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An Elixir of Life?

Emotional labour in cultural journalism

Johana Kotišová

Abstract

Recent technological and institutional changes in journalism are believed to have dragged cultural journalism into a crisis. This paper looks closely at one thing that makes the job of cultural journalists, in particular critics, distinct from other journalistic beats – the openly acknowledged importance of emotionality and subjectivity in these media workers' professional practices – and explores the role of emotions in dealing with the crisis in the profession. Based on fourteen semi-structured interviews with film and food critics, the paper addresses the following questions: What emotional labour do the cultural critics perform? How does professional cultural criticism legitimize itself in the digital era? I suggest that both the film and food critics cherish the fact that their work processes draw heavily on their subjectivity: emotional experiences, political opinions and personal memories. However, to be able to do their job, the critics cannot allow such elements of subjectivity to take the reins, and therefore they perform emotional labour for the successful objectivization of their emotionality: making use of their emotions to better recognize what moments or aspects are significant for the assessment of the quality of the cultural object being reviewed. Furthermore, I suggest that in the context where digitalization has threatened the exceptional position of the professional cultural critic, emotional labour together with some other strategies of handling one's subjectivity can help them to construct boundaries of professional cultural criticism and thus to reclaim professional legitimacy.

Keywords

cultural criticism, cultural critic, digitalization, emotional labour, boundary work, objectivization of emotionality, professional legitimacy

Introduction

This paper addresses the emotional labour of cultural and lifestyle journalists, that is, how a sample of fourteen film and food critics work with/use their own emotions to fulfil their professional ideals and meet their criteria of success (Hochschild, 1983). In particular, I explore the role of emotional labour in delimiting professional boundaries and reclaiming the legitimacy of the profession within the changing, digitalized landscape of cultural/lifestyle criticism that has seen the multiplication of actors who have something to say about cultural objects. As such, the paper focuses on two sub-fields of journalism studies that have recently received increased attention – cultural and lifestyle journalism (e.g. Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2013; Hovden and Kristensen, 2018; Kristensen and Riegert, 2017) and journalists' emotional labour (e.g. Peters, 2011; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2016).

First, cultural and lifestyle journalism remains understudied in the field of journalism studies; most research is still devoted to news and political journalists' practices and norms. Recently,

media scholars have pointed to the profound changes in (not only) lifestyle and cultural journalism brought about by the digital age (Deuze and Witschge, 2016; Maares and Hanusch, 2018). The fundamental digital transformation of journalism in general and lifestyle/cultural journalism in particular disrupted the boundaries of the (sub)field, attracted new actors, and brought forth new genres (see Carlson, 2015). The proliferation of everyday digitally enabled criticism – blogs and vlogs, online databases, rating sites and the like – has challenged the exceptionalism of professional cultural criticism (see Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007), allowing lay people and fans to play some of the roles that were previously reserved for professional critics. Since the usual cornerstone of journalistic professionalism, objectivity, has always been a problematic term in lifestyle/cultural criticism (a field based largely on an individual critic's personality), and moreover, has been being rethought even in more “serious” beats of journalism due to the rise of citizen journalism and user generated content (e.g. Blaagaard, 2013), cultural and lifestyle journalists and critics seek new and fresh means of ensuring the legitimacy of their work, that is, they search for new sources of justification and public acceptance of cultural journalists' norms and practices (Tong, 2018). This recent questioning of legitimacy has led some theorists to talk about a crisis in cultural criticism or even the death of the critic (Elkins, 2003; McDonald, 2007).

Meanwhile, journalism scholars have started to acknowledge the central role emotions play in journalism practices and journalism outcomes (e.g. Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013; 2016; Beckett and Deuze, 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2018) and to suggest that subjectivity or empathy, not only detached objectivity, can enhance professional journalistic performance (e.g. Glück, 2016; Steensen, 2017). Emotions have started to be studied and conceptualized as both a phenomenon permeating the “face” of journalism, that is, the outcomes of journalists' work, and a behind-the-scene force driving personal “impression management”, that is, journalists' emotional labour (Kotišová, 2019). The concept of emotional labour is central to this paper. I understand it as emotion management driven by professional ideals and other criteria of success, turning “our capacity for managing feeling into an instrument” (Hochschild, 1983: 186). Such a commodification of one's emotions is by no means limited to journalism; however, it forms a part of specific immaterial labour that is linked to the precariousness of cultural work in general (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Researchers studying cultural and lifestyle journalism agree that members of the professional sub-group, especially critics, differ from news journalists not only in their role perceptions, values, and professional practices, but also in the way of handling – using, suppressing, drawing from, putting aside – subjectivity, personality, and emotionality (Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007; Hovden and Kristensen, 2018). In short, what makes cultural/lifestyle journalists “journalists with a difference” (Forde, 2003: 113), is that their work is supposed to be “infused by a passion which is otherwise frowned upon within journalism” (Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 620). However, journalism scholars usually conclude that cultural journalists' work involves emotions, affect or passion, and do not dig deeper. This paper takes a step further and investigates the role of subjectivity, more specifically emotionality, in cultural/lifestyle journalism. Addressing the question of what cultural journalists' emotional labour is, the paper seeks to add to the research on cultural journalism and research on journalists' emotional labour, by weaving them together.

