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DYNAMICS OF READING CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article raises the issue of reading culture dynamics in the global information society. The tendency of the development of the modern information society is the change in the axiological status of practices that previously had a marker of elitist, high-status intellectual participants (reading fiction, hearing and understanding classical art, conscious perception of modern art, etc.). Reading is connected with the definition of the status of information as a socio-cultural phenomenon and carriers of information, which are basic for modern man. Fiction acquires the importance of a marker of the relationship of the individual with the extra-utilitarian practices of modern society. Reading is still the practice of elite, despite the declared availability of knowledge in the post-industrial era. A new kind of reading culture is being born, which is presented by "texts about texts" since in the modern world, it is not the phenomenon which is important but its presentation. New network media begin to be experts which define the borders and the orientation of reading. They emphasize novelty and a broad thematic scope of literary texts, which reviews will become basic for the world view of a modern person.

1. Introduction

Modern civilization, which is being broadly disputed by information society theorists, obviously, cannot be comprehended without the concepts of "post-industrial society" (Bell, 1999), and "global

information society" (The Okinawa Charter of global information society, 2016). Despite the futurological orientation of the specified works, we can say that we are living in this period now. In spite of the fact that some researchers consider the project of "information society" to be a global myth and utopia, "the biggest dream and the biggest scientific delusion of sociology and philosophy of the last decades", (Tuzovsky, 2014), and despite of the fact that they say that it is impossible to forecast future changes during an era of "fluid modernity". "We just ceased to hope that these changes will once come to the end" by (Bauman, 2011), it is possible to state that information technologies, being perceived negatively or positively, determine development of society in the 21st century (Dvoryanchikov et al., 2016).

One of the tendencies which develop modern information society is the change of axiological status of activities which used to be elite and which showed high intellectual status of their participant (reading fiction, listening to classical music and understanding classical art, conscious perception of the latest art, etc.). This tendency most prominently comes to light when we analyze the image of a reading person, the process of reading, the way new books are presented in network media, since nowadays, in the era of total visual perception, there is a special attitude to the process of text understanding.

2. Methods

The methodological approach is based on scientific sources dedicated to the modern theory of information and post-industrial society, methodological works analyzing the concept of "literary competence", research that develops the concept of language personality, the theory of speech genres. Research methods – a complex of system analysis, modeling, interpretation methods.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The book and new network media

The concept of information society makes reading a kind of activity which participates in information transfer process. Participation in communication is perceived to be a benefit for society since technical innovations in all spheres of life seem to be a way to cardinally improve all aspects of society life. Meanwhile, leading philosophers and social theorists (Unesco's World Report "Towards Knowledge Societies", 2005), arguing about the future transition from information society to knowledge society, consider information to be an additional tool and a product. They believe that only pure knowledge can be public benefit. In this sense, the book and attitudes to it make it possible for a modern person to reach a post-industrial civilization and knowledge society.

In our opinion, society nowadays expresses several quite opposing to each other ideas of the book's future. First, the Internet and its opportunities make it possible to access any book: one can purchase a paper book or an e-book through the Internet, or at least use piracy resources. Despite the steady increase of people's interest to electronic editions during the first decade of the 21st century, researches of the latest time speak about the increase of the opposite tendency. The Colta online media gives information from the congress "Retail Distribution Market – 2016" held in Greenwich, Connecticut, the USA, about paper books sales growth in 2015. The sales increased in 2016, and the buyers' age is from 18 to 29,

contrary to concerns that the youth undoubtedly prefers digital information. According to the Russian statistics agency, which data were published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (the Russian Newspaper) in September, 2016, in Russia, paper books sales have also increased by 6%. Experts explain it by the fact that the economic situation in the country is getting worse "Sociologists noticed long ago that people begin to read more in hard times" by (Gayva, & Uzbekova, 2016). There are no paper periodicals (it is a problem for those people who got used to dealing with printed newspapers); it is assumed that the book has replaced other kinds of leisure activities as they have become more expensive (evening reading instead of going to the theatre).

