III PMMIS 2019

Post mass media in the modern informational society
"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
achievements and problems"

LITRES READER BOOK REVIEW: NON-INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE ON THE INTERNET

Tatyana Saveleva (a)*, Natalia Danilenko (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Chelyabinsk State University, Miass branch, 15-666 Vernadsky street, Miass, Russia, tatjana-saveljeva2010@yandex.ru
(b) Chelyabinsk State University, Miass branch 2-29, Phizkulturnikov Street, Miass, Russia, nbdanilenko@gmail.com

Abstract

The Internet has allowed anyone to participate in the literary process not only as a reader or writer, but also as a critic. The prevalence and relevance of the reader's review on the Internet reveals a number of problems. Institutional (literary) critique is perceived by readers as official and therefore causes a certain distrust. The reader's review on the website of the online store is the main Navigator in the information flow of literature and, accordingly, requires study. A survey of 240 people was conducted. 70% of them are young people aged 15 to 25. 30% are respondents aged 25 to 55 years. The questions asked were about the ways of selecting books for reading, which electronic resources of books are most often addressed by respondents, what critics they know, if they read reviews about books, or write themselves. We have analyzed more than 500 reader reviews, their communicative and writing strategies. Reader review in the electronic library Litres is a model of all non-institutional (reader) criticism in miniature. The reviews can be traced to the dynamics of the reader's fashion, the popularity of an author or work, as well as Trends in the development of literature as a whole. The prevalence, diversity and creativity of reader reviews indicate a serious change in the ratio: writer-reader-critic.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Reader critique, reader book review, communication and writing strategies.

1. Introduction

A new information technology environment generates new genre forms or transforms existing ones, not only in news journalism, but also in its other types, for example, in critique. One of these genres, that has become widespread owing to information technology, is a reader review of the book read. Before analyzing this type of text, it is necessary to define the terminology. Modern philology considers three types of critique: literary (professional), writer and reader (non-professional). Bart (1994) calls the latter "amateur", also emphasizing its lack of professionalism. Nevertheless, we would like to avoid the opposition "professional" - "non-professional", since today the semantics of this opposition includes an estimated value of quality: "high-quality" - "poor-quality", and this term is inappropriate when analyzing the texts of critique. The term "institutional" ("non-institutional") seems to be more adequate, since it avoids evaluations, only identifies whether writing a critical article on a work of art, reviews or annotations, a book review is the author's work, the fulfillment of labor obligations. However, when the term "non-institutional" is used, inconsistencies and misunderstandings are also possible. The fact is that in the theory of art, the fixed meaning of "institutional critique" is the criticism of institutions. Institutional critique is a strategy in the art of the second half of the 20th century connecting art, first of all, with economic, political and social processes in the society. Art theorist Rauning (2011) puts such criticism in direct dependence on economics and politics:

> *If institutional critique is not to be fixed and paralyzed as something established in the art field and confined within its rules, then it has tocontinue to develop along with changes in society and especially to tie into other forms of critique both within and outside the art field, such as those arising in opposition to the respective conditions or even before their formations.* (para. 1)

That is why we have chosen the definition of "non-institutional (reader) critique. In the 2000s, another term appears - "network critique" (Ermolin, 2003), however this definition did not last long, as well as the term "network literature" did not either. In his work "Russian Literature Today. Life Due to Concepts" Chuprynin (2015) notes the opposition of book and philological critique. He considers book critique as advertising criticism based on the values of public relations, but he blames philological critique for the fact that it imported into the country "a set of values, methods and the language of Western university statements about modern literature. Analyzing literary reviews in the practice of a book reviewer Molitvina (2016) also writes about the status of the book critic. On the crisis of professional critique write in the literary review of the magazine " Friendship of peoples": critique is degenerating today in the search for stylistic missteps, verbal blunders (Ermolin, 2017).

Disputes about literary and reader critique (their correlation, pragmatics, style, place in the modern literary process and book publishing) replicate the disputes about mass and elite literature or perennial disputes about professionals and amateurs. Bakanov (2017) notes that in online space professional (literary) critique "regularly competes with the mass and is increasingly inferior to it in emotionality of perception and simplicity of presentation. However, literary critics often ignore not only the mass literature, but also the mass reader remaining a phenomenon of a narrow professional audience. According to the results of our survey (240 respondents), a professional critic has much less influence on

the opinion of an ordinary reader than the recommendation of a friend or a reader review on the website of the online store. The results of the survey are presented in table 1.