The article consists of six sections. The following two sections suggest in which sense “emotion” is an obvious and helpful concept for thinking about the specifics of and current

developments within cultural criticism. The third part provides a methodological outline of this study and explains in detail the focus on film critics and food critics. The fourth section presents findings of the analysis and discusses their theoretical implications. Above all, I argue that in the digital era, when multiple new (fan, lay) actors have entered the field of cultural criticism, cultural critics are delimiting their profession and reclaiming its legitimacy using a particular form of emotional labour. Emotional labour therefore replaces the strategic ritual of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972) in its legitimizing role (McNair, 1998). Since the field of cultural criticism has seen various announcements of crisis and even death, emotions can work as an elixir of life to revive the field. In conclusion, I suggest that what needs to be further studied is the interrelation between emotional – that is, unpaid – labour, autonomy, and forms of precarity.

Emotional exceptionalism

The paper deals with film and food critics, that is, two subgroups of media professionals who could be classified as cultural or lifestyle journalists (some would probably categorize film critics as cultural journalists, while food critics would fit into the category of lifestyle journalists). Both cultural journalism and lifestyle journalism can be seen as a subset of the other term. For example, cultural journalism can be defined as the news media's coverage of art, literature, music, fashion and lifestyle (Kristensen and Riegert, 2017), thus encompassing lifestyle journalism. On the other hand, lifestyle journalism is believed to be distinguished from mainstream journalism by the fact that it covers expressive values and consumer practices that help create and signify a specific identity (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2013); such a definition can easily include writing about culture. This paper follows the definition of cultural journalism and sticks to the term “cultural critic”, because it is based on interviews with people whose main activity is writing reviews, that is, criticism: a part of cultural journalism that draws heavily from individual opinions and subjectivities.

Clearly, the definition of cultural journalism has been marked by confusion about boundaries between cultural journalists, connoisseurs, art experts, and practitioners (and fans – see below), and remains unclear – such as the very practice of the profession. This lack of clarity can be partly caused by the increasing prevalence of freelancing and part time jobs in cultural journalism (Hovden and Kristensen, 2018), compelling cultural journalists to take more jobs and perhaps play several different roles at the same time. Because of the lack of clear boundaries, journalism scholars have usually defined the subset by its (perceived) difference from news and political journalism: by its distinct education and role perceptions. Gemma Harries and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2007) call this perceived difference “arts exceptionalism”. The arts critics they interviewed suggested that they were journalists, but not conventional journalists: they believed themselves to be better qualified (they typically had a degree in a specific area: film studies, history of arts, letters and the like), to do a qualitatively different job, and to have the responsibility to communicate the transformative nature of the arts. Similarly, Eamonn Forde (2003) describes his research participants, music journalists, as “journalists with a difference”, with their own employment conditions, goals, positions within power relations etc. Folker Hanusch's and Thomas Hanitzsch's (2013) analysis of in-depth interviews with Australian and German lifestyle journalists suggests that the lifestyle journalists share a very specific set of role perceptions, such as providing entertainment, advice and news-you-can-use, and examples of desirable lifestyles. The perceived differences included addressing the audience as consumers, thus working as cultural mediators between

cultural producers and cultural consumers (Hovden and Kristensen, 2018; Janssen and Verboord, 2015). By comparison, Jan Fredrik Hovden and Nete Nørgaard Kristensen (2018), in their study based on data from the Worlds of Journalism project, found out that cultural journalists, more often than both political and lifestyle journalists, saw their role in telling stories, educating the audience, and promoting tolerance.

Most importantly, cultural critics are rather unanimously believed to differ from news and political journalists by being driven by passion, a force that news and political journalists do not/should not experience (Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007). Nearly all Harries' and Wahl-Jorgensen's interviewees expressed the sentiment that it would be impossible to work as an art critic without strong passion, fascination, engagement and involvement. By comparison, the professionalism of news journalists is still linked to the commitment to objectivity and detachment (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti, 2013; Carpentier and Trioen, 2010; Vos, 2011). The principle of having passion as a driving force thus creates a boundary between cultural journalism and news journalism, because it tells us what practices and values are appropriate, acceptable and desirable (Carlson, 2015) in cultural journalism as opposed to news journalism. Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen further refine this distinction by drawing a line between arts reporters/editors, and freelance critics. While the former tended to adhere to the strategic ritual of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972), the latter regarded objectivity as irrelevant or unnecessary. The authors understood this distinction as an obvious expression of the different levels of embedding in newsroom hierarchies.

