

Cultural “foggy mirrors” or alternative spaces? Blogs as means for shaping the Romanian popular literary criticism

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Abstract

Ethnographic studies and survey research are increasingly showing that the Internet has been tightly integrated into the situated social practices of its users. Cyberspace presents a classic environment for filling in gaps through and by virtue of one’s personal psychological repertoire. This is where imagination and imagery are played out. Imagination entails the general cognitive capacity of human beings to fantasize about the nature of others, both people and environments or objects, through ideas, narratives, concepts, explanations, assumptions and beliefs. Imagery refers to the visual representation of imagined objects – namely, assigning them forms. In the context of online communication the role of imagination in generating emotions in cyberspace is even greater than in actual-space. The factual information we have about an online partner is usually more limited than our knowledge an offline partner and our imagination must fill in the gap.

The present article tried to explain the ways in which the Romanians make use of blogs to construct an alternative space devoted to literary life. On the basis of official Romanian blogs ranking the present article will analyze a sample of ten culturally/literary personal blogs in order to identify the limits and perspectives offered by this alternative Agora.

Keywords: Alternative culture, blogs, popular culture, literary criticism, public arena.

1. Introduction

Ethnographic studies and social investigations indicate more and more the present degree of dependency of our daily lives to the new communication technologies, especially the Internet. The Internet and the activities associated to its use have become at present an integrated part of the larger social practices, the new technologies having a higher and higher impact on our life.

According to Manuel Castells (2001: 118):

“The uses of the Internet are, overwhelmingly, instrumental and closely connected to the work, family, and everyday life of Internet users”.

The studies subsumed in the new research direction of the “Computer mediated communication” (CMC) developed around the analysis of this type of problems. CMC was merely defined as a communication form which takes place in between people through the intermediate of the instrument called „computer” (Herring, 1996). Cyberspace stands for what the classic medium represented in order to fill up communication distances through the intermediate of the psychological repertoire specific for a human being as a distinct

personality. It is a place where imagination and imaginary are often all mighty. The imagination involves the human being's ability and capacity to fantasize about the others' nature, whether they are human beings, objects or real situations through the intermediate of ideas, narratives, concepts, explanations, assumptions and beliefs (Thomas, 2003). The imaginary refers to the visual representation of the imagined objects – to be more precise, to the action of endowing them with forms (Thomas 1999). In the context of the online communication in which the identity ambiguity dominates, the role of imagination in producing feelings and emotions in the cyberspace is bigger than in the real space. The factual information about an online partner that we have are usually more limited than the knowledge related to an offline partner, so that imagination can fill this cognitive "gap" (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004: 80).

The present article is trying to identify the ways in which the Romanians use blogs (in their quality of CMC) in order to build an alternative "space" devoted to literary life. On the basis of a continuous research in the Romanian online environment – the weekly classification of blogs made by "Zelist" (www.zelist.ro) – the present article analyzes a sample of ten personal "cultural/literary" blogs with the purpose of identifying the perspectives offered by this alternative "agora".

2. Conceptual and theoretical frame

The internet can be considered not only as a motor of social change influencing beliefs and social behaviors (Hine, 2000; Jones, 1998; Kopper, Kolthoff, Czepek, 2000), but also as a cultural product which reflects these beliefs and social behaviors (Hine, 2000).

Blogs and other forms of personal pages existing on the "World Wide Web" can be considered as a manner of emphasizing the presentation of the self (Goffman, 1959) and of the written culture performative aspects (Denzin, 2003) especially the unclear distinctions between the producers and the consumers of knowledge and between the public and the private sphere. This happens because a large quantity of personal information becomes available to the public through the intermediate of the online communication. Any blog is considered to be a new type of asynchronous computer mediated communication (CMC) used in a diversity of ways but most often made under the form of a public diary or a continuous comment about oneself (Herring et al., 2004; Huffaker, 2004; Halavais, 2002). Postings on a blog are mainly composed of texts but several of them include photos and multimedia content. Although there are different types of blogs (Blood, 2002; Herring et al, 2004) the majority are interconnected so that they could provide information for other sites on Internet. A lot of them are interactive namely they also contain comments to the postings, these comments becoming a real "discussion list" related to a certain posting. Readers may

leave a comment to a certain posting which may correct mistakes, or may contain opinions about the posting or its topic.

