

NAUKI O MEDIACH / MEDIA STUDIES

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ALL THE POWER IN THE HANDS OF READERS? THE NEGOTIATION OF AUTHOR AND READER ROLES BASED ON EXAMPLES IN THE BLOGOSPHERE

1. Introduction

The idea of Roland Barthes that the author must die for the reader to be born, is one of the most important contemporary literary theories¹. Moreover, the concept put forward by the researcher appears to correspond to social and cultural reality of the new media epoch. It can even be claimed that its significance increased at the beginning of the 21st century, since communication through digital, interactive and hypertext media remarkably changed the relations between the author and the reader. As Maciej Maryl accurately pointed out, the reader “with the aid of the new technology, gained the possibility of far-reaching intervention into the work”².

The blogosphere today provides a significant communication space, important for technological, cultural, social and other reasons. Blogs are examples of participatory culture, both when referring to the activity of bloggers and the activity of other Internet users, who comment on the posts or enter into interactions with the authors. Since a weblog is a communication tool, a genre permitting interactivity, then multiple interactions take place between the bloggers and the readers, making up certain important elements of the blogging process. An example of the blogosphere permits to note that the roles of the author and the reader are not predefined and the scope of their “rights” is negotiated. The result of the negotiation depends on attitudes adopted by the parties participating in negotiations, on communication purposes with which they enter the interaction, and finally, on the skill in achieving those aims.

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¹ R. Barthes, *Śmierć autora*, translated by M.P. Markowski, „Teksty Drugie”, 1-2(1999), pp. 247-251.

² M. Maryl, *Pozorne otwarcie hipertekstu. Model komunikacyjny hiperprozy*, w: *E-polonistyka*, eds. A. Dziak, S.J. Żurek, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2012, p. 154. Writing about the recipient’s activity and democratization of relationships between the author and the reader, Maciej Maryl refers to the findings of such researchers as George P. Landow or David J. Bolter.

The literary context will interweave in this paper with issues related to the theory of communication and the specificity of new media. This results from the fact that literary critics have significantly contributed to describing the relations between authors and readers, and in many cases have presented correct diagnoses with regard to various phenomena of participatory culture, which can actually be distant from literary communication (e.g. blogs can, but do not have to be literary texts).

The first part of the article will discuss the above-mentioned concept of R. Barthes, with particular focus on the roles of the author and the reader in the context of a specifically understood fight for domination between those two sides. The second fragment of the text will be devoted to the proposal of using the negotiation category to characterize communication processes occurring between blog authors and readers in order to describe their roles, and their rights³.

An inspiration to take up research on the communication processes in the space of participatory culture were doubts concerning the over-generalization of R. Barthes's concept, namely, the question of whether it is not extended over a too-large area of transmitting-receiving communication or whether the opinion about a revolutionary change of the roles traditionally assigned to the author and the reader is not overused. The thesis put forward in this text assumes that although the traditionally understood roles of the author and the reader definitely change in the blogosphere, it is communication and not the reader who should be seen on the pedestal from which the author has been knocked off.

2. The author is dead, long live the reader?

The issue of negotiating the roles of the author and the reader in the process of creating texts of participatory culture using the example of blogs, requires references to the theory of Roland Barthes concerning the death of the author, as the changes related to emergence of new communication technologies have emphasized the meaning of the concept indicated and its fundamental character for the problem undertaken⁴. R. Barthes claims that text creation is a process

³ The category of negotiation seems to be appropriate with reference to determining the roles of the author and the reader, although it is rarely used and developed in this context. It usually concerns negotiating the meanings than negotiating the scope of rights of the figures mentioned. See: D.P. Pearson, R.J. Tierney, *On Becoming a Thoughtful Reader: Learning to Read Like a Writer*, in: *Becoming Readers in a Complex Society*, eds. A.C. Purves, O. Niles, The National Society for the Study of Education, Chicago 1984, p. 145; D.W. Booth, *Reading Doesn't Matter Anymore: Shattering the Myths of Literacy*, Pembroke Publishers Limited, Markham 2006, p. 176.

⁴ We should also mention the findings of Michał Głowiński to indicate information that perhaps is obvious and raises no doubt, but nevertheless is worth emphasizing. The referred researcher emphasizes the fact of partnership between the speaker and the receiver, writing that the receiver is the "virtual addressee, making up an integral element of the work, the assumed partner of the literary subject in the process of communication set in the work. Such a recipient is not tantamount to a specific person reading a given text, it is a set of roles determined by that text, which

in which the person of the creator dies and explained: “writing is a sphere of neutrality, non-transparency, in which our subject disappears; a negative, in which all identity finding itself in the writing body fades away”⁵.