Emotions are also a dynamic that distinguishes cultural journalists (people with some expertise in art) from laypeople, that is, a dynamic that constructs (external) boundaries between professional cultural journalism and amateurs by defining who counts as a journalist and what counts as journalism (Carlson, 2015). Helmut Leder et al. (2014), using facial electromyography, measured whether their research participants' level of expertise affected their emotional responses to works of art. As the researchers argue, aesthetic experience "emerges from a complex interplay of cognitive and emotional processes" (2014, p. 2). For lay viewers, these processes are tightly intertwined, so that they like what elicits positive emotions. By contrast, experts such as professional cultural critics may be less responsive to the affective valence of art. In short, knowledge and expertise tend to affect – mitigate – the emotional response to a work of art. Leder et al. believe that it is so for two reasons: first, because experts encounter art in their everyday contexts, and second, because their emotional response is typically moderated by other features of the content such as style or the quality of individual performances (Leder et al., 2014; Scherer, 2005). Vice versa, "[d]etaching oneself from the emotional impact of the artwork allows to draw attention to aesthetic qualities by appraising stylistic, formal and contextual (e.g., art historical context) aspects" (Leder et al., 2014: 9).

These findings suggest that cultural critics differ from news journalists by being allowed to experience and express stronger emotion/passion, and from laypeople – audiences – by moderating their emotional response to cultural objects based on their knowledge. Therefore, it seems that cultural critics perform complex, at first sight even self-contradictory, emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). Apparently, the emotional labour also serves as boundary work, that is, a practice of defining "who counts as a [cultural] journalist, what counts as [cultural] journalism, what is appropriate [cultural] journalistic behavior, and what is deviant" (Carlson, 2015: 2). Emotionality seems to be central to both internal and external boundary work of

cultural critics: it not only forms the core of the “arts exceptionalism”, differentiating cultural journalism from other journalistic beats, but creates also external boundaries of cultural journalism, “protecting” it from amateurs. So far, boundary work has been studied rather in relation to news journalism than to cultural journalism (see Carlson and Lewis, 2015). Therefore, the present paper seeks to investigate this emotional labour (and, relatedly, also boundary work) more deeply, addressing the following research question (RO1): What emotional labour do cultural critics perform?

The end of cultural criticism as we know it

Importantly, cultural journalism, including criticism, is believed to have radically changed over the past few decades due to the more general institutional and technological transformation of media work (Deuze and Witschge, 2016; Kristensen and From, 2015; Kristensen, Haastrup and Holdgaard, 2018; Hovden and Kristensen, 2018; Maares and Hanusch, 2018). As a result of the emergence of digital media in the assessment of cultural content, cultural criticism has seen an increase in participatory practices. Various types of new arbiters of taste have entered the field, accompanying professional cultural journalists: fans, bloggers, media celebrities, academics, and intellectuals (Blank, 2007; Verboord, 2014). The digital transformation of the media landscape, together with the expansion of the “soft news” genre and the spreading of the communication paradigm, has also widened the scope of reviewed cultural content (including video games, food, wine, clothing, electronics, and tourist destinations) and led to different formats of cultural critique (e.g. blogs, online grading platforms, user generated content uploaded on online content sharing platforms, video reviews; see Marshall, 2010).

This fundamental transformation of the field, the entrance of new actors and expansion of new genres, further disturbed the very definition and legitimacy of cultural criticism/critics, made the boundaries of cultural criticism more porous (Carlson, 2015), and challenged the exceptionalism of cultural critics (Forde, 2003; Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007). In 2003, the art historian and art critic James Elkins (2003: 71-72, 77) in his analysis of what happened in arts criticism wrote that

“Art criticism is in worldwide crisis. Its voice has become very weak, and it is dissolving into the background clutter of ephemeral cultural criticism. But its decay is not the ordinary last faint push of a practice that has run its course, because at the very same time, art criticism is also healthier than ever. Its business is booming: it attracts an enormous number of writers, and often benefits from high-quality color printing and worldwide distribution. ... So it’s dying, but it’s everywhere. It’s ignored, and yet it has the market behind it. ... it is produced by thousands of people worldwide, but it has no common ground.”