As compared to other CMC forms, blogs have technological characteristics which make them different (Herring et al., 2004) among which we could cite the fact that the users don't have to know advanced programming or that other people can comment for each posting on the blog. Such characteristics are extremely important for the construction of the online identity (Huffager, Calvert, 2005). First of all, the lack of necessary expertise for creating and maintaining a blog makes this application to be more accessible. No matter the age or the sex of the holder. Secondly, the capacity to store the postings of the blogs creates a way of tracing impressions and expressions from the near past building thus the identity through a process of continuous self-reference. Finally, the software used in the case of the blogs offers several opportunities for feedback or connections with other bloggers and this may lead in time, to the development of a sense of belonging to a certain group. In short, blogs represent a new dimension for CMC and may offer the opportunities to understand the way in which bloggers present themselves online, especially in what concerns expressing oneself and group relations, since both processes previously mentioned have an influence on the construction of the social identity.

The new technologies came to have a significant impact on the ways in which people live their daily lives. The ways in which the new technologies influenced and are still influencing the human interaction and communication are extremely important. In connection with the possible interactions through the new technologies, it becomes obvious that they don't differ significantly from the daily "face-to-face" interactions. Referring to CMC, Lengel (2004: 9) says the following:

"Sure, it's a pretty new, sophisticated technology, but what's really interesting about it is the way it's being used to do the same old totally natural thing: communication".

From the perspective of the identity construction and personal presentation through the intermediate of CMC the thesis of the "self presentation in daily life" proposed by Goffman (1959) remains the most useful method for understanding the action processes, the interaction and the construction of the self in various domains including the Internet. In this last case, we have to take into account the way in which Goffman's conception of self presentation was used in order to understand CMC and the way in which CMC was used by social actors during the self -presentation process. Through online interaction the actors are offered the opportunity to explore the multiplicities of the self. The offline identity is the one which plays an important part in creating a completely new identity or underlining some features already existing in a person's identity. The individuals often have several online identities, several web pages and e-mail addresses which represent different aspects of themselves (Lengel et al, 2004). "The symbolic markers" of the virtual language are tools used by people in their presentation as persons in the online space and from this point

of view they are similar with Goffman's "props" (Goffman, 1959) which are used as hidden means of presenting the personal identity in the public space. A symbolic marker from the symbolical online interaction can be as simple as an e-mail address where including the endings 'edu' or 'org' contribute to contextualize the actor (Lengel et al, 2004). Nowadays the Internet and the CMC can be considered as essential means of creating and negotiating social identities (Chandler, 1998). The Internet offers us not only a different space for creating our identities but also the potential to create a different type of self. Communicating through Internet provides us with opportunities of interacting with other members of a much larger social network and becoming part of different groups with various identities (Chandler, 1998). The results of the studies and the investigations underline the fact that the Internet is becoming more and more integrated in its users' localized social practices (Bakardjieva, 2000; Castells, 2001; Feenberg, Bakardjieva, 2002; Herring et al., 2004; Jones, 1998; H. Miller, Arnold, 2001; Nardi et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2003; Smith, Bakardjieva, 2001; Wellman, 1999; Wynn, Katz, 1997). According to these social interaction studies, Internet users build social networks, either online or offline, on the basis of their socio-biographical proximity relations, of their social values strengthened inter-subjectively and of their projects and aspirations, often combining online activities with offline affinities.

De Certeau (1984) claimed that the localized social groups practice a series of "strategies" in order to encompass the "strategies" of the daily institutional and normative control (Feenberg, Bakardjieva, 2002: 112). Inspired by Foucault's analysis on the "truth regimes" and by the breaches in these regimes which enable "subjugated knowledge" in view of a daily resistance, these strategic opportunities could be found in the dominant codes of the institutional structures placed at the superior extremity of force reports. Thus, the social groups and the oppressed individuals can react strategically to institutionalized power tactics even when they remain inside the dominating control strategy (Feenberg, Bakardjieva, 2002: 113). As Feenberg explains (Feenberg, 2002: 113):

"Tactics thus belong to strategies the way speech belongs to language. The technical code of society is the rule of an exorbitant practice, a syntax which is subject to unintended usages that may subvert the framework it determines".

From the perspective of Wellman's theory of social networks the thesis is the following (Wellman, 1999: 169):

"The Net is only one of many ways in which the same people may interact...it is not a separate reality".

