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**Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles:
An Instance from Romanian cultural journalism**

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Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles: An Instance from Romanian cultural journalism

Abstract:

This work serves as a theoretical and practical guide for journalists exploring sophisticated journalistic genres. It addresses the concerning trend of culture pages in newspapers and online platforms becoming scarce, often replaced by simple PR news. This decline is partly due to a lack of familiarity with complex cultural texts, as journalism students receive only brief exposure to these genres. In Romania, cultural articles are frequently penned by writers with diverse, non-literary backgrounds, including engineers and teachers, further complicating the landscape. The study examines the structure and specificities of these cultural genres, offering practical guidance for journalists. It addresses both theoretical and practical aspects, offering a guide for journalists navigating more complex cultural texts, while also reflecting on broader trends in the field. The findings may reveal insights into Romanian cultural journalism and offer a basis for comparing with other cultures facing similar challenges.

Key words: cultural journalism, review, critique, criticism, chronicle, specificities, writing strategies

Introduction

This study serves as both a theoretical framework and a practical guide for journalists engaging with more sophisticated journalistic genres. It responds to the growing concern over the diminishing presence of culture sections in newspapers and online platforms, which are increasingly being replaced by basic PR content. This trend can be attributed, in part, to the limited exposure journalism students receive to complex cultural texts, leaving them unfamiliar with these genres. The study explores the structure and unique characteristics of these cultural genres, providing journalists with practical strategies for writing and engaging with such content. Additionally, the findings aim to offer valuable insights into the state of Romanian cultural journalism and present opportunities for comparative analysis with other cultures facing similar challenges.

For our study on the decline of cultural journalism we apply several qualitative research methods. These methods help us explore the nuances of how cultural genres are structured, how journalists approach these genres, and the broader context of cultural journalism. We use content analysis and pay attention to the content of cultural pages in newspapers, magazines, and online platforms. This includes identifying themes, patterns, and structures in cultural articles, paying attention to how genres are represented. Thus we look for recurring themes, tone, language, and depth of analysis in the cultural texts.

Data Sources: Articles from Romanian newspapers, cultural blogs, and online platforms, categorized by the writer's background (e.g., literary critics, engineers, teachers).

We utilize a literature review, summarizing existing research, theories, and scholarly work relevant to the topic. This involves gathering and synthesizing current knowledge to provide a comprehensive overview of the field while

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identifying gaps or areas that require further exploration. In addition, we conduct a theoretical analysis, focusing on various theories, particularly in areas like literary criticism. This method aims to understand and interpret key concepts, frameworks, and theoretical perspectives. We also compare different theories, assessing their applicability and relevance to the study's focus. Furthermore, we present a range of opinions on the state of Romanian cultural magazines, summarizing insights from those directly involved in the production of these publications - editors, writers, and author-contributors who frequently publish in cultural sections. These subjective viewpoints are essential for assessing the current state of cultural journalism in Romania and demonstrating how it continues to thrive despite the economic challenges facing the broader press industry.

We also used a case study or a personal narrative approach, including personal examples of the author, working on a culture magazine. Using this method, the author reflects on her experiences, providing insights into the practical application of theories, personal observations, or the real-world implications of academic discussions. Thus the analysis includes the personal experience of the author, who worked as a cultural journalist and led the Culture section of the main local regional daily, *Observator*, from 1992 to 2009. Since 1999, the author has been a senior editor at *Arca* cultural magazine. This qualitative research method, incorporating personal and subjective experiences, aims to provide insights into cultural journalism from within the field. The personal examples provided are not absolute models but rather ways to better understand the approach and structure of the discussed cultural texts. These methods collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic by combining theoretical frameworks with personal and contextual insights.

Our goal was to identify the journalistic characteristics of these cultural products and how they differentiate among reviews, critiques, and literary criticism. The study investigated their commonalities and the distinct discursive elements that set them apart. Theoretical support was drawn from significant studies defining these genres and numerous opinions from within Romanian cultural magazines. These opinions concerned the fate of literary magazines, their independence, the role of literary critics, and the importance of book reviews. While subjective, these perspectives from contemporary Romanian writers and critics are crucial for the study because they reflect the internal dynamics of cultural magazine editorial offices. Many of these views may also resonate in the cultural landscapes of other countries facing similar issues.

We analyze the presence of elements specific to cultural journalism, applying discourse analysis. This involves analyzing how language is used in cultural journalism to frame cultural topics, events, and the role of critics. The personal examples provided are not intended as absolute models but as ways to better understand the analyzed genres of cultural journalism.

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The cultural magazine *Arca* from Arad, founded by editor-in-chief Vasile Dan in February 1990, serves as a monthly publication focused on literature, essays, visual arts, and music, under the auspices of the Romanian Writers' Union, and published by the Arad County Council through the Arad County Cultural Center. *Arca* has established itself as a prominent institution in the cultural-publishing landscape of Romania, attracting high-quality contributors from across the country and abroad due to its authentic, original, and contemporary format. Currently, *Arca* is published in triple issues (quarterly), A5 format, and includes a full-color art album by a contemporary Romanian artist, making it a true aesthetic object. The printed edition is complemented by the online version (ISSN 1584-4250), available at <https://uniuneascritorilorarad.ro/revistaarca.html>. The magazine is a member of the Association of Literary Magazines, Print Shops, and Publishers (A.R.I.E.L.), recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Culture, which awarded it the title of "Magazine of the Year 2016." "*Arca*" also participates in the European project "Review within Review," coordinated by the Slovenian magazine "*Apokalipsa*."

Thus, our work aims to address, from multiple directions and perspectives, the shifts that have occurred over time in press texts with cultural subjects. Although the study focuses on a Romanian cultural reality, the situation of cultural journalism, along with the theoretical and practical models discussed, can also be applied to other cultures facing similar financial and value selection issues.

Literature Review

Cultural journalism in cultural publications: theoretical delimitations and the state of Romanian cultural magazines

Cultural journalism can be included in a variety of formats and publications, appearing in specialized pages, general newspapers and magazines, or in publications dedicated exclusively to culture, both in print and online. These diverse distribution platforms target a heterogeneous audience. The types of texts produced by journalists vary depending on the medium in which they appear. Texts in specialized, exclusively cultural press are longer, more complex, and more focused on various areas of culture, from books to dance, theater, or visual arts. (Neamțu, 2024, 2025b)

Due to limited space, we will focus only on three genres of cultural journalism, as the topic is complex and will be further developed in future articles. Our analysis will focus specifically on a few distinct genres within cultural journalism: book reviews, book chronicles, and literary criticism. Cultural journalism can be included within specialized press. Specialized press encompasses various branches of journalism with specific areas of public interest, such as sports journalism, women's press, popular science press, environmental or health journalism, and so on. The importance of this specialized type of journalism is emphasized by professor Denis McQuail (2010), who highlights the need for acquiring specific skills and knowledge for cultural journalism. McQuail points out that cultural journalism plays a crucial role in society by informing and educating public taste and preferences. However, it faces a significant challenge: maintaining a consistent audience and attracting new readers in today's society, which is experiencing a severe crisis of patience and time. (Neamțu 2019, 2025d).