R. Barthes believes that the image of the literature is dominated by the figure of the author, discussions concerning the author and reflections on his biography, which is the result of the multi-century custom of putting his person on the pedestal, but this tradition has been vanishing⁶. Contemporary culture is subject to dynamic transformations and the situation to which R. Barthes referred, claiming that it is the author who is the central figure, therefore everything “turns only around the author, his person, history, predilections, passions”⁷, dynamically changes. The researcher found that the author is, in fact, the past of the work he created, and added:

The author seems to feed the book, which means that he exists before it, suffers and lives for it in the same relation of preciousness as a father towards a child. It is quite the contrary in the case of the modern sriptor, who is born with his text, is not granted the existence which would precede writing, he is not either an object, the predicate of which would be a book, the time of his existence is the time of utterance and each text is written in the eternal here and now⁸.

An inspiring concept of R. Barthes is connected with a range of practical changes, related, for instance, to a new method of treating texts of culture, which consists in rejecting their explanation through the biography of the author or negating the legitimacy of interpretation based on surmising the intention of

requires from the reader a certain type of reading, imposes upon the reader specific methods for interpreting the meaning material, directing the process of concretization. The way in which the work develops the role of the recipient is determined by beliefs and styles conventional at a given time and, above all, literary conventions, the elements of which the work is fulfilling” – M. Głowiński, *Odbiorca dzieła literackiego*, in: *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. J. Sławiński, edition 3, extended and corrected, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2000, p. 351. M. Głowiński points to the fact of various relations and multiple interactions between two sides taking part in the process of literary communication, but the researcher’s reflections reveal clear differentiation between the speaker/author, who makes and implements certain assumptions, and the addressee/reader, who moves within specified boundaries imposed by the author. However, in the book *Style odbioru. Szkice o komunikacji literackiej (Receiving Styles. Sketches on Literary Communication)* M. Głowiński poses questions that are significant even today: “in what way does the structure of the literary work determine the role of the addressee, therefore – how does it create a virtual receiver?”, and also: “how do requirements of the recipients (their »expectation of society«) affect the shape of the poetic work determining its structure?”. M. Głowiński, *Style odbioru. Szkice o komunikacji literackiej*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1977, p. 65.

⁵ R. Barthes, *Śmierć autora...*, s. 247. R. Barthes perceives the effect of surrealism on the emergence and development of the trend under discussion. Team and automatic writing contributed to the change of the image of the author, and even – through the subversive character of surrealists with rebellious attitude towards cultural traditions – to its de-sacralization. As the example of innovative trends, R. Barthes mentions Stéphane Mallarmé’s poetics emphasizing the meaning of the process of writing and diminishing the role of the author. Ibidem, pp. 248–249.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 248.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem. All special typefaces in the quotations were introduced by the authors of those texts.

the author (which is expressed by a question known to many generations of students “What did the poet have in mind?” or “What did the author want to say?”). R. Barthes proves that although “the explication of the work is usually looked for at the side of who created it”⁹, yet this trend is incorrect and becomes reversed, with the changes consisting in emphasizing the role of the reader in explaining the sense of the work¹⁰.

What should be emphasized is the contribution of linguistics, in the opinion of R. Barthes, to the process of throwing the author off the pedestal. It even created the possibility to “destroy the Author” by making providing opportunities of applying significant analytic tools and demonstrating that “utterance as an entirety is an empty process, which goes well without completing by any of the interlocutors: from the linguistic point of view, the Author is only the person who writes, just like »me« is only the person who says »me«, the language knows only the »subject« and not the »person«, and this subject, otherwise empty without the mere utterance that defines it, is sufficient to »take up« the speech, or exhaust it”¹¹.