Second, writers consider some features of information society to be negative, and the Internet to be a trap which makes any writer a hostage of a certain reputation ("false"). A famous Russian writer, A. Ivanov, the author of social and psychological novels "The Geographer Spent the Globe on Drink", "Community", "Bad weather", gave an interview to S. Nikolayevich for the program Cultural Exchange (Cultural exchange with Sergey Nikolaevich, 2016). He said that being an author he does not prefer to exist in Internet space: "The virtual space is not prestigious a priori, only real things are prestigious. One would like to be a prestigious writer". For this reason a book has to be published, substantiated in paper. This opinion has no private or narrowly professional (literary) nature, it is a symptom of time which coincides with the point of view of the reading subject (a book downloaded from the Internet can be an unworthy product, whereas a publisher, having invested in a book, definitely makes the reader–writer relations legitimate).

Third, speaking about opportunities to choose books in a large information field, it is necessary to admit that these opportunities are rather illusory, since it is impossible for many book consumers to estimate the amount of information hierarchically; to determine what does not simply attract attention due to private interests (for example, love to the detective genre), but also has public response; to create literary trends, a pantheon of the latest literature, etc.

For this reason new Russian media which exist in the virtual environment, are becoming more and more popular. They create a special conceptual sphere of "new book culture", determining the majority of parameters of the book perception. We speak about network media Wonderzine, Gorky, Afisha, Colta, etc. In recent years, network resources have become the key supplier of information about what is going on in the book world because information obtaining and processing is quick, and they are active in social networks (Selyutin et al., 2016). Each of these websites has a section devoted to books. The exception is the media resource "Gorky", which is entirely concentrated on the analysis of all types of books. Besides, it is important to consider that these resources are declared to be uncompetitive, which make it possible to avoid consumerism moral: online editions make active links to each other's materials; the appeal to critics of these editions is authoritative and verifies articles' and reviews' reprint, though materials can be published in agreement with famous publishing houses and have commercial, not information nature. The creator of the network media "Gorky", B. Kupriyanov, is confident that all participants of the global conversation about the book are non-conflict: "Look, we have millions of friends and no enemy. All people who are engaged in education in this country and think of books and reading are our allies. The educational project "Arzamas.Academy" is our close friends. As far as I know, they very much worry about our launch and give us advice" (Gorky is a meme too': what a new website will write about literature 'Gorky, 2016).

3.2. Media and book trends creation

The analysis of these editions is impossible without the theory of fashion and fashionable trends creation in modern mass culture. In the fashion theory, the phenomena which became style forming are called trends; in the fashion industry, there are people who are engaged in fashionable trends forecasting (trend forecaster, trend spotter, trend hunter) (Sekacheva, 2006). If we apply this terminology to the discussed issues, it will become obvious that there are trend writers (trend setters) like, for example, V. Pelevin or V. Sorokin; there are trend books, for example, "How I ate a dog" by E. Grishkovets; genre trends, for example, cyberpunk, fantasy or ironical detective story, etc. There also is a whole institute which forecasts literary tendencies – the institute of literary criticism (one of main functions of literary criticism is to foretell). An expert on cultural studies, Malcolm Gladwell, tried to understand and illustrate how fashionable trends appear taking into account literary fashion. He analyzed factors which make a little-known book a best-seller; and also the mechanism of how rumors are generated and function. According to Gladwell, new tendencies are subject to principles of virus epidemic. He pointed out three regularities: the principle of minority, when individuals (fashion leaders, authorities, muses) play a big role in social epidemics spread; the "infection" principle, when small things make a big difference; the principle of environment force, when people are more sensitive to the surrounding situation than they seem (Gladwell, 2009).