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Among all types of specialized press, cultural journalism is most comfortably associated with opinion and generous argumentation, as its genres closely resemble those of opinion journalism. This implies a writing style that emphasizes the expressive aspect of the article, allowing for greater freedom in composition. The journalist infuses the article with their own culture, reflecting their personal way of decoding reality through their readings and accumulated tastes over time.

In cultural journalism, many of the daily journalism requirements are suspended. Timeliness, text compression, simplicity, and direct style can be abandoned in favor of increased subjectivity, nuance, wordplay, and rhetoric that seeks to captivate the audience with a text that approaches literature. Indeed, literary criticism has often been viewed by analysts as a "borderline" genre (Iosifescu, 1969: 359), serving as a guide for readers through the intricacies of the author's proposed text.

For didactic reasons, we can classify texts in cultural journalism into two main categories: narrative types (short news, reportage, serialized diary, portrait) and non-narrative types (manifesto and program, essay, analysis and commentary, epigram, review, pamphlet, interview, polemic, open letter) (Neamțu, 2021, 2024). Our study focuses on non-narrative genres.

Romanian media analysts (Armanca, 2021; Neamțu, 2023a; Neamțu, 2025a; Simuț, 2006) discuss a shift in the media paradigm due to migration online, accompanied by newsroom impoverishment and losses in readership and relevant content. Armanca discusses the challenges and responsibilities of cultural journalism, questioning how much cultural content reaches the general public. Online media typically allocate sections for events and rarely for critical analysis or detailed interviews. This gap is filled by cultural press and magazines under the aegis of the Romanian Writers' Union, which capture the editorial pulse and broader cultural events such as performances, art exhibitions, and films.

In this qualitative research we use a literature review or a theoretical synthesis. This approach involves gathering, summarizing, and synthesizing various perspectives, theories, and findings from multiple authors. It provides an overview of the existing body of knowledge on a specific topic, highlights different viewpoints, and identifies trends, agreements, or debates within the field. The goal is to present a cohesive understanding of the subject while potentially identifying gaps or areas for further investigation. It should be noted that the various opinions of Romanian writers and critics are not present in specialized theoretical studies (these are absent in the theoretical landscape of Romanian cultural genres), but rather they are opinions collected from various important cultural publications, magazines that have conducted surveys on various cultural topics. We believe that their responses are relevant and provide a noteworthy perspective on our subject.

Literary critic and historian Ion Simuț believes that cultural journalism and literary criticism are complementary, asserting that traditional forms such as reviews, critiques, and literary chronicle should not appear in local press. He views these as strictly the domain of specialized cultural or literary magazines, which he

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refers to as "traditional" using a generic term. Simuț criticizes these literary unions' magazines, such as the Romanian Writers' Union, for lacking an interest in the "sociology of the creative act," suggesting that this could invigorate their content.

"Traditional literary (or cultural) magazines would become more vibrant if they included more cultural journalism, particularly by paying greater attention to the sociology of the creative act. However, the reverse is not as valid: if cultural journalism incorporates too much literary (or visual, musical, theatrical) criticism, it risks losing its appeal" (Simuț, 2006).

Simuț, former director of the cultural magazine *Familia*, which belongs to the Romanian Union of Professional Writers, published an article in *Familia* no. 5/2019 that sparked multiple negative reactions from colleagues at competing literary magazines. The article provides a sharp critique of the state of Romanian cultural magazines and how cultural topics are integrated into our cultural press.

"We all have two main goals: 1) to write about books, theater, films, concerts, and exhibitions, and 2) to publish poetry, prose, and essays, with or without illustrations. The formula for a literary magazine is simple. Do we care about our audience? Most of us probably don't. We're content if writer X reads the review we wrote about them or if the writers we published come to the office to collect the latest issue. [...] A troubling symptom is the magazines' inability to create literary events that establish values. In conclusion, we have an inflationary, formulaic, homogenized, column-driven, aging, inertial, non-journalistic, indifferent-to-the-public, unsellable, sectarian, and provincial literary press. Solutions or remedies exist for each of these defects, but they first need to be acknowledged. A patient who does not recognize their illness and symptoms cannot be treated effectively" (Simuț, 2019).

Simuț warns that every cultural magazine should have two main objectives: to write about books, theater, films, concerts, and exhibitions, and to publish poetry, prose, and essays, with or without illustrations. In the Romanian professor's view, the formula for a literary magazine is simple and unchanged. Occasionally, the formula may include favorable notes about friends and criticisms of adversaries. Simuț questions the target audience of today's cultural magazines if they are only read by collaborators and colleagues from other magazines. In such cases, the cultural magazine becomes a trade publication with a limited audience. Simuț also highlights a troubling symptom: the magazines' inability to create significant literary events and the distortion of literary awards, which are sometimes granted based on questionable criteria.

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Literary critic Marius Chivu (2019) examines the fate of cultural journalism, which he views as gradually deteriorating and labeling it as amateurish, the simplification of critical discourse is alarming: analysis, reflection, and critical evaluation have been replaced by banal enthusiastic recommendations, sometimes recycling pre-written phrases.

The conclusion is that Romanian literary press is inflationary, standardized, outdated, inert, non-journalistic, indifferent to the public, unsellable, sectarian, and provincial. Although solutions to these problems exist, they must first be acknowledged. Continuing his critiques of Romanian cultural magazines, Simuț publishes two new opinions in the form of journal pages in the cultural magazine *Vatra*. Simuț delivers a harsh diagnosis, lamenting the absence of a hierarchy of literary values in Romanian critical practice.

According to Simuț (2024), there are two types of criticism: diplomatic, kind criticism and probing, interrogative criticism, which is far from being malicious. We will present, in summary, some of the pertinent opinions of those directly involved in the activity of Romanian cultural magazines, whether they are writers who edit them or authors who regularly publish in literary journals. Their opinions, although subjective, are important for gauging the current state of Romanian cultural press.

The cultural magazine *Vatra* has dedicated several issues to a comprehensive investigation of the state of Romanian cultural magazines, as a response to the critical opinion of Simuț, which has provoked numerous comments in the online environment. The investigation includes responses from leading Romanian writers, critics, and literary reviewers who are part of the editorial teams of cultural magazines from the Union of Romanian Writers or who regularly publish in literary journals. Since their viewpoints seem relevant for assessing the current position of Romanian cultural press, we will summarize the main relevant points presented in the four issues of *Vatra*. The investigation is based on several fundamental questions for understanding the Romanian cultural phenomenon: current state of cultural magazines, landscape of cultural magazines, status of collaborators and solutions for more effective dissemination of cultural magazines.

Viorel Mureșan (2024) emphasizes the subjective nature of "selection" in cultural magazines, where choices are often influenced by situational interests. Prestigious contributors are attracted through persuasive methods, while regular columns are entrusted only to trusted individuals to avoid embarrassing

¹ Simuț, I. (2024, July 16). Jurnalul unui potrivnic. *Vatra*, (5-6), 23-24. Available from: <https://revistavatra.org/2024/07/16/ion-simut-jurnalul-unui-potrivnic-3/> [cited:19.07.2024]; See also:

Simuț, I. (2024, May 14), Jurnalul unui potrivnic. *Vatra*, (3-4), 27-28. Available from: <https://revistavatra.org/2024/05/14/ion-simut-jurnalul-unui-potrivnic/> [cited: 19.07.2024]

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appearances. Occasional contributors, who add diversity and attract readers, are selected based on criteria such as their hometown, age, religion, gender, and connections with the magazine's management. Thus, access from outside the magazine's literary circle is limited.