Shakirov (2016) writes about the loss of influence of literary critique on literature and the reader, stressing that the new names and trends are opened not by critics, but by publishers. This is indirectly confirmed by Zhdanov (2016): the higher the level of the critical text, the less effective it is. On the other hand, using the online space, every reader can become a critic. Questions about the transformation of literary critique, about the change in the aspect ratio of the triangle, the writer-reader-critic on the Internet put in their works (Tishkov, 2012; Kostyrko, 2011; Ermolin, 2003).

Table 01. What helps you choose a book for reading

Acquaintances' and friends' advice	Literary Critic Reviews	Reader reviews	I choose at random or already familiar authors
31%	7%	41%	29%

Thus, we see that a reader review on the website of the online store is the main navigator in the information flow of literature and, accordingly, requires studying.

2. Problem Statement

The Internet has enabled anyone to participate in the literary process, not only as a reader or writer, but also as a critic. The prevalence and relevance of a reader review on the Internet reveals several problems.

▪ There appear a change in the ratio of institutional (literary) and non-institutional (reader) critique in the modern literary process.

▪ A reader review becomes a marker of the entry of a book (author) into the literary space and serves as an indicator of the sociocultural vectors of the development of literature and society as a whole. Meanwhile, there has been a polar attitude of researchers towards the reader review as a genre of critique: it is viewed both as an opportunity to express one's opinion and an improper influence of this opportunity due to the anonymity of the statement.

In light of this, it becomes interesting to consider the reader review both from the point of view of pragmatics and its philological analysis - the study of composition, structure, and artistic elements.

3. Research Questions

Due to the change in the reader-critic ratio in online space, many researchers speak of a crisis of critique in the modern literary process. However, the amount of institutional (literary) critique does not reduce. Marina Volkova published the post "My Favorite Critics" on her Facebook page where there are one hundred names of modern critics, whose opinion, according to the author, can and should be listened to. The Subscribers of the page complement this list. However, when interviewing a youth audience (from 15 to 25 years old), only two last names appeared in the questionnaires: Galina Yuzefovich and Dmitry Bykov - not considering V.G. Belinsky who is familiar to the respondents from the school studies.

In our research, we want to answer the questions:

3.1. What caused the popularity of a reader review in the online space? What motivates the reader when he leaves a review of a book on the site: self-expression, a desire for feedback, an emotional outburst?

3.2. What are the artistic and communication strategies for a successful review?

Among the reader reviews there are texts consisting of several primitive sentences: I liked it - I did not like it, "the hero is good, but the author made a great mistake", and serious detailed reviews as well. Unlike institutional critique, the reader, who leaves his review, does not need to maintain a writer's reputation, does not need to adhere to certain political views, he is not constrained by the concept of "format - non-format". Does the reader review benefit from this or does it lose due to unrestricted freedom which is equal to anarchy?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our research is to consider the reader review on the resource LitRes as a fact of critique, as a non-institutional journalistic text in the online space: its pragmatics, functions, artistic features, writer's and communication strategies.

5. Research Methods

The methods used in the study: survey (both offline and social media survey), comparative analysis, quantitative analysis, philological analysis of the text.

5.1. Survey

A survey of 240 people was conducted. 70% of them are young people aged from 15 to 25. 30% are respondents aged from 25 to 55. The questions asked were about the ways of selecting books for reading, which electronic resources of books are most often addressed by respondents, what critics they know, if they read reviews about books, or write themselves. The choice of the audience is due to the fact that it is young people who more often choose reading in electronic format, and therefore, refer to the book reviews, which are the subject of our study. LitRes undoubtedly takes the first place among the book electronic resources.

5.2. Choosing an electronic resource for collecting actual material

Shcherbinina (2019), analyzing public Internet platforms for readers ' self-expression, lists the sites of writers, virtual literary clubs, fan groups of individual authors or works, author blogs, electronic libraries and online stores. There are reader reviews on many electronic resources. We have chosen the online store of e-books LitRes for several reasons.

First of all, it is a popular resource that has existed since 2006 having its own applications "Read" and "Listen" and collaborating with libraries and leading Russian publishing houses, as well as directly with many writers. Wikipedia mentions among them Evgeny Grishkovets, Alexandra Marinina, Oleg Roy, Daria Dontsova and others.