This function is taken over by new media, which predict new trends by forming special strategy of new books presentation. For example, the Afisha magazine created the project about books "One hundred best novels of the 21st century", which can be considered a handbook on the latest world literature in Russia in the 21st century. The authors of the project through cross-referencing make a list of new novels with no ranking in importance. They were assisted by a board of experts, which consisted of writers, philosophers, specialists in cultural studies, journalists, critics, publishers. Each text had an additional review made by the respected critic L. Danilkin (One hundred best novels of the 21st century, 2014). So, a reader of such network media (the Afisha magazine taken as an example), who follows these recommendations, definitely enters the circle of people following fashion and fashionable trends in the field of books.

In our opinion, people form a certain world view when they trust network media and follow them in choosing the strategy of their own life, and the program of reading, in particular. The main feature of this world view is its "readiness", since it represents books as one of many mass and cultural phenomena, regardless of a book status and reputation of a represented author. Book products appear among fashionable trends in general, they adjoin to lists of domestic and foreign series, just opened restaurants, etc. Creolized websites' texts create an active visual row which is like an anchor for the reader of the website: it is possible to open a page about video games, and about books, too.

It is very important that this presentation should be connected with the concept "new", providing certain social comfort for the participant of this communication type (I know that "it" exists, or, at least, "I heard about it"). It is not reading which has a significance, it is a book as an object, its appearance in the humanitarian world, and it is a new book, "news" in the world of books. The very structure of such websites, for example, the Afisha. Daily website, does not imply serious critical and literary handling of

literature phenomena: it is important to introduce the phenomenon into use (though the famous critics L. Danilkin and K. Milchin also work for this online media).

The second concept is "inclusiveness", since it is obvious that presentation of a new book is determined not so much by information demand but by economy and marketing events. Therefore, reading the websites' materials, it is possible to get an idea about documentary books, books for summer reading, about feminism, etc. The websites' readers do not read literary texts; they read "texts about texts" - the book reviewers' reflections on new literature. This book metatext is created from reviews, cross referencing to the websites' special projects (for example, "10 best books for children's reading"). And because other websites' materials are mentioned (the Afisha.Daily website refers to the Wonderzine website, the latter, in its turn, refers to the Gorky website), reviewing becomes generative (according to N. Chomsky): the review does not obtain new information; it obtains details extending metatext education.

We can see a certain phenomenon settling. What was valid, new and interesting (for example, the Afisha magazine twenty years ago), is now perceived as secondary. Therefore, creators of content about books try to develop a contrary strategy, to develop the concept which would bring books out of a semantic line of new city objects. In this regard, the recently appeared Gorky website, which has offered a new approach for the settled techniques, deserves attention. Analyzing numerous performances of Gorky's creators (Kupriyanov, Nazarova, etc.), it is possible to define so far not so much the result of their efforts, but the website mission clearness.

3.3. Deconsumerization as a mission: back to elitism

Opposing discreteness and inclusiveness of book reviews, editors assume that they will manage to create a complete semantic field for each mentioned book; they will be able to place it in a cross-cultural context, being guided by editions which offer this context, in particular, "The New York Review of Books", "where they consider books with various approaches to the same subject, both old and new, when a separate edition does not exist in vacuum, and there is a certain history of reading, ideas, thoughts, images" (Gorky is a meme too': what a new website will write about literature 'Gorky: interview with the editors, 2016).

The second important point is that the materials about books lack claims to be elite, exclusive, to have "capital character". According to the authors, the very name of the resource is supposed to remember the famous writer M. Gorky's tradition to perceive phenomena not so much belonging to the capital city but to all Russia ("Gorky is a person who is associated with the whole of Russia, not something closed: he is not somebody sophisticated and devoted; he is more likely someone very simple, even hackneyed, from the textbook; available, clear"; "Gorky" is for those people who just lack any cultural and book context and who will be able to compensate its absence thanks to us. Therefore, first of all, we are aimed not at Moscow, not at millionaire cities, but at regions Gorky is a meme too': what a new website will write about literature 'Gorky: interview with the editors, 2016).