The writer Ovidiu Pecican (2022) believes that despite the decrease in print runs of literary magazines, there is a constant or even increasing demand for literary and artistic publications. These magazines address a real need of the public to stay connected with original local and international creations. They should be of interest to politicians and sociologists because they reflect the state of living and active Romanian culture. For writers and artists, these magazines represent an essential way to present their work to the public. Books are seen as a less urgent but essential level of creation for long-term dialogue. The author notes that the selection of contributors is based on friendships, affinities, alliances, and momentary interests.

Professor Dan Ungureanu discusses the transition of literary and cultural magazines to the online environment, highlighting their importance in the current landscape. He suggests that traditional literary magazines should evolve to address broader social and cultural topics, similar to publications like *Observator Cultural* or *The New Yorker*. In Romania, cultural magazines are compared to isolated fortress-cities, and he proposes creating an online portal to present them all to readers. According to Ungureanu, it is difficult for young authors outside established literary circles to collaborate with cultural magazines, lamenting that, unlike the communist era, writers and intellectuals no longer have a significant social role. Nowadays, young people's attention is fragmented and oriented towards entertainment and personal development activities, to the detriment of "high culture" (Ungureanu, 2022) which has become merely a pastime for corporate employees.

Cătălin Sturza (2022) reflects on the relevance of cultural magazines in Romania, questioning whether they have a real impact. The author notes the inconsistency of cultural magazines' presence on social media. Many influencers in various fields, including literature, have more followers than all the Romanian cultural magazines combined. The magazines' websites are seen as mere showcases, not updated regularly, and lacking interest in developing as independent entities separate from their print editions. The author is convinced that there is no real interest in either online sites or social media within the Romanian cultural press.

O. Nușfelean discusses the lack of a clear and firm opinion in many cultural magazines. This absence is seen as an element that can give meaning to critical efforts, provoking literary developments or clarifying certain publishing contexts. The author observes a slowness in the willingness to display more confrontations of

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opinions in Romanian magazines. Nușfelean advocates for dialogue rather than exacerbated attacks. Rivalry between publications is acceptable but should occur without below-the-belt shots or negative criticism. Writers, usually mild-mannered, express their opinions and frustrations in restricted circles and often avoid mixing literary disputes with political ones (Nușfelean, 2022).

According to Teona Farmatu, cultural magazines are isolated in their own 'bubbles', each with its own internal dialogue, collaborators, and principles, leading to a fragmentation of communication between them. The interaction between magazines and their audiences is seen as fragmented, influenced by egos, ideological conflicts, and a generalized sterility in thinking. The author also points to insufficient funding in the field of cultural magazines and suggests adopting a 'less is more' principle, even if it means that the magazine will not be as frequent. Maintaining a monthly or weekly publishing schedule is viewed by Farmatu as "extremely difficult and exhausting due to the lack of financial support". (Farmatu, 2022)

From a social perspective, Andreea Pop (2022) notes that the literary environment is marked by divisions, antipathies, malice, and egos, lacking empathy and professional solidarity. However, the cultural environment is dynamic, especially in the context of today's society, with intense activity in the field of poetry. According to Dina Hrenciuc-Pișcu, magazines that rely on public funds often undergo dramatic transformations, while those that secure financial independence are more visible. Ideally, magazines should become completely independent of public funding. However, in the current Romanian context, where fiction is being replaced by reality, it is increasingly difficult to combine literary value with financial efficiency. The author describes the landscape of literary magazines as "relatively impoverished" (Pișcu, 2022).

In Romania, cultural magazines select their contributors largely based on personal appreciation and preferences rather than remuneration, as many contributors are unpaid, according to writer Nicolae Silade (2022). Contributors choose magazines based on their reputation and prestige, and valuable magazines are those that can attract well-known collaborators. The Romanian literary landscape is divided into numerous factions and sub-factions. Despite the pandemic, literary life remains active with many festivals, colloquia, and reading clubs, but participation is often influenced by criteria of age, friendship, and group affiliation rather than genuine values.

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Adrian Grauenfels (2022) shares his experience from Israel, where we learn that the press is divided into four major linguistic spheres: Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, and English, with the Romanian language having an almost nonexistent presence. Magazines are predominantly online, with a focus on politics and current affairs. The only publication dedicated to art and culture is 'Jurnal Israelian' from Editura SAGA. There is a general tendency towards trivialization of writing, tolerance for false texts and misinformation, and a lack of critical and academic mechanisms. The reading time for online magazines is only 3-7 minutes, and the influence of smartphones and inadequate education contribute to the lack of practical solutions. The author believes it is imperative to write for a small cultural elite, and that finding sponsors and government support is crucial for the survival of cultural magazines.

Mihai Iovănel observes that Romanian cultural magazines often select collaborators who are willing to write (almost) for free, noting the prevalence of critics working for minimal compensation. Dan Lungu describes the Romanian cultural landscape as "monotonous" (2022), pointing out that promotion and distribution issues, outdated themes, and lack of editorial coherence contribute to the limited impact of many publications. The broader context shows a small book market and low cultural consumption, with over 70% of individuals aged 16 and older not reading any books in the past year. Additionally, the number of libraries closed has increased, particularly in rural areas, and the remaining ones have not been updated. The rise in internet access and accelerated digitization of administration and education highlight the importance of an online presence for literary magazines. In a few years, print editions will likely be available only to subscribers who prefer them. While there is creative freedom and opportunities for newcomers, the social status of writers has diminished, the number of readers is decreasing, and making a living from writing is very challenging.

According to Alex Cistelean, in the local landscape, there are three types of cultural magazines: literary and cultural studies journals, private cultural magazines, and cultural magazines published by public institutions. Cultural magazines in Romania need to adapt to the rapid changes in the cultural landscape, including transitioning to an online format and updating editorial strategies, in order to remain relevant and visible. According to Nicolae Coade, creating a high-quality magazine requires a determined approach and considerable effort, akin to the "Trojan War" (Coade, 2022). Although everyone desires success, few are willing to actively engage in the process. Contemporary

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These are published by literary faculties and focus on literary theory and history, cultural studies, and so on. They can be very good or they can be insignificant, serving more as platforms for university staff to showcase their work. These journals have a relatively secure future due to the obligation of academics to publish research, but they are less involved in local debates.

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Notable examples are Observator Cultural and Scena 9. These magazines cover cultural reviews and are aimed at a broader audience. They face a more uncertain future, as they depend on corporate funding and are competing with the digital environment (blogs and social media) that attracts the same audience.

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magazines often appear superficial, like "postcards from the seaside" sent by editors on vacation. It is important to make efforts to attract the audience and create relevant offerings, even in the current context of the pandemic. One solution might be to consult students to find out which magazines they read, but a clear response from them may be elusive. It is not the audience's fault for not reading; it is the editors' responsibility to provide engaging and useful content, believes the writer.