Secondly, LitRes has several formats of free content: reading the introductory fragment, reading online without downloading the book, ordering the selected work through its regional library. Thus, the circle of the readers is not narrowed, since the readers who do not buy e-books for various reasons are not cut off.

Thirdly, one of the most extensive corpuses of reader reviews is presented on LitRes. This is also due to the fact that for their reviews on LitRes the readers are credited with bonuses, which can be used to pay for their book purchases.

6. Findings

The literature on LitRes is arranged by thematic groups: easy reading, serious reading, history, foreign literature, children's books, journalism and others. There are also popular science blocks in the library: country house, household, sports and medicine, psychology, but we only considered fiction sections. We did not take up the reviews of audio books either, since most of them are written about how the book is read, how easy it is to listen to it, and not about the work itself. Within each section there are subgroups. For example, the "serious reading" block is represented by categories: all books, modern prose, poetry, biography and memoirs, dramaturgy, classical literature, and seriously about history. The same book can be declared in different sections: the novel by A. Ivanov "Tobol. Many Are Called" can be found in the sections "modern prose", "adventures", "seriously about history". Each artwork page contains an annotation from the LitRes, a description from the publisher, quotes from the work and reviews from the readers, among which the best is highlighted by the editors of the resource.

6.1. Communicative strategies of a reader review

Considering the literary review as a media dreamer, Moreva (2015) notes the following communication strategies: presentation, idealization, rehabilitation, exposure and disclosure, which are implemented in tactics: dialogism, immersion in the text, self-presentation. The reader review of LitRes from this list is characterized, first of all, by presentation, idealization and denunciation.

One of the reasons for writing a reader review is the possibility of having a peculiar dialogue with the author. The words of gratitude, a wish of creative success, an assurance that a new book is eagerly awaited. But there are not only thanks, but also reproaches to the author. Anyway there are more positive reviews for any book. For example, Guzel Yakhina "Zuleikha Opens her Eyes" - 83% of the total, A. Ivanov "Tobol. Many are called" - 79%, Dan Brown" Origin" -80%. The novels "Doctor Zhivago" by B. Pasternak, "12 chairs" by Ilf and Petrov do not have any negative reviews.

Neither the thematic group nor the author's fame influences the amount of reviews to the work. The only tendency that we note: the works of classical literature, especially those that are a part of the school curriculum, have much fewer reader reviews. Otherwise, detectives, love stories, fiction, foreign and domestic authors, with a world name and known only in narrow circles can have approximately the same number of reviews.

Table 02. Number of readers ' reviews of the book

Author and work	Thematic section on LitRes	Number of reviews
G. Yakhina "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes"	Serious reading Modern prose	815
A. Ivanov "Tobol" Many Are Called "	Serious reading Modern prose	57
D.Rubina "Russian Canary"	Serious reading Modern prose	39
E. Vodolazkin "Aviator"	Serious reading Modern prose	137
C. Bukowski	Serious reading Modern prose	32
M.Sholokhov "The Silent Don"	Serious reading Classical literature	25
B. Pasternak "Doctor Zhivago"	Serious reading Classical literature	21
EM. Remarque "Three Comrades"	Serious reading Classical literature	132
Donna Tart "Goldfinch"	Serious reading Classical literature	3
Ilf and Petrov "12 chairs"	Serious reading Classical literature	12
Janusz Leon Vishnevsky "Loneliness in the Network"	Easy reading Love story	77
M. Metlitskaya "In a Quiet Town by the Sea ..."	Easy reading Love story	43
Yu Nesbë "Leopard"	Easy reading Detectives	34
Dan Brown's "Origins"	Easy reading Adventure, action books	443
John Martin "Swordstorm"	Easy reading Fantasy	3
V. Panov "Distortion"	Easy reading Fantasy	23

As it can be seen from the comparative table 02, we randomly selected authors and works from various thematic sections of the LitRes library, a sensational bestseller by John Martin, continuing the series "A Song of Ice and Flame", screened, reproduced in computer games has only three reviews, and the novel by V. Panov " Distortion "- 23. Just three reviews were also received by the popular novel D. Tart "Goldfinch", despite the media boom that accompanied its appearance, including "crazy queues in winter New York to see the painting "Goldfinch" exhibited in a private collection (Zimina, 2015).