The ambivalence in his description – the notion of the deadly expansion of cultural criticism – is echoed by Rónán McDonald who speaks of the death of the critic, simultaneously pointing out that “it might seem absurd to speak of the death of the critic when everybody now seems to be one” (McDonald, 2007: 4). The critic is, in his view, dismembered by the growing inward-looking-ness of academic criticism and democratization of popular criticism with its decreased entry requirements (i.e. no need for expertise). The public has acquired the belief that it has the capacity to evaluate its cultural consumption, and has swept aside professional critics, thus changing the paradigm of cultural criticism: “The critic-as-instructor, as objective

judge and expert, has yielded to the critic who shares personal reactions and subjective enthusiasms” (McDonald, 2007: 5). As I will show in the analytical section below, this techno-pessimism is too simplistic, mainly in the distinction between objective experts and subjective amateurs. However, McDonald well argues that these opposing forces have been accelerated by digitalization. Above all, he shows how the paradigm in which “[e]veryone has an opinion and one opinion is ‘as good as another’” (McDonald, 2007: 4) made a dent in the legitimacy of professional cultural criticism.

If cultural journalism, and particularly cultural criticism, is relatively freed from the otherwise firm journalistic commitment to objectivity and detachment (a privileged signifier of professional journalism; Carpentier and Trioen, 2010) because of its connection to subjectivity and passion, and if its boundaries and perhaps significance have been challenged by digitalization, we need to ask also the following research question (RO2): How does professional cultural criticism legitimize itself in the digital era?

In the analytical section, I will argue that looking into cultural critics’ emotional labour can tell us much about their professionalism; more precisely, that the specific handling of professional critics’ emotions is how they distinguish themselves from laypeople and fans, and that therefore this practice can be understood as both a kind of boundary work and a way of reclaiming the legitimacy of cultural criticism. Seeing particular features of emotional labour or personality as vital markers of journalistic professionalism is nothing new in journalism studies. For example, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2013) in her analysis of Pulitzer Prize-winning articles illustrates how these exemplars of journalistic practice across all news genres, including cultural criticism, are deliberately and carefully infused by journalistic sources’ emotions, a practice which she calls a “strategic ritual of emotionality”. Chris Peters (2011) considers emotion management a crucial foundation of the journalists’ job; Antje Glück (2016) argues that empathy is not only legitimate, but even a central resource in journalistic work practice. All these scholars (with the exception of Wahl-Jorgensen), however, have studied the relevance of the emotional concepts for *news* journalism. My analysis therefore extends the study of emotions in journalism to cultural criticism.

Method

This study builds on data gathered within a larger project focusing on the practices, semantics and normativity of aesthetic evaluation of films and food¹. The project aimed at understanding how four categories of people with varied relationships to film and food – professional critics, practitioners/experts, fans and lay people – differ in the language, criteria, and claims to normativity they use while evaluating the specific cultural forms. Opening the field to fans (i.e. those who identify themselves as fans and behave accordingly), practitioners (cooks and filmmakers) and lay people (those who do not have any special relationship to food or film) did not allow us to work with a refined typology of cultural critics who make a living by criticizing cultural objects, such as that of Nete Nørgaard Kristensen and Unni From (2015), who distinguish the intellectual cultural critic, the professional cultural journalist, the media-made arbiter of taste, and the everyday amateur expert. The authors’ first three categories would all fit into our category of professional critics (while the everyday amateur expert would roughly correspond to our category of fans). On the other hand, broadening the

¹ We chose these two areas in order to cover and compare the aesthetic evaluation of both arts and non-artistic cultural objects. Film and food were also a strategic choice based on the relatively large number of non-professional actors who evaluate these forms.

spectrum of people who have been believed to have something to say about culture and works of art allows us to, first, investigate the new, non-professional entrants into the field of cultural criticism, and thus take seriously the changes brought about by digitalization, and second, to look into what constitutes the boundaries of professional criticism. Therefore, while the categories of lay people, fans, and experts are not included in this study, they are implicitly present through their influence on the topics that I identified as significant and distinct during the analysis.

This paper is based on semi-structured interviews with seven professional film critics and seven professional food critics who make (or made) their living at least partly by evaluating films and food. At first, we selected and contacted critics based on two criteria: diversity and popularity within the national context of Czechia. By using these criteria, we aimed at exploring the diversity of types of evaluation among some of the country's most important cultural mediators. In this way, we recruited seven film critics but no food critic: most of them were either busy or reluctant to “fiddle with something so natural”, as one of the celebrity food critics wrote us. Therefore, in the second step, we used our previous personal and professional contacts to recruit the food critics. Our interviewees were not necessarily writing journalists, but also bloggers and videobloggers, that is, those who had found themselves inside the boundaries of professional journalism only recently (Carlson, 2015).² Moreover, very few of the critics were able to live solely on criticizing culture – often, they had additional sources of income – which further problematized their belonging to the field of professional cultural criticism. These factors might strengthen the need to fend off non-professionals. Six of the film critics and three of the food critics were men. The national context of the small media market comprising only a small population of cultural critics very much limited the possible size of the sample. Given the limited sample size but also given the novelty of the research problem, this paper has rather exploratory ambitions and suggests what the critics' emotional labour can look like without claiming that the findings are universally applicable. Their relevance for a broader population of cultural critics needs to be (dis)proved by further research.