This point of view is confirmed by Goffman's analysis also made by Miller and Arnold (Miller, Arnold, 2002) on gender and identity in the case of personal pages on Internet:

“What people are doing on the Web is primarily what people are doing offline...by and large, and the things people do on the Web, and the selves presented there, should not be expected to be distinct and separated from actions and self in other areas of life”.

3. Data set, variables and research hypotheses

The methodology used for this article consists of a triangulation of the research methods applied at the level of the same data set. From a strictly methodological point of view, we have chosen the discourse analysis and the virtual ethnography. The starting point is the fundamental assumption according to which the discourse analysis is a method which helped us identify the way in which social identity is rebuilt through language – in the direction pointed out by Sweeney (2003) and Sancho (2003).

At the same time, the virtual ethnography allowed us to seize some communicational mechanisms involved in the communication on Internet, given its capacity of staying as far as possible from the standard conventions of geographical delimitations, corporality and physical presence in order to concentrate only on interaction and communication (Hine, 2000: 4):

“An ethnography of the internet can look in detail at the ways in which the technology is experienced in use.”

The analyzed data set consisted of a qualitative sample composed of ten personal online diaries (“blogs”) which have a declared “cultural” content, or to be more precise which concentrate on online¹ literary criticism. The choice of these ten blogs was made on the basis of their importance in the weekly top blogs made by “Zelist” (www.zelist.ro).

4. Data analysis

4.1. The expression of the “cultural/literary” blogs’ identity

In order to differentiate their own blogs from those of other people, users create and express unique characteristics through blogs which will thus give shape to their identities – that is to say, they will be the image of the absolute conception people have about themselves. Schiano (2004) made such an ethnographic study of the blogging phenomenon as a form of personal expression and communication. He characterized a number of blogging practices and saw blogging as an activity of keeping a personal diary. The results of his analysis show that blogs are important as individual intimate forms of one’s own

¹ The ten blogs were chosen on the basis of a top made by Zelist on March 1 2010. The sample consisted of the following blogs: adinab.wordpress.com, bibliotecababel.wordpress.com, books.ranbowchild.ro, capricornk13.wordpress.com, ce-am-mai-citit.blogspot.com, chestiilivresti.blogspot.com, cinabru.blogspot.com, terrorista.ro, whitenoise4ever.blogspot.com, zumcitor.wordpress.com.

expression and communication. Blogging was characterized as a versatile space which can be used in similar ways as an online diary, a personal "Newsletter" or a personal chronicle. In Nardi's study (2004) on this phenomenon the results indicated the fact that the relation between the known audience and the unknown one is the key to maintaining and differentiating a blog from another. Through the activity of blogging and the interaction with other bloggers, individuals with common interests are able to form a specific group or a community and to identify themselves with this specific group. The individuals may be members of different groups according to their interests, nevertheless through their attempt to differentiate from the others; each group will have its own unique characteristics, including specific rules and norms. These unique characteristics can be seen as the identities of some specific communities which can exert an influence on the members' identities, namely on social identities. Thus, blogs can be considered as a point where significances are made by individuals but these meanings aren't yet fixed and they don't transform into behavioral habits.

Applying these theses to the sample containing the analyzed blogs we can notice that in most cases there is a special category in the blogroll – "What I am reading now"- where the image of the book that the blog author is reading at the moment is posted. At the same time, for each actor taken into consideration in the box "About Me/ About the Blog" associated with the blog itself, there is a characterization of that blog as one which deals with literary accounts.

AdinaB²: Literary opinions of a lay-reader (amateur for purists) who reads quite a lot. Being often asked: "What have you read lately?"; "What book should I buy to read?"; or "Have you read The Da Vinci Code? Is it nice?" I thought to write on this blog for my friends and for others who are looking for opinions about one book or another. (For the last question: yes, the first 50 pages; no.)

Capricornik: capricornik13 is the blog of a reader who doesn't pretend to be a big specialist in literature. If you're expecting literary criticism you're not in the right place. It's a place in which I have decided to leave my impressions about the books that I am reading and to communicate with you, the other book-lovers. Sometimes, I also introduce travel impressions, some other times a thought which is haunting me or I play games.

Terorista (The terrorist): This is a blog. A blog can contain texts, photos, links, music, films and ... that's pretty much it. Here, there are texts, links and seldom any photo. The texts refer mainly to the books I am reading. I have proposed myself to write about all the books that I have finished reading, whether they are literature or books containing practical advice, whether I liked them or not, whether I am sure I understood something from them or they just left me puzzled.