Writer Gellu Dorian opines that there are still traditional readers who prefer printed magazines over their online counterparts. He gives a personal example, noting that many collaborators and readers, including himself as editor-in-chief, request the printed version of the magazine even after receiving the PDF. This underscores the importance and physical value of print publications compared to reading on screens, which can be considered less memorable and, paradoxically, ephemeral. However, the trend is to replace print magazines with electronic ones due to economic and convenience reasons. Nonetheless, the author emphasizes that it is crucial for the printed form to remain available for libraries and physical archives to preserve the tradition of research and reading. Discussing Romanian literary life, it is viewed as marked by stubbornness, with the cultural landscape disadvantaged by a political government that unfortunately tends to abandon unpopular cultural issues and make cuts at their expense (Dorian, 2022).

Literary and cultural magazines in Romania are facing extinction due to a lack of institutional support and the absence of adequate cultural policies, with the current crisis revealing the vulnerabilities of this sector. For critic Adina Dinițoiu (2022), the relevance of print media is decreasing, even though books still perform well in print format. Cultural magazines have always struggled with distribution and are now even harder to find, particularly due to the increasing importance of online platforms. Authors active on social media and online publications tend to circulate among the same magazines, including those that also publish in print. This phenomenon reflects a limited cultural space and a lack of diversity, with a desire for quality diversity in the literary landscape.

According to Dumitru Augustin Doman, the 200 magazines that appear in Romania are considered to be too many for their readers, who are "people of a certain age who developed a habit of reading print since the 70s and 80s and are now reluctant to switch to postmodern technology. The latest generations of readers are satisfied with their smartphones, which – in addition to numerous applications – also serve as a portable library. However, from what I see around me, young people do not read literary magazines on their phones but rather many other things". Doman also recalls an "explosion" of magazines that occurred following the anti-communist revolution of 1989 and laments the lack of polemics in cultural magazines, which "indulge in a certain autism" (Doman, 2022).

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These are supported by local councils, county councils, or the Writers' Union. Although they have a long history, the professor believes these magazines face an uncertain future due to political-ideological changes and dependence on public funding. They are often resistant to change and confront pressure to become provincialized, along with competition from other magazines.

The Anatomy of the Review, Literary Chronicle, and Literary Criticism

Continuing, we will attempt to delineate the three genres of cultural journalism: the review, the chronicle, and literary criticism, focusing on the structure of these texts and the constitutive elements of the final discourse in the press. From my own experience, having led the culture section of a local daily, *Observator*, for over 10 years and working since 1999 as an editor for the Writers' Union magazine, *ARCA*, I have noticed that often the distinction between these genres is not clearly understood by cultural journalists. Cultural journalism, along with its genres, is often treated superficially even in Journalism departments studies, being relegated to the section of specialized journalism without a deep focus on the subject. Therefore, we will try to organize these genres, providing examples to illustrate each one.

Attempting to answer the question 'What is a review?', Lindsay Price provides several answers that are worth noting, adapting them to our genres under discussion.

several answers that are worth noting, adapting them to our genres under discussion.

"A review is a subjective but educated response to a piece of theatre, book etc. An informed and credible opinion, owing to the signatory's expertise. What should we learn from a review? A review should describe the subject of a book, without giving too much information about the plot. It should express an opinion supported by a thoughtful analysis. What's the difference between a well-written and a poorly-written review? Is the reviewer able to discern the vision of the author? Is the reviewer able to see the book's value despite his/her subjective response? Is the reviewer able to analyze the book in terms other than like/dislike? Does the reviewer support their views with examples? Does the reviewer let their personal opinion of a book colour their review?" (Price, no year, online)

These questions can assist the cultural journalist in crafting his review. Thus, writing a review, as well as a literary chronicle, involves keeping in mind several control questions (Ruști, 2002:135) that converge towards the question: why should I, as a reader, buy the book?, including other important details. This table is an original creation by the author of the article, who believes that in this format, the information can be more easily understood by readers. The table includes the author's own examples for a better understanding of the journalistic genre discussed. We chose a travel book and an interview with the author, melted in the same text, to provide an interesting, unique approach

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<p>Useful Information for Writing a Book chronicle</p>	<p>An example of writing a book chronicle, travel book: Ion Cristoiu, <i>Crunta exploatare a sânului Julietei</i>, București: Martorul clipei, 2022, 398 pages. [In translation: Ion Cristoiu, <i>The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast</i>]</p>
<p>General Information About the Author and the Book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here, we may include a section from a previous interview with the author, who is a well-known Romanian journalist. • Contextualization of the text/ travel diary. • Statement of the themes addressed by the author. • What is new about this book? • Which countries does the author discuss? • What is the value of the book: the style of his approach? 	<p>The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast and Other Charming Reports - TITLE</p> <p>During the pandemic, I traveled from my own armchair with the latest volume by Ion Cristoiu, "The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast", published in 2022 by Martorul Clipei Publishing House.</p> <p>Ion Cristoiu remains a significant figure in the history of Romanian journalism not only for the numerous newspapers he founded and developed (such as <i>Evenimentul Zilei</i>, <i>Cotidianul</i>, <i>Zig-Zag</i>, <i>Expres</i>). His analyses on cristoiublog.ro or on television channels where he is invited combine meticulously documented information with a unique, captivating style. A "historian of the moment," as he likes to call himself, Ion Cristoiu possesses a solid culture that he does not ostentatiously display in his texts. The author has a sense of linguistic balance, which he uses intelligently in a crescendo of arguments that lead to the point he aims to prove. Ion Cristoiu's texts always have a conclusion and provoke thought. His arguments are logical, sometimes surprising, but never boring. Reading him, you might exclaim, "I also believe / feel / think that way (or not?), but 'he write it so well.'" Good journalists are those who find the natural formula to express exactly what they think, regardless of the consequences.</p> <p>The elaborate, direct structure of the storytelling, combined with the reporter's talent for making you see exactly what he</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a general message of the book? • You may use an interview with the author in your review. After the in-depth interview conducted, a relevant section can be extracted for the presentation of the book at this time. <p><i>In the year 2000, I conducted a more in-depth interview with journalist Ion Cristoiu. I found the interview on my personal computer, from which I'll share the answers to just two questions:</i></p> <p>Interviewer: Carmen Neamțu: Mr. Ion Cristoiu, it is said that if you manage to irritate the interviewee, they will end up shouting the truth out of anger. Let's start our discussion from this point. What irritates you the most today?</p> <p>Ion Cristoiu: What irritates me the most is the inability of some people to understand from life, from the past, from books, that everything is transient, including the positions they hold. At some point, everyone behaves as if they will be up there forever. The second thing that irritates me - though I can't quite determine which of these irritates me more, perhaps this one - is the attempt by some newly wealthy Romanians to imitate the lifestyle of what they believe to be the lifestyle of multimillionaires in the West. There, wealthy businessmen live modestly because they don't have time. We have a class of pretentious people in every sense, newly rich,</p>	<p>saw/heard/felt/experienced, is a rare quality in journalism. Ion Cristoiu possesses this quality in abundance, and you can rediscover it in this volume.</p> <p>I have often analyzed Ion Cristoiu's editorials with students, examining the clean, clear way in which he structures his texts. Beyond the analysis, these editorials serve as benchmarks for writing that is both readable and engaging, providing models for younger journalists who wish to enter a profession where the temptation of superficiality is ever-present.</p> <p>This book offers a relaxing journey through various places around the world. Ion Cristoiu's innovative approach involves a reporter's perspective, full of humor, aiming to demystify and break away from the clichés of today's hurried tourist.</p> <p>A traveler abroad carries with them, even from the moment they cross their home country's border, the belief that the country they are heading to is fundamentally different from their own.</p> <p>Naturally, school has taught them that extraterrestrials are so called because they live outside of Earth, and consequently, no matter how costly the tour company is, it cannot offer you extraterrestrials on a platter, not even in Alaska. Nonetheless, somewhere deep in the traveler's soul, there flickers the hope that they will encounter strange people and customs, which they will be able to talk about upon returning, not without a certain pride. Responding to this need, the exploitation of traditions by tourism is booming all around the world.</p>
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uncultured, who only care about imitating what they think Western millionaires do.