As the topic of linguistics emerges, it is not possible at this point to omit the issue of undermining the classical model of communication in relation to the changing roles of the author and the reader, or more broadly – the speaker and the receiver. The model of communication process developed by Roman Jakobson presents the roles of the sender and the receiver as contrasting with one another. The researcher developed a scheme presenting factors inseparably related to verbal communication and explained its elements in the following way:

The sender directs a message to the receiver. For this message to be effective, it must be applied in the context (i.e. it has to mean something), a context perceptible for the receiver and or verbalized, or such that can be verbalized; further on, the code is necessary, fully or at least partially common for the sender and the receiver (or in other words – for that who »codes«, and who »decodes« the message); finally, there must be a contact – physical channel and psychical relation between the sender and the receiver, making it possible for the two of them to initiate and to continue communication¹².

On the other hand, Jerzy Mikułowski-Pomorski points out the limitations of certain models of communication, pertaining, among others, to the above-quoted paradigm. In his article, *Od mówcy do rozmówcy. Perswazja czy spotkanie? Rewizja klasycznych modeli komunikacji (From the Speaker to the Interlocutor. Persuasion or Meeting)*, the researcher poses the question of whether the point of view of human communication developed in the epoch of industrial society and concerning this society fits into the contemporary situation. The researcher states that classical models of communication require critical reflection. Revision

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 250–251.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 249.

¹² R. Jakobson, *Poetyka w świetle językoznawstwa*, translated by K. Pomorska, in: *W poszukiwaniu istoty języka. Wybór pism*, vol. 2, ed. M.R. Mayenowa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1989, p. 81.

should be applied, in the opinion of J. Mikułowski-Pomorski, in particular to relations between the sender and the receiver. In his opinion, the speaker in the Jakobson's model is "a rhetor aiming at a specific objective"¹³, while it would be more appropriate with the modern communication model to perceive the speaker as the partner of the receiver. As the researcher emphasizes: "The speaker is in a relationship with the receiver, it is not that *ex-post* signals do not make him change his way of communication, but interactively received signals from the receiver that cause fast modification. Because of this, to a degree higher than before, the speaker changes and adjusts in the dialogue with the receiver; becomes much alike him"¹⁴. J. Mikułowski-Pomorski emphasizes that although the speaker continues to initiate the process of communication and sets its conditions, his relations with the receiver change. The function of the addresses does not end with receiving a one-way message¹⁵. As results from the above remarks, nowadays it would be more adequate to speak about an active receiver, affecting the communication process, able to react to the content of the message, and even modify it.

The scheme proposed by R. Jakobson clearly indicates the meaning of individual factors shaping the course of the communication process, but assigning the function of the speaker to the blog author, and the blog reader – the function of the recipient, does not exhaust the communicative issue of the weblog. According to the suggestion put forward by J. Mikułowski-Pomorski, classical communication models should be revised, and in particular, the situation of the speaker and the receiver in the communication process occurring through the new medium, the Internet, should be discussed.

The above-elaborated digression concerning changes in perceptions of the process of communication is important, since those changes are strongly related to the concept of R. Barthes. The statement that the "birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author"¹⁶ can be treated to a much wider extent, and refer e.g. to social or cultural communication, not only literary communication.

3. Negotiating the author and reader roles in the blogosphere

Roger Fisher and William Ury state that everyone, aware or not, is a negotiator, since negotiations make up an inseparable part of life. As the authors claim: "Everyone negotiates something every day. Like Moliere's Monsieur Jourdain,

¹³ J. Mikułowski-Pomorski, *Od mówcy do rozmówcy. Perswazja czy spotkanie? Rewizja klasycznych modeli komunikacji*, "Euro-limes", 1(2004), <http://janek.uek.krakow.pl/~limes/files/el1%284%292004/jmp_limes1%284%29.pdf>, access: 10 December 2015.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ R. Barthes, *Śmierć autora...*, p. 251.

who was delighted to learn that he had been speaking prose all his life, people negotiate even when they don't think of themselves as doing so. A person negotiates with his spouse about where to go for dinner and with his child about when the lights go out"¹⁷. The authors, who perceive negotiations as a basic means of getting what you want from others, define negotiations as "back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed".

Gerard I. Nierenberg defines this issue in a similar way, showing the possibility of applying negotiations both in professional and personal life, as well as in social or political sphere, etc. As the author summarizes: "After research and experiments, I arrived at the conclusion that in life everything, under any circumstances, at each time, is related to negotiating"¹⁸. This statement seems to be a far-reaching generalization, but the author tries to explain it: "Every desire that demands satisfaction – and every need to be met – is at least potentially an occasion for people to initiate the negotiation process. Whenever people exchange ideas with the intention of changing relationships, whenever they confer for agreement, they are negotiating"¹⁹.