² In what concerns the text, the choice of the blog was made starting either from the assumed „virtual identity” (it's the case of „Terorista”, „AdinaB”, „Zumcitor”, „Whitenoise”, „Cinabru” and „Capricornik”) or the abbreviation of the blog name (it's the case of „Chestii livrești”, „Ce am mai citit”, „Biblioteca Babel” and „Rainbow Child” blogs).

Thus, the blog readers have in front of their eyes a relatively unitary image of the authors' personal identity, a sort of "a virtual identity card", which guides the virtual reading from the very beginning.

The "alternative" space built by the ten blogs can be conventionally divided into several sections, out of which we decided to study two:

- A. Public notoriety vs. overt affinities at the level of the blogs from the same thematic category;
- B. The relation with the audience of their blogs and the established similarity networks.

4.2. Affinities vs. Online popularity – a problematic report

Through definition, the blogging activity is an intimate space of self-expression, which concentrates on individual forms of expression and personal experience. According to Langellin and Peterson (2004: 176):

"Weblogs emphasize similar performative values of the particular and the personal....weblogs are written by ordinary people, not extraordinary ones; in a personal voice or register of discourse, not a public one; to be read by one person at a time, not many people all at once".

In other words, through the activity of blogging there is a space created in the public medium and the position that a blog (and its author) occupy in this "agora" is directly dependent on a characteristic often associated with the social position in the offline space, namely "notoriety", its importance as compared with other blogs.

In our study, we were interested to identify if there is a dependency relation between the public "visibility" of a literary or popular criticism blog and its importance among the blogs of the same nature. However, the analysis of the public data referring to the notoriety of the literary "criticism" blogs didn't indicate us either the existence of a reciprocal dependency relation or a causal determination relation between two elements. Thus, the literary blog which enjoys the highest notoriety in the public virtual space – "Chestii livresti" ("Bookish stuff") – has a limited number of reciprocal relations with the blogs of the same nature (only four blogs from the considered sample have included it in their blogrolls – To see to this effect Table 1 below). At the same time, the less "visible" blogs in the virtual medium – „Whitenoise“, „Cinabru“ and „Zumcitor“ – have nevertheless a "nucleus" position inside the "alternative" arena of the literary criticism blogs.

A question for which I couldn't get a direct answer on the basis of this type of data was: Is there a dependency relation between the blog's "age" – to be more precise the period of time and the moment since which it started to function in the virtual space – its "notoriety" in the public virtual space and the "nucleus" position of a blog at the level of the inter-blogs relations for the same type?

For some of the analyzed blogs the answer is affirmative and we are taking here into consideration "Terorista" (The terrorist) blog, the one which has the longest history from the total of the considered sample. In its case, we can clearly perceive a dependency relation between the three considered elements

(To see to this effect Table 1 below). In other cases, the previously mentioned relation is not so obvious and here we can mention „Capricornik” blog, which has relatively recently started and which has the lowest “notoriety” in „Zelist” top, as compared with the rest from the studied sample. However, “Capricornik” established six relations of reciprocal dependency inside the “agora” of the analyzed virtual literary criticism.

Table 1 – The hierarchy of blogs in the public “agora” vs. the power of the inter-blogs networks of the same type

Name	Rank ³	Score ⁴	Month and year of appearance	Number of literary criticism postings	Number of reciprocal relations
Chestii livresti (Bookish stuff)	79	7.132	June 2007	152	4
Terorista (The terrorist)	121	5,571	May 2006	251	6
Whitenoise	180	4,381	January 2007	125	7
Ranbow	277	3,193	January 2007	60	5
Biblioteca (The library)	305	3,017	June 2008	72	3
Cinabru	330	2,908	July 2007	175	7
AdinaB	423	2,473	October 2008	126	6
Zumcitor	449	2,383	August 2007	33	7
Ce am mai citit (What I have been reading lately)	488	2.263	July 2007	61	1
Capricornik	655	1910	June 2009	42	6

It’s obvious that a fundamental element in defining literary “criticism” blogs as an alternative cultural space is their relation with the audience, the annotator-readers (anonymous or not).

4.3. A unique or several audiences for the literary criticism blogs?

The blog addresses to a category of individuals, a certain “audience” but it does this by using an intimate tone. Mediating communication on a blog – where the computer screen is in front of an audience that can’t be seen while the posting is being written – encourages revealing information and intimacy. While in the

³ According to Zelist top on March 1 2010.