Interviewer C.N.: One last question. You have been asked for numerous interviews, and you yourself have initiated countless dialogues. Is there a question you wish you had been asked over all this time but weren't?

I.C.: That's a difficult question. Maybe I should have been asked what I consider myself to be. And I would have answered: I consider myself a failure in several areas. I could have been a very good philosopher, but I wasn't and am not. I could have been a very good writer. And I am not. I could have been a very good literary critic. And I am not. I am a very good journalist. The sum of mediocrities in various fields has given rise to a good journalist. I think this is one of the keys to my success. That doesn't mean I am satisfied with not being a great writer. I would have preferred to be a great writer, even if I were less of a celebrity, rather than a journalist who is a celebrity, but a fleeting one. People will forget me after I'm gone.

With journalist Cristoiu, you see Hamburg and Baden-Baden with new eyes, fly to New York on the presidential plane, meet the Romanians in the diaspora in Washington, "crushed and irreparably afflicted by the disease of being photographed," discover Verona with Juliet and her balcony, which makes a massive contribution to Italy's GDP, find the crocodile farm in Thailand's Samut Prakan province, near Bangkok, or the Florian café in Venice. You encounter the new Western Japanese, the Russians, in a different light, conquer the fortress of Carcassonne, Pont d'Avignon, and Pythia from Apollo's sanctuary, under the invasion of prosperous consumerism. You observe that the exploitation of traditions is thriving across all the meridians of the world. And you find that, on a journey, you almost always need a relaxed and easygoing perspective.

Ion Cristoiu draws you to his reports with provocative titles. After reading his travel notes, you won't be disappointed by a mismatch between the title and the actual text: *The Dutch Mercedes – The Bicycle, How I Felt in America Just Like in Găgești-Deal, My Victory Over Sexual Tourism, New Year's Eve Like a Battlefield, A Sinner at Mount Athos, Pissing in Paris, How Some Thai Women Stepped on Me, How to Sleep in the Balcony of Europe (on the Costa del Sol) For 7 Euros, Experience an Infernal Allied Bombardment, Thank God They Took Me for an Italian!, A World-Class Tourist Attraction: The Ice Cream Stand, How the Scots Profit from the Fashions of the Times, Nothing About the Ancient Greeks, Everything About the Dogs and Cats of Today*, etc.

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	<p>Ion Cristoiu wraps his writing in a "jacket" of humor and self-irony, and masters the journalistic style he now practices in his travel notes, direct, surprising, and amusing:</p> <p>"Those who can afford to eat as much as they want and those who can't. Among those who can't afford it, there are two sub-groups: 1. Those who continue to fight against calories with a tenacity reminiscent of someone flailing their arms in the vast ocean despite having no idea how to swim. Those who have abandoned the fight, telling themselves: 'A person has only one life and one stomach!' I count myself among the first category, the subgroup of tireless fighters. This is why, at least for me, flying on the presidential plane has always been a test of life. It is not at all easy to see everyone around you devouring food and drinking beer after beer while you chew more aggressively on gum that substitutes for cigarettes, food, and drink" (pp. 41-42).</p> <p>"Nothing is more sacred in a restaurant than the two decisive moments of reading: the menu (at the beginning) and the bill (at the end)" (p. 88).</p> <p>There are 398 pages in which you discover forgotten and overlooked details, often deemed less important by some, from various corners of the world: Pont d'Avignon or the profitability of poorly made work; the bar in the Erotic Art Museum in Hamburg; the difference between Heaven and the Official Salon; the most prestigious toilet on earth, discovered at Edinburgh Castle; the culinary trap of burritos in Cleveland; the surprise of Juliet's balcony not being on the street and the mystery of millions of letters sent despite Juliet being dead for</p>
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	<p>a long time; how Cristoiu became the only customer from 1720 to now who stayed in the famous Florian café in Venice for no more than a few minutes, etc.</p> <p>Ion Cristoiu knows how to give value to trivial information and elevate it to the status of an event that can spark a story or a reader's reaction.</p>
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Table: Carmen Neamțu, own processing 2025

Apart from specialized writing (such as literary criticism), there are also brief promotional reviews, summaries, or concise informational pieces. A review should prioritize the information that the general public needs. The information in a review serves to either motivate (regarding the value of the book) or incite readers. The review has both the role of informing and shaping opinions (Neamțu, 2024:573-588). Brief literary promotional reviews most often appear in written or online daily press and are typically sent to the editorial office through the publisher's public relations office or directly by the book's author. This topic will be discussed in detail in a future study, which I am preparing thoroughly. This is a subject that we are going to explore in a future study.

"The main purpose of a review is to provide information about the work in question; to describe, as accurately and completely as possible, its style, content, and ideas." (Randall, 1998, p. 205)

Several important Romanian writers discuss the importance of book reviews in a 2014 survey that starts with the question: When does a book die? I will summarize a few opinions that reflect the current state of Romanian cultural affairs. The writers' responses are relevant not only to Romanian cultural journalism but also vividly illustrate the situation of books and reading in general, regardless of the language in which they are written.

"Books generally do not die, because they are not living things. It is abnormal, counterintuitive, and in a way magical when one of them receives a breath that revives it. Only living books die, because only they live" (Cărtărescu, 2014).

According to writer Ioana Pârvulescu, "when a book is not read, it rather falls into a kind of sleep. It can be awakened from its slumber (even if it's a 'death-like sleep') at any time by someone who reads it after a century or a millennium, by someone who rediscovers it and repositions it into another life, in another world" (Pârvulescu, 2014). According to editor Lidia Bodea, a book dies without readers; "books become nothing more than interior decorations—made of papyrus,

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parchment, or paper—or electronic deposits [...] Books that, spiritually, never die (they are immortal) are called classic books. Unlike books of a few generations, they are considered part of humanity's eternal heritage" (Bodea, 2014).

