him has a historic interest for us as the act of a person in whom we have long been interested. He is not only a poet or a novelist; he is also a character in our biography." (Mrbauld.com, 2019). Although the reader, as already mentioned, does not necessarily have to come into contact in person with the author, he may pass on his thoughts to the author, through a letter to him. Today, this communication is accelerated with the Internet, which creates the ideal space for interactive communication between the author and the reader. The reader can also convey his/her thoughts about a particular book to his friends, with a positive or negative recommendation for the book, and extend the sensitivity of the author to other persons. In some cases, the reader can also communicate with the publishing house, with its bookmarks, which can lead to an increase in the circulation of the books, with that and the readiness of the author.

6. CONCLUSION

The intention to build a special communication system that connects the author and the reader through the book, i.e. the attempt to create a model that will combine the two separate processes (the process of creating a book by the author, and the process of reading the book by the reader), in a new, structured and more complex system is shown in this new, proposed communication model. It contains all the aforementioned and explained factors that affect the author in the process of creating the book, and the reader in the process of its reading. The important elements that are presumed to affect the work of the author, and considered as important for the creation of a unique work are: the creative personality; reading yourself; experience; inner world; imagination; predispositions (gender, degree of education, motivation, social environment); the creative potential and the need for development. The reader, however, as important elements in the process of reading is distinguished with his need for development; his self, experience; imagination; the internal world and, of course, the predispositions (gender, degree of education, motivation, social environment). In addition, an important element in this communication system is the experiential harmony, both between the author and the reader, or between their personal fields of experience. From this communication model, it can be seen that despite the type of communication (print, or digital) the communication continues, from the reader to the rest of the people (friends, or the publishing house), and to the author of the book (through a letter).

REFERENCES

- Bates, B., & McGrath, J. (2013). *The little book of big management theories*, Pearson.
- Birkerts, S (2006). *The Gutenberg elegies: The fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, Paperback, Farrar, Straus and Giroux; First edition (November 14, 2006).
- Bennet, A. (2008). *Writing home*, Faber & Faber.
- Coon, D.L (1997). *Essential of Psychology: Exploration and Application*, 7th ed. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Eco, U. (2004). *Six walks in the fictional woods*, 8th ed., Harvard University Press.
- Hartley, J. (2004). *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. London and New York: Routledge.
- Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2009). *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. Thousand Oaks, Calif, Sage.

- Lord, A. (1971). A singer of tales, Available online from: <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5595> [accessed 22 Oct. 2019].
- Mrbould.com. (2018). W.H. Auden's Aphorisms on Reading – MR. Bauld's English Website. [online] Available at: <http://www.mrbould.com/audenrd.html> [Accessed 21 Oct. 2019].
- Travers, P.L. (July 2, 1978). "I never wrote for children" in *The New York Times* July 2, 1978, Section SM, p.5. Available on <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/07/02/archives/i-never-wrote-for-children.html> [Accessed 21.10.2019].
- Waples, D., Berelson, B. & Bradshaw, R.F. (1940). *What reading does to people, A Summary of Evidence on the Social Effects of Reading and a Statement of Problems for Research* The University of Chicago, Chcago, Illinois.