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face-to-face interactions we can decide to reveal selectively a certain amount of information to certain people and not to others, most of the blogs don't allow this type of limited construction of expression due to the fact that the blog design itself limits the user's intimacy level (Lessig, 1999, Gustafson, 2004, Park, 2003).

While we can limit the intimacy degree in face-to-face interactions according to our interlocutor, most of the blogs have only one level for the public character and one for the private character of the interaction (Boyd, 2006; Park, 2003). Park reminds us of the fact that the nature and the character of the expression forms depend to a high extent of the expectations related to intimacy (Park, 2003, p. 3):

"The vast majority of people express themselves in greater quantity and often greater quality if they are allowed to freely choose the public-ness of each of their utterances. In the real world, you almost certainly feel more comfortable discussing certain topics—political controversies, or the shortcomings of your company's management team or your marital problems—in an environment where you can control who hears you."

How the authors of a blog address to the audience, more precisely what is the tone and the relation they have with their potential readers constitute, from our point of view, the key to building an alternative "agora" of the literary criticism culture in Romania.

Analyzing the importance of the audience for a blog, Laurie McNeill describes the interaction between the blog author and its audience as being one of the two parts which build together a text (McNeill, 2003: 27):

"The reader of an online diary therefore actively participates in constructing the text the diarist writes and the identities he or she takes on in the narrative. Though active and even intimate, however, that participation remains virtual, disembodied".

The lack of corporality of the audience is the one which helps the authors to use the confessional tone on a blog. In spite of all these, whether there is or not that lack of corporality, the very existence of an audience for a blog means that such a journal is no longer a monologue but a dialogue and the authors are (McNeill, 2003: 29, 31-32):

"...acutely aware of their readers, whose desires, expectations, and reading practices shape the texts that bloggers produce".

In the case of the sample of considered blogs we can make a distinction between two categories according to their audience:

1. Specific audience – more precisely, the appearance of certain dependency networks inside the analyzed sample.
2. General audience – annotator-readers outside the inter-blogs "networks" from the same thematic category ("popular" virtual literary "criticism").

According to the data of the previously mentioned Table 1 we can say that at the level of the studied sample there is a reciprocal dependency network in which certain blogs have a "central" place (it's the case of „Whitenoise", „Cinabru" and „Zumcitor" blogs where the number of reciprocal dependencies reaches the maximum level– 7) while others are in an "isolation" position as compared with similar blogs (it's the case of „Ce am mai citit"/ "What I have been reading lately" blog).

In what concerns the general audience of the analyzed blogs we can say that in this case we can also differentiate between two categories:

A. "Known" general audience – this consists of annotators who are also bloggers, identifiable through the links they leave in their comments;

B. "Anonymous" general audience – categories which consist of all the annotators of the mentioned blog who sign "Anonymous" or who offer links towards their own blogs.

In what concerns the positioning of the analyzed blogs in the "alternative" virtual space, we can notice the appearance of a new hierarchy among the studied blogs and their new repositioning.

Table 2 – The importance of the analyzed blogs in relation to the "known" audience

Blog name	The size of the "known" audience (number of identifiable annotators)	Rank
„Terorista" (The terrorist)	253	I
„Whitenoise"	181	II
„Chestii livrești" (Bookish stuff)	159	III
„Cinabru"	119	IV
„AdinaB"	89	V
„Zumcitor"	73	VI
„Rainbow"	59	VII
„Capricornik"	53	VIII
„Biblioteca" (The library)	47	IX
„Ce am mai citit" (What I have been reading lately)	23	X

The second subcategory of the general audience – namely the "anonymous" public of the blog – is more difficult to identify and approximate, given their "fluid"/"uncertain" character. To approximate its size we could look to the Romanian annual blog contest -„Roblogfest"- where blogs compete for different thematic categories – where you can find the anonymous votes for certain blogs which compete for the same thematic category. Thus, not only in 2008 but also in 2009 from the total of the analyzed sample we could

say that a single blog enjoys a privileged position in the Romanian blogosphere being considered the third, or the second from "The best cultural blogs" – it's about „Terorista" (The terrorist)⁵. With the exception of „Zumcitor" blog (which enjoyed the appreciation of the "anonymous" audience members at these contests) no other analyzed blog was able to have such a large anonymous general audience.