According to literary critic Cornel Ungureanu (2014), books do not die if they truly exist. Writer, translator, and literary critic Radu Parachivescu (2014) brings to the forefront the issue of the quality of the act of writing a book and the concessions made by authors in the desire to please a diverse audience. Literary critic Bogdan Alexandru Stănescu (2014) discusses how editors and literary historians can extend the life of a book, "a book lives longer the more it is re-read. It is the book you take with you when you move, or the one you feel the need to read from time to time during vacations". The writer and literary critic Marius Chivu (2014) is convinced that all books die once they have been written. And literary critic Angelo Mitchievici considers the term "when" in the question "when does a book die?" to be redundant: "A book does not die at a specific moment, for example, when it is no longer read. Rather, it is dead if it never had readers, if it did not nourish any sensitivity, imagination, or produce any thoughts or reflections at any point. Books are dead if they do not generate any inner movement, do not stimulate intelligence or emotion" (Mitchievici, 2014).

The writer Ioan Stanomir reflects on the life and death of books, suggesting that they are intertwined with our own existence:

"Books can never truly die. They can only transform into that fine dust that becomes one with our dreams. Books do not die because they pass into us, unseen, discreet, and ethereal. Beyond death and endings, they imagine the bridge we cross when our time comes" (Stanomir, 2014).

We could say that through reviews, chronicles, and literary criticism, the life of a book is extended. The book does not die but is explained to the public and introduced to them for further reading. Related to reviews, a chronicle is a genre that "records and comments on the spectacle of film, theater, fashion presentations, etc." (Ruști, 2002:141, Neamțu, 2024:573-588). As an important genre in cultural journalism, chronicles differ when appearing in mainstream press compared to specialized cultural press. Despite the text structure being similar, the complexity is greater in specialized press due to the more demanding audience. Simuț (2006) distinguishes cultural journalism from literary criticism, viewing them as a complementary pair. However, literary criticism is primarily found in cultural journals of the Union of Professional Writers.

For didactic reasons and to make it clearer and quicker for cultural journalists to understand, we present in the table a synthetic overview of the main distinctions we consider relevant in analyzing the cultural genres proposed by our study. The table below is a synthesis based on the author's personal experience of 28 years practicing cultural journalism. In its development, we also drew on a series of important studies that did not directly address cultural journalism. These

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include studies on literary theory (Eagleton (2003); Culler , 2011), semiotics (Barthes , 1972) and literary writing, argument and engaging with sources (Booth, Colomb, Williams (2003), glossary with definitions and explanations of key literary concepts all of which contribute to the crafting of coherent texts for cultural journalism (Abrams , 2014) or a guide to writing clearly and correctly (John Peck and Martin Coyle , 2002). Ultimately, writing for a cultural page is the result of the author's cultural background, which combines multiple disciplines, from criticism to text interpretation and clear argumentation, all necessary for capturing the audience's attention.

So Eagleton, Culler, Barthes, Booth, Abrams, Peck, Coyle, are highly influential in the fields of literary theory, semiotics, and critical theory. However, their work primarily focuses on literary criticism, literary theory, narrative techniques, and semiotics rather than cultural journalism specifically. They don't provide direct opinions about cultural journalism and its genres in the way we might expect from media studies scholars. However, we consider that their theories and ideas can be applied to an understanding of cultural journalism. None of these authors directly focus on cultural journalism, but their theories and insights on literature, writing, and semiotics are applicable to how cultural journalism interprets and presents cultural products to the public. Each author emphasizes elements that can shape cultural journalism, such as clear writing, awareness of genre, the role of myth and symbols, and the importance of understanding the audience. These authors must be part of the cultural background of those writing cultural journalism, in order to better understand the

5

Eagleton explores the politics of literary theory and the impact of culture on shaping ideologies. Although he does not specifically address cultural journalism, his insights into the interaction between literature, culture, and power can be applied to this field. Eagleton emphasizes the ideological implications of culture, which can encourage cultural journalists to reflect on how their reviews and critiques influence or represent societal power dynamics. He argues that "all literary works... are 'rewritten,' if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a work which is not also a 're-writing.'" (Literary Theory, 2009). This concept can be extended to cultural journalism, as it often reinterprets cultural products for the audience, shaping how they are perceived and understood.

6

Cultural journalists, like literary theorists, interpret the significance of cultural works. Culler's focus on how readers interact with texts (whether literary or cultural) could be applied to how journalists shape the public's interpretation of cultural products.

7

Barthes' semiotic theory of myth examines how ordinary cultural objects and practices are imbued with meaning beyond their literal function. This makes his ideas particularly relevant to cultural journalism, which often involves interpreting and conveying the symbolic significance of art, film, literature, and other cultural products. Barthes' concept of "myth" refers to how these cultural items reflect and transmit societal values and ideologies. Cultural journalists can apply this framework to analyze and decode the deeper ideological messages embedded in cultural products. As Barthes does in *Mythologies*, cultural journalism often uncovers the hidden symbolic layers of a work, helping audiences understand its broader cultural and social implications.

8

Although *The Craft of Research* is primarily a guide to academic research, its emphasis on constructing a clear argument and engaging with sources can be useful for cultural journalists. Good cultural journalism requires careful research, whether in the form of interviews, reviews, or essays. Journalists, like researchers, need to frame their arguments and ideas clearly to effectively engage their audience. This text emphasizes the importance of clarity, coherence, and structure—all of which are essential in producing quality cultural journalism.

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cultural phenomena they are writing about.

For didactic purposes, we have summarized in the table the main distinctions regarding the concepts of literary review, literary chronicle, and literary criticism. We believe that the table provides a clearer understanding of these terms, offering a better overview of the information needed to comprehend the terms being discussed. The table is the result of the author's personal experience in consistently practicing these journalistic genres.



9

A Glossary of Literary Terms (2014). Abrams' Glossary provides definitions and explanations of key literary concepts, genres, and critical approaches. While not directly related to journalism, cultural journalists who write about books, plays, or films can use these concepts to enrich their reviews and critiques. Understanding literary and cultural genres is critical for journalists who want to analyze and write about cultural products. Abrams' definitions help clarify the characteristics of different cultural forms that journalists might cover.

10

The Student's Guide to Writing: Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (2002): This book is more of a guide to writing clearly and correctly, rather than a direct commentary on cultural journalism. However, its advice on how to craft well-structured, coherent, and stylistically appropriate writing is crucial for cultural journalists who need to communicate effectively with a broad audience. Cultural journalists need to ensure that their writing is accessible and engaging, and this book's guidance on clarity and coherence in writing can help achieve that. Cultural journalists need to adjust their tone depending on the genre they are writing a review, an interview, or an essay.