While moving on to the issue of negotiating the roles of speaker and the receiver in the blogosphere, the significance of referring to computer-mediated communication should be emphasized. This issue is undertaken by Zoe I. Barsness and Anita D. Bhappu in the article entitled *At the Crossroads of Culture and Technology: Social Influence and Information-Sharing Processes During Negotiation*²⁰. As results from the text, the blog as an asynchronous medium is related to high "understanding costs" for negotiators, since in the negotiation process the participants do not receive a lot of important information. This is a communication process deprived of significant grounding, which is present in face-to-face communication and enriches interaction, develops and facilitates understanding. There are not clues related to the communication context, which emerge in direct communication when a common communication space is built on the basis of non-verbal signals, sequence of information exchange and the use of time in the discussion. The fact that negotiation concerning the roles of the author and the reader takes place in a computer-mediated communication, affects the way in which communicating persons build and interpret messages due to a lower feeling of the presence of other persons, lower awareness of the needs of others and higher probability of accentuating one's own needs and objectives. In particular, individuals who, regardless of the context, focus strongly on their own interests can, in an extreme way, reveal

¹⁷ R. Fisher, W. Ury, *Dochodząc do tak. Negocjowanie bez poddawania się*, translated by R.A. Rządca, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 1992, p. 21.

¹⁸ G.I. Nierenberg, *Sztuka negocjacji*, translated by D. Bakalarz, Wydawnictwo Studio Emka, Warszawa 1997, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

²⁰ Z.I. Barsness, A.D. Bhappu, *At the Crossroads of Culture and Technology: Social Influence and Information-Sharing Processes During Negotiation*, in: *The Handbook of Negotiation and Culture*, eds. M.J. Gelfand, J.M. Brett, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2004, pp. 350–373.

the lack of interests in needs and priorities of the other side. On the other hand, the possibilities of interaction that emerge here would not occur in indirect communication²¹.

What is important, in the opinion of G.I. Nierenberg, negotiating is characterized by a lack of pre-defined rules. A man learns the effectiveness of certain actions in the process of negotiation due to his experience²². The authors of weblogs also learn how to moderate the blog, how to establish rules for cooperation with the readers, and the readers on the basis of their experience learn what arguments can persuade the blogger to take specific actions. The problem of negotiating in the blogosphere can be treated broadly (e.g. it can refer to agreeing on an opinion on various topics), but in this text, the issue will be reduced to negotiating the roles of the author and the reader. It seems obvious that the author is the person who sets up the blog, who writes and publishes subsequent posts and moderates comments of Internet users, while the reader is a person who reads the posts, comments on them, and even if this person is not active, his still leaves his trace in blog statistics. However, the issue subject to negotiation is the scope of rights of readers as co-creators of the blog and the scope of author's rights as a moderator deciding which comments can be left and which should be removed, who can comment on the blog and who is deprived of this possibility, etc. Additionally, the issue that is important and is often left unsaid is the effect of readers' expectations of the blogger activity.

The two most common blogosphere types of negotiations will be discussed below: hard negotiations (dominant negotiation style) and principled negotiations (also referred to as integrative). The above-presented characteristics are the transfer of the description of negotiations presented by R. Fisher and W. Ury in the realm of the blogosphere²³.

In hard negotiations, the author and the readers of the blog perceive each other as opponents. The objective of both sides is to win. The author presents the readers with the framework of activities available for them and expects them to follow the rules that he has established, keeping to his own position in various issues, therefore sticking to his vision of the blog. However, the bloggers require some concessions from the blogger, e.g. concerning the freedom of commenting, by exerting pressure on the author, rebelling against his dominating attitude. The two sides do not trust each other²⁴, they keep a distance streaked with hostility. The participants in negotiation assume unyielding attitude, holding their positions – both towards people and problems, requesting unilateral benefits.

²¹ K.L. McGinn, R. Croson, *What Do Communication Media Mean for Negotiators? A Question of Social Awareness*, in: *The Handbook of Negotiation and Culture*, p. 344.

²² G.I. Nierenberg, *Sztuka negocjacji...*, p. 40.

²³ R. Fisher, W. Ury, *Dochodząc do tak...*, p. 35–36.