Based on our research objectives and on the literature review, we constructed an interview guide (see e.g. Arksey and Knight, 1999). The interview guide comprised a rather wide area of questions about:

- Criteria of aesthetic evaluation;
- Evaluative and descriptive terms and their mutual relationship (e.g. What do you mean by “good”/ “quality”/ “sophisticated”...?), justification of the aesthetic judgements and their perceived validity;
- How evaluating cultural objects develops with time and experience;
- The role of personal memories, emotions and moods on evaluation;
- Disputes about quality and how the interviewees resolve them;
- The role of professional criticism in the given field of cultural production.

The interviews lasted between fifty minutes and three hours and were conducted in Czech. They were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss,

² Separate from these participants, we interviewed six to thirteen members of the other categories: six filmmakers, six film fans, eight lay people (in relation to film), eight cooks and winemakers, thirteen food/wine fans, and twelve lay people (i.e. people who eat to live without paying any special attention to their food).

2007); however, as I was interested in the interviewees' emotional labour, I followed rather the axial and selective steps of the analysis; that is, I coded the interviews using a selection of codes related to emotionality, subjectivity, and professionalism.

What follows are these codes organized into a narrative beginning with the interviewees' notions of how digitalization has changed their profession, followed by their perspectives on the general role of their emotions in their professional practice, and ending with concrete ways of reclaiming exceptionalism and/or professional legitimacy through the use of emotions.

Findings

Delegitimization and rejecting the professional cornerstone

While the literature speaks of the death of the critic and the crisis of cultural criticism (Elkins, 2003; McDonald, 2007), our interviewees acknowledged that digitalization has changed the paradigm of film criticism and perceived both its positive and negative effects on professional criticism. The Internet helps young professionals to start their career, thus allowing cultural journalism to expand by incorporating non-traditional journalists (Carlson, 2015). At the same time, through enabling the proliferation of amateur evaluators who, according to the food critic Paul, do not have enough expertise, the Internet has destroyed the reputation of food criticism in general:

“These people did not know anything about the food ... and still strived for objectivity. As a consequence, when the owner [of the restaurant] heard that food bloggers were coming, he just was dismayed that they would be phoney idiots again who wouldn't give a damn how it is made”.

Therefore, they felt the need to delimit themselves – as professionals – from the amateurs.

At the same time, especially the film critics rejected existing definitions of professional film criticism, so they needed to distinguish themselves not only from the amateurs, but also from the seeming objectivity of professional film criticism:

“There is this idea that you understand the film in the aesthetic sense, that you have a radar that tells you, this is good, this is not good, which other people cannot recognize, but you have it. Which, I think, is bullshit. But it's one of the ideas related to the profession. ... It's such a game that you disguise your individual taste for some general taste. The language of criticism stands like this”. (Carl, a film critic)

Objectivity seemed to be perceived as an obsolete term and impossible mission among the food critics as well, a relatively new branch without any established definitions of professionalism:

“Trying to be objective is the biggest mistake. ... Food can be evaluated positively only in the sense of the technique of preparation and the quality of ingredients, but not whether it's tasty and so on”. (Paul)

Therefore, the critics – nearly all we interviewed – explicitly rejected the strategic ritual of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972), seen as residing in the assessment of a cultural object based on how it meets certain genre criteria of quality, and instead sought for other sources of professional boundaries and legitimacy. This finding is rather surprising, given Hovden's and

Kristensen's (2018) review of recent studies, suggesting that contemporary professional changes have led to increasing "journalistification" and "newsification" of cultural journalism – meaning that news logics increasingly drive cultural journalists' work. However, the rejection of the strategic ritual of objectivity can be explained by the structure of the sample and the prevalence of critics (as opposed to cultural reporters) who write or film mainly reviews, i.e. practice their profession in a genre driven by aesthetic logic.

Subjectivity in criticism

In their narratives, our interviewees stressed the importance of subjectivity for their work. They believe that cultural objects do have objective characteristics; however, these are perceived subjectively. Therefore, objective evaluative statements (such as "the film is of poor quality") have "zero value" (Luke, a film critic), whereas statements referring to subjective experience of the cultural object ("I believe that the film is of poor quality") are totally indisputable:

"I am convinced that when anyone rates anything, it's subjective. When someone claims that something is objectively bad, it's nonsense. ... I hope that my readers take it as if there was the phrase 'I think' in front of each of my statements". (Luke)

Preferences are determined by the individual personality of the critic; for example, melancholic film critics will more probably like, and therefore evaluate positively, melancholic films. The critics acknowledge that they "primarily base [their] work on [themselves]" (Alice, an experienced film critic): they draw from their tastes, experiences, but also fatigue, anger.