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Important Elements for Distinguishing Cultural Journalism Genres To clarify and facilitate quicker understanding for cultural journalists, the table synthesizes the main distinctions considered relevant in the analysis of cultural genres proposed by our study.	Literary Review A brief and accessible critical evaluation of a recent work, aimed at a general audience.	Literary Chronicle A more detailed and contextualized analysis of a literary phenomenon, addressed to a specialized or academic audience.	Literary Criticism A profound and complex theoretical analysis of literary texts, intended for an academic and specialized audience.
Definitions for the terms	A review is a brief critical evaluation of a recent literary work. The primary goal is to provide readers with a quick assessment of the work's value and interest.	Literary Chronicle A literary chronicle is a more detailed and contextualized analysis of a literary work or a group of works, focusing on a deeper understanding of the text.	Literary criticism is a theoretical and methodical analysis of literature, employing various perspectives and theoretical frameworks to interpret and understand literary works. A profound and complex theoretical analysis of literary texts, designed for an academic and specialized audience. This involves in-depth examination and

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			interpretation of literary works through various theoretical frameworks.
Content and Characteristics of Cultural Articles	<p>The review describes the subject, analyzes the main themes and the author's style, and provides a subjective opinion on the work. It is typically intended for a general audience and is published in literary magazines, newspapers, or online platforms.</p> <p>It focuses on describing the subject, analyzing the style, themes, and structures, and providing a reasoned opinion on the quality and value of the work.</p>	<p>The critique provides a detailed examination of the literary context, influences, and impact of a work, often comparing it to other works by the same author or to other works within the same genre or period. It is written for a specialized audience, including students and scholars.</p> <p>It includes a deep interpretation of the text, exploring in detail the themes, symbols, influences, and impact of the work. It may discuss the author, their style, and the place of the work in their career or within a literary movement.</p>	<p>It is much more detailed and theoretical than both the review and the literary chronicle. Literary criticism examines works from multiple perspectives (structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, etc.), analyzing symbols, themes, styles, and socio-cultural contexts. It relies on theoretical methods and concepts and often references other critical and theoretical works.</p>

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Length of Cultural Texts	Literary Review:	Literary Chronicle:	Literary Criticism:
	<p>Typically brief, usually ranging from a few hundred to a couple of thousand words. It provides a concise assessment of a recent literary work, summarizing its main points and offering a quick evaluation for a broad audience.</p> <p>It is relatively short, often ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand words.</p> <p>It is usually shorter than a literary chronicle and is written in an accessible style, intended for a broad audience.</p>	<p>More detailed than a review, usually ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 words. It includes a deeper analysis of the work, its context, influences, and significance, often comparing it with other works by the same author or within the same genre or period.</p> <p>It is longer and more elaborate than a review, often ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands of words.</p> <p>It is longer and more elaborate than a review, often featuring a more complex structure.</p>	<p>Often extensive, ranging from several thousand to tens of thousands of words. It involves a comprehensive, theoretical analysis of the work, exploring themes, symbols, styles, and socio-cultural contexts using various critical frameworks and methodologies. This type of text is typically aimed at an academic or specialized audience and may be published in scholarly journals or books.</p> <p>It can vary from short critical essays to extensive academic studies, journal articles, critical books, or chapters in collective volumes. It is intended for an academic audience and is published in academic journals,</p>

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			essay collections, and monographs.
The Audience for Cultural Texts	Targeted primarily at readers interested in determining whether the work is worth their time.	Targeted at a specialized or academic audience, interested in a deep understanding of literature and literary debates.	It is aimed at an academic and specialized audience, including students, professors, researchers, and literary critics. Literary criticism requires advanced knowledge of literary theory and literary context.
Purpose of Cultural Articles	The purpose of a review is to provide a critical evaluation of a recent work, such as a book, a film, a play, or a concert.	<p>The purpose of a literary chronicle is to provide a more detailed and extensive analysis of a literary phenomenon or a series of works, often offering historical and cultural context.</p> <p>A literary chronicle is published at regular intervals by the same person and features a specific graphic presentation (Husson & Robert, 1991, p.52).</p>	Literary criticism focuses on the analysis and interpretation of literary texts, contributing to the development of literary theory and a deeper understanding of literature. It provides a more advanced level of analysis and theorization, enhancing the understanding and interpretation of literature from complex perspectives.

Table: Carmen Neamțu, own processing 2025

Typologies of Literary Critics.

Literary critics are the ones who must give verdicts in cultural journalism, as their opinions are essential in positioning an author on the map of significant contributions to literature. We will now present several distinctions made by an important Romanian literary critic and we will attempt to delineate the categories of literary critics as outlined by one of the most esteemed and highly regarded Romanian literary critics, Nicolae Manolescu. He has written several articles on the importance of literary criticism for a country's culture. I will summarize the professor's views, as beyond Romanian culture, his ideas are pertinent and important for understanding literary criticism and the significance of this journalistic genre in general.

It is important to note that the literary critic typically expresses his/her views in specialized cultural magazines and less in the daily press, where the role of critic, in this case, falls to the cultural journalist. This journalist is not necessarily a professional writer. This distinct topic will be addressed in a future study that we are currently working on.

According to Manolescu (1972), there are five categories of literary critics, with the professor's approach constituting an attempt to characterize the literary landscape of Romanian journalism, including a caricatural note that the author assumes from the start. Thus, we can speak of: the critic from academic backgrounds; the lover of humanities; the refined critic; the combative critic; and the young journalist. Manolescu's synthesis is a direct portrayal, pointing out the wounds of criticism in general. These typologies can also be identified in other linguistic spaces, as Manolescu primarily discusses human typologies. Manolescu (2024) views the literary critic as a barometer of literature, a person who sets the literary opinion of the moment:

According to Maurice Blanchot (1955, 1969), there are two kinds of criticism and critics: traditional criticism and creative criticism. Traditional criticism is centered on evaluating and judging literary works based on established criteria, norms, and standards. The traditional critic is the one who interprets the hidden meanings of the work, explaining and evaluating it within a literary and cultural context. Creative criticism, on the other hand, is the opposite of traditional criticism. It focuses less on explaining/evaluating the work and more on exploring the infinite possibilities that the text offers through the complexity of the analogies that the work evokes. For Blanchot (1969), literature can be an encounter with the unknown within us, and the role of the critic is to mediate the encounter between author and reader as intelligently as possible. Literary criticism is an ongoing exploratory conversation, without definitive conclusions or final interpretations.

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The State of Reviews and Criticism in Cultural Journalism: Relevant Surveys on the Romanian Literary Phenomenon.

Related to reviews, the chronicle is the genre that records and comments on the spectacle of film, theater, fashion presentations, etc. (see: Ruști, 2002; Neamțu, 2021, 2024). The chronicle, as an important genre of cultural journalism, differs when it appears in daily press compared to its appearances in specialized cultural press. Even though the structure of the text should be the same, its complexity is greater in specialized press due to the more demanding audience. Simuț (2006) differentiates cultural journalism from literary criticism, seeing them as part of a fertile complementarity, although literary criticism is primarily sought in cultural magazines of the Union of Professional Writers.

According to Simuț, the media coverage of a good contemporary Romanian literary book is currently around three reviews per year, whereas, in the mid-2000s, it was approximately one per month. We will summarize some opinions from relevant Romanian writers and literary critics regarding the state of Romanian literary criticism. These opinions are important as they gauge the current Romanian cultural moment and provide insights from those directly involved in the act of literary criticism, the genre we are discussing here.

In summary, we can assert that the growing importance of online journalism, including in the literary and cultural fields, has led to changes in cultural texts. These texts now find themselves competing with the free access to information on the internet, where a heterogeneous public can now express opinions on anything, imagining themselves as experts on various subjects. Disguised as anonymity, a series of comments filled with insults and personal attacks on the authors of the articles have surfaced. Freedom of expression has been interpreted as the freedom to say anything, in any manner, disregarding basic rules of interpersonal decency (Neamțu, 2023a). As a result, the literary critic has lost ground as an authority in the field, being replaced by influencers and eclectic characters who use colorful, often vulgar language to attract an audience at any cost. Writer Adina Dinițoiu (2022) discusses the "erosion of traditional authority" that critics and reviewers once held.