It is impossible to conduct gender or age analysis of those who write reader reviews due to the anonymity of the statement. Sometimes this can be judged by the nickname or the text of the review, but not always.

A reader review is an opportunity to express not only admiration for the author and his book, but also to criticize the work. Among critical notes from the readers, the first place in terms of prevalence is taken by the ones blaming the author for inaccuracy of the actual details. Spelling, punctuation and graphics of the reviews bellow are saved:

▪ *Flaps on every page. The author was clearly neither in the bath, nor in the barn!! ("G. Yakhina "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes ")*

▪ *The book begins with the "spreading cranberries" and continues to amuse the reader with the author's lack of information about the simplest things of the peasant's, and even of everyday life (A. Ivanov "Tobol" Many Are Called")*

▪ *There are a lot of mistakes and inaccuracies in the references to religious rites: there is no hallelujah at the end of the prayer service, there cannot be evening liturgy for the Intercession, alb is worn only during the service, but at the end it isremoved. It is enough to go to any church and see (A. Ivanov "Tobol" Many Are Called")*

Secondly, the authors are to blame for the lack of any elements of the artistic system of works: the elaboration of characters, composition and language of the work.

▪ *In Russian there is no word NETU. Well, the heroes use it in their speech, this underlines the spoken, popular language, but it is illiterate to use it in the words of the author. I didn't even expect this from the author (A. Ivanov "Tobol" Many Are Called");*

▪ *Further, the manner of writing became annoying ("G. Yakhina" Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes").*

▪ *Awful product. very boring. many incomprehensible words (M. Sholokhov "The Silent Don");*

▪ *In my opinion, there is more form than content. He writes colorfully, but the plot is tight in some places. And the syllable is sometimes too fanciful (B. Pasternak "Doctor Zhivago");*

▪ *Just horror. Only a waste of money (C. Bukowski "Women");*

▪ *As for the plot, as the classic said: "I do not believe it!" (D. Rubina, "Russian Canary").*

▪ *Superficial and ragged plot. The author has vivid problems with the chronology. The time periods, seasons, age relations are not coordinated, because of this confusion you just get lost in the narration (M. Metlitskaya "In a Quiet Town by the Sea")*

The third most common group of reproaches to the authors is based on disagreement with the ideological position of the writer, his political, national or religious views.

▪ *In my opinion - the author overdid it with the coloring of all the Russians in black, and the "civilized European prisoners" in white (A. Ivanov, "Tobol "Many Are Called");*

▪ *A worthy publication for the Yeltsin Center library as an example of modern Russophobia ("G. Yakhina "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes").*

▪ *Enough for us about the Soviet ill will! Do the Finns have more goodwill? (E. Vodolazkin "Aviator")*

A person writing a review communicates not only with the author of the work, but also with other authors of the reviews.

▪ *I am writing only to dilute this pink kissel akhov and okhov ("G. Yakhina "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes");*

▪ *I agree with the previous reviews; the book is great! (D.Rubina "Russian Canary").*

6.2. Writer's strategies of a reader review

The volume of readers ' reviews is different: from 19 to 1000 words, it does not depend on the thematic category. The style of the review in most cases depends on the volume: the smaller the review, the more often it will be used exclamation marks, superlative adjectives and lexemes: masterpiece,

miracle, delight, wonderful, cool-and their derivatives (This is not a book – MASTERPIECE!!!!). The subjectivity of the interpretation of a work of art from the reader critique today, on the contrary, comes to institutional (literary) critique. Kutenkov (2018) writes about this: "A critic often imposes his laws on the author — which, due to the absence of an agreement on terms, looks unconvincing" (para. 3).

Readers ' reviews with an attempt to seriously analyze the text are written in a competent literary language. In many it is possible to note figurative language, with use of art and pictorial means:

▪ *The Silent Don it like a crypt: a sad parade of the dead, of the people who are dear to Grigory Melekhov.*

▪ *Complete same opinion rite (the following is a quote from the novel (A. Ivanov "Tobol. Many are Called)*

Many reviews contain autobiographical motifs, stories about the ways of familiarization with the work. Many authors of reader reviews refer to analogies, comparing the work described with those already known. So, "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes" by G. Yakhina is compared with "The Kukotsky Enigma" by L. Ulitskaya, "Abode" by Z. Prilepin, the novel "Darkness Lays down on the Old Steps" by A. Chudakov.