²⁴ See remarks of Krzysztof Stachura concerning trust and distrust in the Internet: K. Stachura, *Zaufanie i nieufność w internecie. Analiza wybranych determinantów kapitału społecznego*, in: *Com.unikowanie w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie*, eds. M. Niezgodą, M. Świątkiewicz-Mośny, A. Wagner, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2010, pp. 138–144.

The example of hard negotiations can be found, e.g. in blogs of journalists or politicians, who transfer into the sphere of new media communication the customs they know from traditional, one-way media. The activities that can be observed here include for instance, removal by the blogger of comments containing opinions that are contrary to his views. The dominant attitude of a weblog author sometimes results in the readers' protests towards the blogger. A symptomatic example is the blog *Les bleus sont là* by Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz, critically evaluated in terms of interactivity in the ranking of journalists' blogs of the "Press" magazine. *The jurors wrote about the blogging manner of the above journalist, among others in the following way:* "Responds to current events. Unfortunately, [...] zero contact with the readers. [...] Although the forum is sometimes huge and makes an interesting reading in itself, the author seems not to notice it at all"²⁵. The journalist does not use the potential of the blog interaction: leaves the remarks of the receivers without answers, does not enter into interaction with the readers, although they may publish hundreds of responses below individual posts. The comments in the blog *Les bleus sont là* often use the addressing phrases, such as: "Mr. Ziemkiewicz" or "Rafał". Internet users addressed many questions to Ziemkiewicz, but – observing the blogging practice carried out by the journalist – ceased waiting for answers, and the phrases like: "Mr. Ziemkiewicz, is the attitude of Mr. Holdys more important?"²⁶ should be treated as actually rhetorical questions. The analysis of the blog content shows that, over time, the number of questions to the author is reduced and the number of opinions concerning the authors increases. These are remarks of the type: "It is a good thing that we have Ziemkiewicz, Wildstein and some other persons from »Cafe Rzeczpospolita«, with such open minds! They are not behind the bars! The other should be felt sorry for..." or "Ziemkiewicz should take care of Michnik, because if he is not here, then Ziemkiewicz will have nothing to write about. And by the way, Ziemkiewicz »chewing out« the »Tygodnik« forgets that RP did not have many moments of pride in communist times"²⁷. The author is here an absent figure – the reader does not write to him (which is typical for the blog), but writes about him. The blogger hands over the field of comments to the readers, but resigns from entering into discussion with them. This situation shows how little the reader can actually do if the author takes a dominant attitude. It has negative consequences for the course of the communication process and means ignoring the potential of blog interactivity.

Apart from disregarding readers, another manifestation of the dominant attitude of a blog author is deleting comments. One of Internet users reading the blog of R. A. Ziemkiewicz wrote: "Ziemkiewicz is afraid of discussing, it's 100% sure... he deletes stronger posts. It's a pity, as you would here then where

²⁵ *Top blogów dziennikarzy*, "Press", 4(2011), pp. 43.

²⁶ Comment in: R.A. Ziemkiewicz, *Les bleus sont là...*, <<http://blog.rp.pl/ziemkiewicz>>, access: 12 March 2015.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

your place is”²⁸. The user of Janusz Korwin-Mikke’s blog stated: “Utter fool with a bow tie with empty kozet removes comments. Bravo clown, you will finally win publicity, dyed freak”²⁹. There are much more examples of similar statements. They appear particularly in blogs, the authors of which bring about controversial issues (which provoke discussions), but they are not willing to engage in a dialogue and reluctantly let readers of different opinions speak.

The participation of readers in co-creating the weblog by leaving the comments can be inconvenient for the blog authors, hence their dominant attitude. This is proved by the statement of blogger Piotr Petrus (using the pseudonym of Riddle): “Since some comments make me nervous, I decided to improve my blog again [...], by blocking comments to some posts. [...] This is a kind of suggestion that in some topics nothing should be written more. But, since it can be got around, no worries, so if anybody wants to write a comment anyway, then he will have nothing against me removing the comment”³⁰. The post in which the blogger presented a dominant approach disturbed the readers and a boisterous discussion began. Voices criticising the blogger for introducing a new rule emerged. The author decided to answer in a determined way to one of the criticizing readers: “And I can remind you that if I don’t want any comments, then I have the right to do it”³¹. The Internet user to whom the statement was addressed, responded “And I don’t want anybody to block my possibility to comment on the posts. And I have the right to comment if I believe that my comment can bring about anything”³². The blogger expressed the belief that his weblog is a space that can be controlled only by him, but his opinion was confronted with the objection of the reader, who considered the possibility of co-authoring the blog as a right he is entitled to.