Subjectivity – the way we socially construct our identity (Steensen, 2017) – is composed of many elements: personal opinions, memories, beliefs, emotions. Emotions were prominent in our interviewees' narratives. Paul, having a background in psychology, was strongly convinced that most people, including critics, "evaluate food based on emotions" and that "food is an emotional thing. ... Most people I know ..., after eating a meal, ask themselves: 'Am I happy that I have eaten this meal?'" Similarly, the food critic Iris talked about emotionally surprising tastes – such as "elegant, sophisticated" Jerusalem artichokes – or comforting experiences with Parmesan cheese (similarly to another food critic, Mary). As Iris noted, "Emotions play a way bigger role than people from the industry would like them to play, because they are ungraspable, one cannot manipulate them that much". This is also why food and works of art are, according to many of our interviewees, very similar: both can carry away the consumer emotionally.

Another important aspect of the evaluators' subjectivity was political opinions and ethical values that implicitly shaped their perspectives. For example, the film critic David realized that his "evaluation stems from some, let's say, very liberal secular progressivist values, that I simply have in me". His, and some others' writing, such as that of Phillip, was therefore permeated by an ethical tone: "For example, how the film depicts minorities, violence on women, whether women are depicted stereotypically, whether the film is racist, it definitely shapes my view of the film". (Phillip) The food critics Iris and Mary almost equated "tasty" with "ethical". Ingredients, especially animal products, can have good quality only when they are produced with care: "My favourite producer of eggs is Mr Novak from [a village]. I've never seen anyone who would love hens so much. ... He talks about them with great love and takes care of them perfectly". (Iris)

Last but not least, what shaped especially the food critics' evaluations were their memories and personal, often family relationships related to these memories. Therefore, even professional critics told us stories about a specific dish that "no one can cook better than my grandmother" (Paul) or, on the contrary, about food that made them sick in the past, such as mushrooms (Michaela), so that they cannot swallow, let alone evaluate meals containing particular ingredients.

In sum, individual immediate emotional experiences, political opinions and personal memories all shaped the critics' evaluations of cultural objects. If both film and food are perceived primarily emotionally by all people regardless their professional relationship to the cultural form, what, then, makes critics different from fans and lay people?

"I watch films in my stomach": Objectivization of emotions

Our interviewees all realized that as reviewing was their job, they couldn't be swept away by their subjective emotions, political opinions or personal memories. They realized that their reviews were supposed to contain more than a simple like/dislike verdict grounded in their whims and moods. However, they were equally aware of the fact that it is their subjectivity what makes their texts unique and valuable (see Moestrup, 2019 and below).

To reconcile the tension, both film and food critics objectivize their emotions elicited by a particular dish or film. By "objectivizing" I mean adopting a distanced stance towards one's own emotions in order to be able to view and analyze them (see below). Rather than pushing the emotions away, the interviewees allow the visceral and bodily feelings to come, and then make the emotions conscious, start dissecting them, question them, search for their source, understand what flavours, motives or shots elicit them, and thus make them intelligible for their readers:

"When I get scared, when I get moved, I will be able to relatively easily reveal the series of shots and motives that led to it". (Adam, a film critic)

"I can be moved to tears, let's say, by the editing of a certain moment of a film. I tell myself, wow, this is amazing, but at the moment I do not distinguish any aesthetic judgement or how it is technically done, but it's primarily *the emotion* that emerges from a combination of some aspects. And then, when I tell myself, aha, I liked this, I start thinking about *why*, and I proceed to the editing and start analysing it". (Alice)

"I use to say that I watch films in my stomach. It means that rather than watching the films themselves, I observe what they do to me". (Richard)

"When the food is exceptional, there is an element that ... awakens some emotion, ... that engages your attention. When it engages you, then it starts to be, logically, interesting. ... But it also happens that when I do not like it, I try to figure out why. Then you get to various categories". (Paul)

They also usually ask themselves whether their emotions are justifiable or well-founded, or whether they should relativize it, invert their perspective. In other words, the critics use the emotion to better recognize what moments or aspects of the cultural object are significant regarding its quality. In this way, they keep enough distance from the emotions, so that the latter do not disturb their professionalism in the view of their readers/viewers. Keeping the emotional distance thus means building a wall that separates professionals from amateurs

(Carlson, 2015). Importantly, the critics differentiate between “good” long term emotions and opinions that are to be utilized and objectivized, and “bad” short term emotions that the interviewees attempt to “extract” from the evaluation process.