In the virtual space where validation, confirmation and correct identification are almost impossible we can assume that the blogging activity in itself is an important source of forming impressions. This source of information has a significant added value beyond the style and the behavior model revealed by textual interactions. When a person is online, she often perceives another person as she is reflected at an artificial level often far away from reality but the incoming reactions are adapted to this ambiguous state of fact built through successive "wrappings" of the offline identities with various attributes specific to the identity or the identities adopted at an online level. We can thus assume that beyond the notoriety or/and the public visibility of a literary "criticism" blog, a key element to the formation of an identity in this virtual space could be found in the author-bloggers' way of approaching subjects.

To give examples of the way in which the "writing style" attracts or dismisses the audience of a blog, we have taken into consideration two "book presentations" included in Table 3 below.

Both of the considered blogs — „Terorista" (The terrorist) and „Ce am mai citit" (What I have been reading lately) – presented a personalized "reading" of the same author (Haruki Murakami). It's the approach "style" which made the difference between a "nucleus" blog of the virtual popular literary criticism agora" („Terorista") and a blog which has a much more limited "public impact" („Ce am mai citit"/ What I have been reading lately).

⁵ According to the final tops for "RoBlogFest" 2008 and 2009 editions.

Table 3 – Differences of tonality in the Romanian literary criticism blogosphere

"Terorista" (The terrorist)	"Ce am mai citit (What I have been reading lately)
<p>Ryu Murakami, "In supa miso", transl. Florin Oprina, Polirom, 2006</p> <p>"Copii de aruncat", it's hallucinating, "Albastru nemarginit aproape transparent", I liked it so I went on with this Murakami as compared to the other one which I definitely abandoned after two books [...]</p> <p>He is compared with Bret Easton Ellis' "American Psycho" – I haven't read anything by Ellis, I have Lunar Park but it doesn't really appeal to me.</p> <p>Violence</p> <p>Didn't impress me at all. The charismatic psychopath murderer's part is for the American Frank. For the part of the terrified and later on seduced disciple is the Japanese Kenji. The action takes place in the amusement districts from Tokyo. The Japanese is the American's guide. Atmosphere, gradual tension, massacre. This bored me – I have something against thrillers, they make me yawn. I vaguely remember that I liked Stephen King more than one hundred years ago when I had read some of his books. OK, there are "shocking" details: [...]</p> <p>Social criticism</p> <p>This is the only cool thing that I found: ridiculous Japanese which set a disproportionate price on Americanisms which the Americans themselves find as worthless.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Yeah, OK. Unfortunately it's full of bla-bla –bla. Cheap psychology, criticism of a consumerist society, rebellious attitude which makes me sick and tired. I liked even "Albastru" more. "Copii de aruncat" is much better but now I am starting to wonder if I didn't exaggerate. I will try another Ryu and then I will make up my mind.</p>	<p>Haruki Murakami – "The elephant vanishes"</p> <p>Completely ignoring the ancient or recent Japanese literature and culture, I have read with curiosity Haruki Murakami's short stories volume "The elephant vanishes" (Polirom, 2005). I wanted to see what this contemporary novelist, who benefits of an entire author series from the Publishing House, has to say with the hope it will be catchy. So, when I saw the volume in a good friend's house I confiscated it and that's it.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Murakami's characters rarely have names and you often have the feeling they are mere shadows. The setting is contemporary minimalist, and the cultural allusions are sophisticated and generally referring to the West. The characters are chatting about Wagner's, Brahms' or Shostakovich's works just like women from a T S Eliot poem would talk about Michelangelo and one can hear Colonel Bogey March in the background. I didn't expect people to wear kimonos, samurai swords, or to drink tea while sitting at small tables but sometimes the obtained effect is artificial – something doesn't fit in there. The writer is – and you can clearly see that in the translation – fully in control of his instruments but this is not an excuse for the aspects I am criticizing here. Reading this volume didn't cure me of all the remorse caused by my short books- thief career.</p>