A model that differs from the model of hard, domination-based negotiations is the principled (integrative) model, being at the same time the most desirable one. In this model, the participants in the blogosphere communication process focus on problem solving. Since the discourse participants separate personal matters from substantive ones and focus on the subject of the discussion, the issue of possible distrust does not have such a significant effect on the course of negotiation as in the previous model (and additionally, this model is characterized by more trust). The objective of the blogger and the readers is cooperation, based on the most effective solutions, in an amicable manner, so that the blog activity can be a source of benefits for both sides. Such a result can be achieved when the author of the blog asks the readers about their expectations and evaluates previously undertaken activities. He then gains knowledge of the needs of the readers and the readers will have grounds to perceive the blogger as a person

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Comment in: J. Korwin-Mikke, *Janusz Korwin Mikke – blog oficjalny*, <<http://korwin-mikke.blog.onet.pl>>, access: 10 December 2015.

³⁰ P. Petrus, *Perfection or vanity*, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20121112130609/http://perfectionorvanity.com>>, access: 10 December 2015.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Comment in: P. Petrus, *Perfection or vanity*....

open to their suggestions. The essence of principled negotiations is to develop possibilities beneficial for both sides. It is often achieved by suggesting many possibilities to the readers, of which they can select the one that is most suitable for them, or even the readers themselves are involved in proposing options that can be used in the blog. At the same time, this type of negotiation is far from giving in to the readers. The blogger safeguards the rules applicable for the blog, but these are the rules co-created and accepted by the readers, particularly in that the author explains the reasons for using them. Moreover, they are not permanent. Their application is not aimed at showing the omnipotence of the blogger, but at stabilizing the functioning of the community. Consequently, the readers have no need to put pressure on the author or to assume a rebellious attitude, but they show their expectations, justifying them, which increases the probability of their satisfaction.

Principled negotiations require from the author to give a certain area to be used by the readers, which involves trust to Internet users, but also the process of jointly establishing rules of cooperation. While bloggers preferring (consciously or not) hard negotiations ignore comments or delete them, authors favouring principled negotiations encourage commenting. Blogger Jakub Prószyński writes, "I hope that you will send your types for the events and trends which in the passing year were most important for you. As always, I am leaving the comments at your disposal"³³. However, it is important for the blogger not only to let the readers comment (which is not as obvious in the blogosphere as it would seem), but also to actively participate in readers' discussions. Dorota Świątkowska, a culinary blogger, lets readers comment, but also answers comments, gives explanations and provides advice. In relation to her holiday leave, she even asked the readers to help each other during her absence: "Unfortunately, at that time, due to only occasional access to the computer, I will not be able to answer your comments. Please, help each other. I know that you can be always counted on (thank you!)"³⁴.

In case of blogging referring to the model of integrative negotiations, the blogger does not play the role of a self-sufficient person, as is the case in hard negotiations, where the author considered his own ideas as final, not requiring any additions. The communication model preferred in the blogosphere is based on complementing the concept of the author and the reader. For example, J. Prószyński writes: "Of course, if I omitted something then the comments are for you and you can write your suggestions for news"³⁵, so he asks the readers to complement the contents of his own post.

In the blogs whose authors follow hard negotiation rules, the communication is rather of a one-way character or is only seemingly interactive. Bloggers using the possibilities offered by new media to a fuller extent, preferring integrative negotiations, invite the readers to be co-authors of the blog. For example,

³³ J. Prószyński, *Pijaru Koku Blog*, <<http://pijarukoku.pl>>, access: 10 December 2015.

³⁴ D. Świątkowska, *Moje wypieki*, <<http://www.mojewypieki.com>>, access: 10 December 2015.

³⁵ J. Prószyński, *Pijaru Koku Blog*....

in D. Świątkowska's weblog, the readers are asked to provide their own recipes and photos of dishes, which they eagerly do, which makes them feel like co-authors of the blog and members of the community that has formed here³⁶.