While this principle of objectivization of emotions apparently permeated both fields of criticism, the food critics seemed to put more emphasis on their cumulative (emotional) experience. Based on what they had liked and disliked throughout their career, they gradually refined and reaffirmed their criteria of quality: “The more one tries, the more tastes he or she knows, the gustatory cells adjust, so that one can recognize even more and evaluate a larger spectrum”. (Lynn) In other words, while the cells become more sensitive, the critics become less tolerant to, for example, supermarket hamburger buns (Thomas). On the other hand, the film critics looked more than the food critics into whether and how the particular emotion was intended to be raised by the filmmakers. While emotions that are forced or very simply stirred up (such as by a melodramatic or openly violent scene) are seen as “cheaper” (Richard), more complex emotions, raised by sophisticated processes, are perceived as more valuable (and thus making for a higher quality piece).

The objectivization of emotions has an important linguistic implication: our interviewees very consciously work with emotionally loaded expressions, such as “epic” or “boring”, to elicit the right dose of the right emotion in their readers and viewers.

Such work with emotions and emotional expressions could suggest that instead of Gaye Tuchman’s (1972) strategic ritual of objectivity, the critics perform Wahl-Jorgensen’s (2013) “strategic ritual of emotionality”: infusing the media texts with policed and disciplined emotions. However, I suggest that the most relevant term for the ritual that we observe in the field of professional criticism is “strategic ritual of objectivization of emotionality”. This is to say that rather than constructing objectivity or emotionality in their discourses, the critics carefully reflect upon their feelings and other subjective responses (memories, political arousal) provoked by a certain aspect or motive of the cultural object (unusual editing, surprising ingredient etc.), and consciously search for the objective features – the motives or aspects – that provoked them. The evaluation then emerges from rational assessment of the way the particular objective features of the object induce the subjective reaction.

Rather than to the two already conceptualized rituals in journalism (Tuchman, 1972; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013), the ritual of objectivization of emotionality is close to some practices that have been described or promoted among social scientists. In particular, this form of emotional labour is close to what some sociologists (Bergman-Blix, 2015; Wettergren, 2015) have called “emotional participation”: critical emotional engagement in the field (here film or food), that is, using emotion as an analytical tool that helps to direct the analyst’s (here critic’s) attention to important themes and aspects of the field (cultural object). Similarly, one can think of Pierre Bourdieu’s (2003) “participant objectivation”: the objectivation of the subject of the analyst (here critic and her/his emotionality), enabling her or him to grasp her or his past experience and subjectivity that they project into the interpretation of the social world (here film or food). Our interviewees do exactly what Bourdieu suggests: they methodically subject their personal experiences and emotions to control, trying to produce epistemic benefits. The objectivization of emotionality is also in line with Anna Elisabeth Schellekens’ (2008) argument that “the pursuit of objectivity for aesthetic judgements must be located within the distinctively personal perspective” (Schellekens, 2008: 238), which is exactly what the

cultural critics did: they rebounded from their personal emotions and subjectivity to reach a mechanism that would appropriately replace the (allegedly) impossible objectivity.

Re-professionalization: Objectivization of emotionality, complexity, and persona

The last part of my argument is that now that the critics' professional legitimacy has been shaken, the strategic ritual of objectivization of emotionality can be understood as a mechanism used by the critics to reclaim their professional legitimacy, because the objectivization of emotionality is, first, a result of their professional socialization, and second, what makes professional critics different from lay people and fans.

However, there are also other means used by the critics to build the professional boundaries and thus to assure professional legitimacy that are directly related to the objectivization of emotionality ritual and to subjectivity in general.

First, the professionals, unlike lay people and fans, are able to perceive a cultural object in its complexity. As they are not carried away by their immediate emotional reaction, they can assess the work from several different viewpoints and angles, and thus offer their readers original, alternative, and even conflicting interpretations. This, together with their formal education (often in film studies, letters or social sciences) that typically allows the critics to ground their evaluations in historical or social context, turns the cultural objects into objects to think about (film; Carl) or allows the reader to understand what happens during the becoming of the object (food; Michaela). Importantly, Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen (2007) argue that specialist knowledge is considered more vital among freelance cultural critics, while for employed journalists and editors, knowledge of the particular art form is not seen as an absolute requirement. This corresponds with our findings: a majority of our interviewees were freelancers and, more importantly, critics, not cultural reporters.