7. Conclusion

A reader review in the electronic library of LitRes is a model of all non-institutional (reader) critique in miniature. According to the reviews, one can trace the dynamics of the reader fashion, the popularity of one or another author or work, and trends in the development of literature in general. The prevalence, diversity and creativity of reader reviews indicate a serious change in the ratio: writer-reader-critic.

References

Bakanov, R. P. (2017). *Rossijskaya medijnaya kritika v usloviyah cifrovyh media: poisk novyh sposobov vzaimodejstviya s auditoriej* [Russian media criticism in the context of digital media: search for new ways of interaction with the audience]. Retrieved from https://kpfu.ru/staff_files/F1450144812/Zhurnalisty_2017.pdf

Bart, R. (1994). *Izbrannye raboty: Semiotika: Poetika* [Selected works: Semiotics: Poetics]. Moscow: Progress.

Chuprynin, S. (2015). *Kritika – ehto kritiki. Versiya 2.0.* [Critique is Critique. Version 2.0]. Moscow.

Ermolin, E. (2003). Kritik v Seti [A critic in the Network]. *Znamya*, *3,* 195-209.

Ermolin, E. (2017). Pisatel' i chitatel' v mire, poteryavshem budushchee: literaturnye itogi 2016 goda [Writer and reader in a world that has lost its future: literary results of 2016]. *Druzhba narodov, 1,* 234-252.

Kostyrko, S. (2011). Russkij literaturnyj internet: nachalo [Russian literary Internet: the beginning]. *Novyj Zhurnal, 263.* Retrieved from https:// magazines.russ.ru/nj/2011/263/ko22.html.

Kutenkov, B. (2018). Poehticheskaya kritika i ehsseistika konca 2017 – nachala 2018 goda: desyat' tekstov [Poetic criticique and essays of the end of 2017-beginning of 2018: ten texts]. *Interpoezija, 1.* Retrieved from http://www.zh-zal.ru/interpoezia/2018/1/poeticheskaya-kritika-i-esseistika-konca-2017-nachala-2018-goda.html

Molitvina, N. N. (2016). Literaturnye recenzii v praktike knizhnyh obozrevatelej [Literary reviews in the practice of book reviewers]. *Izvestiya Saratovskogo universiteta. Seriya Filologiya. Zhurnalistika, 16*(3), 340-344.

Moreva, A. N. (2015). *Kommunikativnye strategii i taktiki v mediazhanre literaturnoj recenzii* [Communicative strategies and tactics in the media genre of literary review] Dissertaciya na soiskanie uchenoj stepeni kandidata filologicheskih nauk, Nizhnij Novgorod. Retrieved from https://diss.unn.ru/files/2016/585/diss-Moreva-585.pdf

Rauning, G. (2011). Kunst Und Revolution. Kunstlerischer Aktivismus Im Langen 20. Jahrhundert Izdatel'stvo Evropejskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, Sankt-Peterburg.

Shakirov, S. M. (2016). Literaturnaya kritika i reklama [Literary criticism and advertising]. *Vestnik Chelyabinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Seriya Filologiya*, *101,* 169-174.

Shcherbinina, YU. (2019, January 18). *Chtenie v ehpohu Web 2.0.* [Reading in the era of Web 2.0.]. Retrieved from http://lanasvet1991.blogspot.com/2014/06/web-20.html

Tishkov, A. A. (2012). Pisatel' – chitatel' – kritik v Internete [Writer - reader-critic on the Internet]. *Izvestiya Saratovskogo universiteta. Seriya Filologiya. Zhurnalistika, 12*(3), 99-106.

Zhdanov, O. (2016). *Setevaya kritika i transformaciya chitatel'skogo vkusa* [Network criticism and the transformation of the reader's taste]: Retrieved from http://literratura.org/non-fiction/2146-setevaya-kritika-i-transformaciya-chitatelskogo-vkusa.html

Zimina, L. V. (2015). Kul'turnaya konvergenciya: novye media i izdatel'skij biznes [Cultural convergence: new media and publishing]. *Vestnik Chelyabinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Seriya Filologiya*, 5 (360), 377–383.