As all the discussions subsumed to Table 3 posting indicate bloggers built themselves some "virtual" characters as they thought the others prefer to see and with whom they would like to interact (Joinson, Dietz-Uhler, 2002). In the case of the previously mentioned postings there is an extremely personalized approach („Terorista") and one with an obvious academic and didactic flavor („Ce am mai citit"). If „Terorista" (The terrorist) chose to emphasize the emotional set derived from the author's reading and which was expressed in a common everyday language, („*Violence - Didn't impress me at all [...] This is the only cool thing that I found: ridiculous Japanese which set a disproportionate price on Americanisms which the Americans themselves find as worthless*"), the author of the blog „Ce am mai citit" (What I have been reading lately) chose an objective review deprived of emotional –subjective accents („*Murakami's characters rarely have names and you often have the feeling they are mere shadows. The setting is contemporary minimalist, and the cultural allusions are sophisticated and generally referring to the West.*"). It becomes thus obvious that the much bigger "public impact" of „Terorista" (The terrorist) blog is based on a higher degree of importance given to the personalized "authenticity" of the transmitted information. We can thus say that the impact and the public importance of the "cultural" blogs in Romania don't result from the correctness and the objectivity of the information they convey, but from the perception of their interpretive character. The popular blogs of literary "criticism" aren't a continuation of the "public agora" of the official literary criticism but mostly an "alternative" to all these, a different and personalized perspective on certain topics, events or persons.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the previous analysis we can draw a series of very brief conclusions.

In Nardi's study (2004) on the blogging phenomenon the results indicated the fact that the relation between the known and the unknown audience is the key to maintaining and differentiating a blog from another. Also, in the case of the sample containing the analyzed blogs the main difference on a quantitative level (To see to this effect section 4.2 and section 4.3 previously mentioned) is the one between notoriety and the "importance/impact" of a blog in relation to all its possible, real audiences.

The analysis showed thus to us that the central mechanism through which a "popular" literary criticism blog can accede to a central place in the virtual space is the balance between the elements of "gives" and "gives off" as Goffman showed (1959). To be more precise, the difference of blogs as compared to other communication means can be explained by the types of performative conventions they use, conventions which appear precisely because of the nature of their audience (Langellier and Peterson, 2004: 170). In the case of the blogs included in the sample we can notice the tonality used in the forms of addressing,

namely a much more accessible tone, more colloquial and far from the "didactic" "dry" "academic" style. The use of this discursive register aimed precisely to maintain the audience's constant interest as well as to form virtual "communities" around these blogs (Langellier and Peterson, 2004).

When telling the story, the narrative (Langellier and Peterson, 2004: 175):

"...the psychological connection of the events is not forced upon the reader. It is left up to him [or her] to interpret the way he [or she] understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude than information lacks".

Written review-postings and all the literary "criticism" blogs are always perceived by the different types of audience as expressing "the position" of a person on a certain subject, or a topic which is open to interpretations and appreciations from the readers (Langellier and Peterson, 2004):

"What weblogs share with daily life is a disposition to trust in appearances, all the while remembering that appearances can be deceiving."

The emphasized emotional and subjective side of expressing oneself through the use of a certain vocabulary tended to continually re-strengthen the authors' presence on Internet. Langellier and Peterson suggested referring to these aspects that (Langellier and Peterson, 2004: 179):

"...spoken colloquialism...establishes the sincerity of her response...it suggests unrehearsed, unplanned - hence, genuine reaction."

According to the specialty literature (Lessig, 1999, Gustafson, 2004, Park, 2003), the blog authors being conscious of the place of their blog in the public space think that a blog is an informal space where they have the freedom to express themselves in a much more colloquial way than they usually do, even though they admit they have to be careful with the used language and the subjects approached in their postings. Most of the bloggers feel a tension in relation to their audience. While, on the one hand, a blog is a private/personal space, on the other hand it's also a public space created in relation to the expectations of a certain audience. The bloggers should be aware of how much they want to have readers, how big their number should be and what impact they want to obtain through their postings.

People like to talk about themselves. This often doesn't reflect the truth, but the text presents in fact the way in which they see themselves (to which we should probably add the elements which make an individual distinctive). This thing doesn't mean that the postings on a blog are composed of dishonest things or even lies but only that the postings are the "mirror", the people's self-image, which is different from the perceptions that others may have about them. The postings from the "popular" literary criticism blogs were actually formed as textual subjective self-descriptions, inevitably different from the description offered to a third part (an academic comment, didactic in its nature for example).

Placing the literary "criticism" blogs at half-away distance between the academic public space and the popular "square" one ensures their success and at the same time represents the "way" through which the activity of "literary criticism" can become an integrant part of the popular culture through building an alternative public "sphere" necessary in Romania.

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