Second, an inevitable part of the critics' professionalization is constructing and performing a particular persona, which is inseparable from expressing subjectivity and emotions in a certain way. This concurs with Steffen Moestrup's notion of persona-driven cultural criticism, "where the performance of the journalist's or critic's personality is a fundamental part of the media text" (Moestrup, 2019: 7). Indeed, the critics we interviewed were aware of their specificity and uniqueness (and of features that made them successful and memorable):

"As I draw from myself, my taste, my experience, I am in contrast to the mass of people. ... In the job, the ego works like this. The one who sidelines it, his or her work stops being interesting". (Alice)

Because the community of film critics is rather small and they know each other, they were also aware of the specificity of their colleagues and observed that their colleagues (dis)liked a particular film for certain personal reasons (e.g. Carl). Thus, some of our interviewees talked about another critic's "narcissism", "egoism" or simply image. Some were considered intellectual/snobbish, while others were more plebeian/folkish (disdaining fancy ingredients or art films).

Importantly, our interviewees believed that they "could afford" such a subjective persona-driven approach thanks to their reputation and years spent in the profession.

In sum, this section argues that aspects of cultural critics' subjectivity – the objectivization of emotionality as the critics' typical emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), further allowing

them to take multiple standpoints, and thus to write more complex reviews, and the importance of individual personas – can work as possible sources of professional legitimacy. Such a perspective supports the argument that emotions and subjectivity are more important for media work than journalism scholars thought they were (e.g. Beckett and Deuze, 2016).

Conclusion

This paper looked closely at what, as journalism scholars (Forde, 2003; Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007; Hovden and Kristensen, 2018) have suggested, makes cultural journalists, in particular critics, distinct from other journalistic beats: the openly acknowledged importance of emotionality and subjectivity for these media workers' professional practice. Based on fourteen interviews with film and food critics, I addressed the following questions: What emotional labour do cultural critics perform? How does professional cultural criticism legitimise itself in the digital era?

I argued that both the film and food critics realized and actually cherished the fact that their work processes draw heavily from their subjectivity: emotional experiences, political opinions and personal memories. All these subjective features shape the critics' evaluations of the cultural objects. However, to do their job, the critics cannot allow their emotions to take the reins. Instead, they perform emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) in the form of what I have called "objectivization of emotionality": making the emotions conscious, analyzing them and their sources/causes, questioning and challenging them, and, eventually, making them intelligible for their readers. In this way, I suggested, the critics use their subjectivity to better recognize what moments or aspects of the cultural object are significant regarding its quality. The term stresses the careful reflection upon subjective responses (raised feelings, induced memories, political arousal) to a certain aspect or motive of the cultural object and the investigation of the objective features of the object that provoked them.

Furthermore, I suggested that in the context where digitalization has threatened the exceptional position of the professional cultural critic to the extent that authors speak of the death of the critic and of crisis in cultural criticism (Elkins, 2003; McDonald, 2007), this emotional labour can work – and for some of our interviewees indeed worked – as a tactic of construction of professional boundaries, and thus as a strategy to reclaim professional legitimacy. Somewhat contrarily to what has been suggested by theory (Carlson, 2015), the way how to maintain the distinction between professional cultural journalism and amateur writing/blogging does not reside in expelling deviant actors, practices and values. Rather, it is positive: embracing a particular form of emotional labour. Other sources of professional legitimacy, namely a complex, multiple perspective and persona-driven approach (Moestrup, 2019), are also tightly linked to the use of subjectivity and can work when the critics draw from/objectivize their subjectivity.

There are important themes that this study only touches upon that need to be further studied. In particular, research on cultural critics' professional identities and the role of subjectivity in reclaiming the professional legitimacy needs to be understood in the context of the rise of atypical newswork, the growth of freelance entrepreneurship, declining availability of resources for freelance journalists, and the rise of many forms of unpaid labour (Deuze, 2011; Deuze and Witschge, 2018). This context seems to be particularly relevant for cultural criticism: as Hovden and Kristensen (2018) noticed, cultural journalists are more likely to work in part-time and non-permanent positions, thus enjoying (even) less stability and

security than other journalists. This is why cultural journalists tend to take other jobs besides writing about culture. Moreover, among cultural journalists, critics are those who work most often as freelancers (Harries and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007), and thus embody this precarity more than editors or cultural reporters.

On the other hand, Hovden and Kristensen (2018: 10) also point out that “cultural journalists generally appear to feel many of the pressures in their work less strongly than other journalists do”. They seem to enjoy relative autonomy from political, economic and organizational pressures. In addition, they are relatively free to choose stories of their interest (i.e. those that they are passionate about).

Where does the critics’ emotional labour fit into in this context? Is building on one’s own passion, emotions and subjectivity an expression of liberation and autonomy from organizational unification? Or is the emotional labour a form of unpaid labour? Is the act of using one’s emotions for work an act of freedom, or a totalizing principle asking the media professionals for all their humanity? These questions related to the interrelations between emotionality and precarity need to be further studied and reflected on. Cultural critics can be a very good population for addressing them.

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