The principal position in filling this resource is to give new book only a part of the estimated volume of information for the reader. Boris Kupriyanov, the inspirer of the website, says: "for the reader it is absolutely all the same whether the book has just been published or it was published 200 years ago, if he didn't read it. For the reader each book is new, whether it be "Crime and Punishment" or the latest

Pelevin's novel" (Gorky is a meme too': what a new website will write about literature 'Gorky: interview with the editors, 2016). That is why, the website has a section "deservedly forgotten books which, however, can be interesting to a reader and a scientist", fragments from new novels, etc. Not every publisher is likely to afford it, but, since the website is a non-commercial thing, its creators, obviously, have a larger scope for imagination and implementation of their ideas. Only time will show the result of such approach, but the authors have obviously taken on a super mission to bring books out of the sphere of pure consumption.

Nevertheless, despite programs chosen by creators of this or that website, when analyzing the content of the chosen resources one might notice one important feature. On the one hand, editions are oriented to a wide range of mass readers, their policy statements declare it. Therefore, such resources solve the problem of access to knowledge, which UNESCO announced to be major and leading to information society crisis, since these resources form thematic, sometimes problematic field of modern literature. On the other hand, the approach to new books presentation and the style of critics point out that the book still has elite status, despite its existence in the form of a text, not the work printed on paper.

The style of book reviews, announcements and interviews, including referral lists (for example, "50 best documentary novels", etc.), in which different respected people offer network media, is a complicated synthetic formation. The main feature of this style is a good literary language, but with elements of colloquial style (which is represented by the combination of the inter jargon and the professional slang of various subcultures). But it is more characterized by active use of scientific style, which shows stylization as a genre phenomenon, or, in some cases, imitation of scientific style. In our opinion, it is not just the representation of media experts as language persons, though this factor needs to be considered (thus, Lyudmila Alyabyeva says that cultural studies, fashion studies and many other terms have no adequate translation or adaptation into the Russian language; and the set designer Galina Solodovnikova speaks about the same thing concerning the theory of theater: "I studied modern theater in English and I do not know the Russian lexicon and terminology for the things which are already familiar to me" (Set Design by Galya Solodovnikova about their favorite books, 2015). It is also a question of a certain style game and providing social comfort to the content consumer: the reader appears in the circle. Thus, if we study the project "The Bookshelf" of the online magazine "Wonderzine", which positions itself as "online edition for girls", we can picture the image of the magazine's reader, an educated girl who likes not only cosmetics, but also independent films, and who possesses scientific reflection, perception of, for example, the book "The mechanical smile". It is a remarkably illustrated book in an album format which I am reading up with pleasure at present. It is devoted to erotic and commodification of a female body in modern culture (a model body taken as an example) and to formation of fashion shows or "parades of dummies" as they were first called" (Alyabieva, 2016).

The project assumes systematic reading circle of a number of famous people with the managing director of the Theory of Fashion magazine Lyudmila Alyabyeva, the director of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts Marina Loshak, the theatrical critic Elena Kovalskaya among them: they act as experts, recommending about ten books which define their personality. The list of books includes editions in many European languages, so we can assumes that the website's readers can speak more than one language; and the presentation of books can be considered as a miniature scientific review. We can also

say that reading being elite activity still plays an important role and to be a part of this culture means to be a highly educated fashionable and spiritual person, following leading trends in this field.

4. Conclusion

Thus, the book remains the most important component of the humanistic paradigm of the future knowledge society. But at the same time, it is obvious that in modern information society a great value is placed not on a phenomenon, but its presentation. So, a consumer deals not so much with the book text (work), but with metatexts: book reviews, announcements, polls, interviews, metasubject links, which are formed at the level of hyperlinks. New network media begin to act as experts defining borders and orientation of reading, accenting novelty and a wide thematic volume of literary texts. Books' reviews will become the basis for a modern person's world view. This person will trust network media and follow them when choosing their own life strategy and the reading program, in particular. The book will stand in one row with other types of mass culture (food, sport, cinema, etc.), but it will still have the status of a cultural marker in modern society.

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