It is typical for the discussed form of blog to ask the readers for advice on many issues related to keeping the blog, e.g. through surveys. These are questions concerning technical solutions or the contents of the weblog. Thus, the readers have a feeling that their role is of significance. In the blog run by D. Świątkowska, the surveys, after certain issues have been solved, are removed so that they do not disturb the content structure of the blog. However, even after conducting the survey, the readers who want to submit their proposals do it through their comments, e.g. "Hi Dorotka, unfortunately, I didn't manage to add my request to the survey. Allow me to do it now, I hope you will take my request into account :) namely, the print option makes the recipe to be printed by default on 2 pages. You have to figure out how to fit the printout with a photo on one page. It would be great if it could be changed"³⁷. Of course, the blogger who only asks for advice and does not take into account any proposals, would lose the trust of the readers³⁸.

Even if the bloggers preferring the model of principled negotiations introduce certain solutions without consulting them with the Internet users, they explain the reasons for their decision. Maciej Budzich writes e.g.: "I decided to carry out a little experiment and import comments that you leave under my films on YouTube onto the blog. [...] Why am I doing so? I liked our discussion under the film about ebooks, a lot of conclusions and own experience – I have a feeling that this discussion will be more visible on the blog, will remain there for longer for somebody who finds this film/post in a week, a month or a year". At the same time, the blogger asks: "What do you think about such »dual channel discussion«?"³⁹, so he shows consideration for the readers' opinion, and probably that he would withdraw from the solution if the Internet users decided that it had not been successful.

³⁶ D. Świątkowska, *Moje wypieki...* .

³⁷ Comment in: D. Świątkowska, *Moje wypieki...* .

³⁸ Often principled negotiations can be close to soft negotiations, consisting in significant concessions to the blog readers, in over-zealously trying to meet the readers' expectations. In one of his posts, J. Prószyński encouraged the readers to demonstrate higher activity, complaining: "It is hard for me to grasp what really interests you". At the same time, in his other post he warned (perhaps also himself): "When we start to take stock of our work in the form of a growing circle of observers, a thought that frequently emerges is »and what to write now?«. You know, demand and supply. If I write something that is not of any interest to them, there will be no interaction, I will not evoke any discussion and whatsoever. [...] Do not differentiate the content depending on to whom we write. Let's do it to remain honest, to write about what really excites us, but without playing to the gallery". J. Prószyński, *Pijaru Koks Blog...*

³⁹ M. Budzich, *Mediafun*, <www.blog.mediafun.pl>, access: 10 December 2015.

4. Conclusions

The structure of the blog assumes a certain general scheme of relations between the blogger and the readers, but the way in which this manner is completed depends on the result of negotiations between the author and the users of the blog. Sometimes the bloggers prefer a dominant style of negotiations. They seem to convey a message that they are self-sufficient, tend to ignore the voices of the receivers, and even delete opinions that are not in line with their views. This causes problems in communication between the blogger and the readers, who are used to interactions that are typical for new media. Internet users aware of Web 2.0 possibilities want to be co-authors or active users of the content that is being provided to them. However, the bloggers accustomed to one-way communication, related to traditional media or simply distrustful of Internet users or avoiding the discussion, tend to adopt a dominant attitude. The model of integrative negotiations in which the blogger does not want to dominate the readers, and his aim is to cooperate with them, is more favourable for the blog communication as a whole. In such a case, the authors of weblogs offer a broader scope of freedom to Internet users, are open to the proposals of the readers and sometimes even ask for them.

Unquestionably, communication through new media has changed the relations between the author and the readers, the best example of which is the space of participatory culture, but those changes are not as radical as it would seem. The example of the blogosphere shows that the roles of the author and the reader are not pre-defined and the scope of their rights is negotiated, although it is the author who has the last word in the negotiation process, since he is sharing his rights. In view of the above, it can be claimed that knocking the author off the pedestal did not result in replacement by the reader, as R. Barthes would like, since it is communication and not the reader that appears on the pedestal that has been left empty after knocking off the author.

SUMMARY

This paper concerns the process of negotiating author and reader roles in the blogosphere. The starting point of this article is the theory of Roland Barthes that the death of the author is necessary for the birth of the reader. This idea notably responds to changing relations between the author and the reader in the new media era. The example of the blogosphere allows us to see that the roles of the author and the reader are not pre-defined and the field of their "laws" is negotiated (two models of negotiations are described in this paper). In the blogosphere, which is an example of participatory culture, knocking the author off his pedestal does not result in the reader replacing the author, as R. Barthes would like. On the empty pedestal, after dumping the author, the reader does not appear – but communication does.

KEY WORDS: author, reader, blogosphere, Roland Barthes