Numerous important literary critics and writers present their relevant opinions in an investigation about the state of literary criticism conducted by the cultural magazine Echinox. We will summarize the most relevant opinions, which are important in the context of outlining the atmosphere surrounding these cultural genres that are the subject of our work. Important questions that were raised include: *What is the relevance of criticism today? What would be the specific*

¹¹ Manolescu, N. (1972, May 1). Criticul adevărat acum este. Echinox, (5). Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2010/12/1972-n-manolescu-cinci-tipuri-de-critici-goldmine/> [cited: 3.07.2023] This article, considered a landmark in the study of Romanian literary criticism, has often been revisited in discussions on this topic, as seen in...: Manolescu, N. (2010, December 9). Cinci tipuri de critici. Echinox. Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2010/12/1972-n-manolescu-cinci-tipuri-de-critici-goldmine/> and Manolescu, N. (2021, August 24). Starea criticii: dosar & anchetă. Echinox, (24). Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2021/08/starea-criticii-dosar/> [cited: 3.07.2023]

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difference in our literary criticism over the past 10 years? What types of criticism can you identify today (e.g., reception criticism, directional criticism)? What do you think is the current methodological, institutional, or even ideological difference between literary criticism and criticism in other artistic fields (film, visual arts, music, etc.)? It has often been said that literary criticism is no longer written, but the question can also be asked in reverse: Is literary criticism still read? Has the relationship between the literary system and the institution of criticism changed in recent years? Do you believe that the function of criticism has been replaced or at least minimized by other dissemination media such as Facebook, Goodreads, or vlogging? Have there been periods in Romanian criticism influenced by external factors (French, American, etc.)? Can we currently talk about influences or dominants from certain cultural geographies in the Romanian space or from specific international critical voices? Or is their supposed hegemony rather a local occasion for debates around imports?

The investigation started from a paradoxical observation in Romanian cultural journalism, namely that we are witnessing a retreat of important critics to more comfortable zones, such as universities, yet literary magazines continue to have sections for reviews and book critiques. According to Anamaria Mihăilă (2020), "from socialist realism to aesthetic autonomy, protocronism, and postmodernism, Romanian criticism remains largely import-driven, still conceptually dysfunctional, but increasingly gaining self-awareness in relation to the need for method".

In 2014, the cultural magazine *Steaua* initiated an investigation coordinated by writer Alex Goldiș, with the proposed theme: the disappearance of literary criticism? Goldiș questions whether the retreat of contemporary critics represents a more general symptom of the disappearance of literary criticism. If so, what are the reasons: the ascendancy of media culture over traditional culture, the increasing specialization in research (the alternative of ISI/WOS academic publishing)? Is this phenomenon a sign of normality, in line with Western trends? Is it still possible today for a critic to be both a reviewer and a researcher? This investigation is answered by important Romanian writers and critics. The issues presented cross the boundaries of language and Romanian literature and can also be found in other small-language cultures that do not have international circulation like English, French, or German.

According to writer Irina Petraș (2014), the situation should be viewed optimistically because literary magazines "full of reliable critics, both young and old". Literary critic Ion Pop (2014) increasingly feels the futility of literary criticism, which he perceives as an "autistic social game, a useless and minor ritual". Alexandru Matei (2014) views the discussion about the end of literary criticism as "a hysterical response", rooted in humanity's apocalyptic imagination. Iulian Boldea (2014) is convinced that literary criticism is transforming into "a niche phenomenon", but he does not believe it is disappearing. It has lost some of its authority because readers no longer have the patience or time to read about books, and literature no longer dominates the hierarchy of public discourse.

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Writer Jonathan Franzen, visiting Romania, stated in an interview that a cultural journalist must stand out and make themselves noticed, but they cannot do so by praising someone who is already successful:

"A critic gains nothing by praising someone who is already successful. If a critic wants to be noticed, they either praise someone overlooked or tear down someone in the spotlight". (Coliban, 2018: 21)

Summarizing, we can say that the distinction between criticism and literary chronicles largely lies in the frequency of their publication. According to Preda (2006:29), a critical article typically provides a summary of a book, followed by the author's personal opinions. On the other hand, a literary chronicle is published at regular intervals by the same person and features a specific graphic presentation (Husson & Robert, 1991:52). A literary chronicler is a recognized figure within the writing community (Preda, 2006:40). The chronicle circulates ideas and appears with regularity, such as on the same day of the week or in the same section or page (Preda, 2006:41). Both criticism and chronicles have unique perspectives and offer a degree of freedom in their approach and writing style, which is influenced by the author of the article (Voirol, 1992:66; de Broucker, 1995:218).

Conclusion

The approaches to these journalistic genres differ significantly depending on the medium in which they appear, whether in a daily newspaper or a cultural magazine belonging to a professional creative union. In both cases, cultural journalism faces challenges in the digital age, as well as opportunities to reach a broader audience through new technologies.

In our study we provided a brief overview of several relevant opinions from individuals directly involved in Romanian cultural magazines, including both writers who edit these publications and authors who frequently contribute to literary journals. While their perspectives are subjective, they are crucial for assessing the current state of the Romanian cultural press.

Literary criticism in Romania, as well as elsewhere, encounters several challenges: a limited and highly specialized audience, a lack of paid critics (as many magazines associated with writers' unions, such as ARCA, do not compensate for contributions), and an editorial market with distribution issues (many print newsstands in Romania have closed, with few remaining even in major cities). There is also a lack of appetite for reading among the general public, the migration of the few readers to online platforms, and cultural magazines often have websites that are not regularly updated and contain dense content. Additional issues include concerns about the originality and diversity of articles (with many magazines -

¹² Coliban, A. (2018, October 25-31). Suntem deja martorii ascensiunii politicii tribale. Interview with Jonathan Franzen, *Dilema veche*, (766), 21. A new investigation on the topic of reception criticism and the reading crisis also appears in Pătrășconiu, C. (2024, May 3). Despre cronică literară, *encore et toujours*, *România literară*, 19-20 (LVI), 16-30.

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having similar structures and failing to offer fresh perspectives) and the influence of social media. While social media allows critics greater interaction with the public, it also risks leading to superficiality in their approaches, driven by the desire to be seen as trendy and appreciated by internet users.

We are thus witnessing an increase in the heterogeneity of cultural arbiters, with the sphere now expanding beyond traditional cultural journalists to include bloggers, celebrities, pundits, academics, and intellectuals. Hence, the question arises: "Everyone's a critic?" We have observed how journalistic authority and critical expertise within the cultural field are being reconfigured. (Neamțu, 2024, 2025b) In conclusion, we can say that cultural journalism, through genres such as reviews, chronicles, and literary criticism, is in a period of transition. It is seeking new forms of expression and adaptation to the changes in the current cultural and media landscape.

We intend for this study to serve as a prelude to more detailed analyses we plan to conduct on cultural journalism genres (Neamțu, 2025c). Due to the limited print space in the magazine, we have focused on only a few aspects of these three genres, with the aim of continuing and deepening our research in future articles.

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