
The Aesthetic Properties and Mission of Literary and Art Criticism of Online Audiovisual Programs

Qiangchun Wang

School of Fusion Media, Sichuan University of Media and Communications, Chengdu, China

Email address:

emsn@qq.com

To cite this article:

Qiangchun Wang. The Aesthetic Properties and Mission of Literary and Art Criticism of Online Audiovisual Programs. *Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 10, No. 4, 2022, pp. 255-260. doi: 10.11648/j.hss.20221004.19

Received: August 4, 2022; **Accepted:** August 17, 2022; **Published:** August 24, 2022

Abstract: China has accelerated the pace of high-quality and innovative development of online audiovisual and listed “Audiovisual China” as a national strategy. However, the lack of literary audiovisual criticism of excellent online video works results in the preliminary analysis of the success and deficiencies of creative experience and a lack of professional evaluation of ordinary works. It is necessary to promote the creation of excellent audiovisual programs, and we shall cultivate a professional online audiovisual literature and art review team, create an excellent online audiovisual review ecological environment, build a professional and authoritative position for audiovisual literature and art criticism, and play the guiding role of online audiovisual literature and art criticism. The internet has transformed literary audiovisual criticism in every aspect. However, the essential attribute of online audiovisual literature and art is aesthetics, which consists of aesthetic principles, standards, and pursuits. Online audiovisual literature and art reviews must firmly keep the correct direction and orientation and fully play a critical role of reviews in leading creation. Authorities should strengthen the construction of literary and art criticism positions and play the guiding role of literary audiovisual and art criticism, such as paying attention to the comments on new works and new works and organizing literary and art comments in a timely response to hot literary and artistic phenomena.

Keywords: Audiovisual Language, Online Audiovisual Programs, Literary and Arts, Audiovisual Aesthetics, Audiovisual Criticism, Audiovisual Landscape

1. Introduction

Entering the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, China has listed “Audiovisual China” as a national strategy and accelerated the pace of high-quality and innovative development of online audiovisual programs. Excellent programs such as online dramas, online movies, online documentaries, online variety shows, online cartoons, short videos, Chinese videos, online columns, online audio programs, and online live broadcasts have emerged. “The world of audiovisual online markets is rapidly changing. Not long ago, it was dominated by linear television... Recently, streaming services such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Prime and others have emerged as new suppliers of audiovisual content.” [1] In 2021, a total of 230 critical online dramas, 686 online movies, 199 online cartoons, and 95 online mini-series were produced nationwide.

However, the lack of literary audiovisual and artistic reviews of excellent online video works has led to insufficient analysis of the success and shortcomings of creative

experience, and the professional evaluation of ordinary works is even more lacking. In contrast, commercial communication agencies’ public relations drafts and “grass-planting essays” grow wildly, confuse the audience, distort the aesthetic value, and take a biased value orientation. It is hard to gauge the internet’s impact on the online audiovisual, mainly because developments are so diverse and contradictory, just as Erlend Lavik said:

Online criticism ranges from brilliant to banal, and it is as easy to argue that film criticism has never been better as it is to argue that it has never been worse. It merely depends on where we cast our nets and on what evaluative criteria we bring into play. What we can say for sure is that digital technology has a great potential to reinvigorate film and television criticism [2].

Therefore, while vigorously promoting the creation of excellent audiovisual programs, it is imperative to cultivate a professional online audiovisual literature and art criticism team and build a professional and authoritative audiovisual

literature and art criticism position. Professional criticism ensures content quality, which is an implicit commitment between the producer and the audience. “Cultural products deal with the meanings of life, and the needs and desires that they seek to satisfy are directed to the intelligence and will of the individual.” [3]

2. Research Status of the Online Audiovisual Programs and Literary Criticism

According to *The 49th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development* by the China Internet Network Information Center, “Up to December 2021, the user size of online video (including video clips) in China had reached 975 million, up 47.94 million from December 2020, making up 94.5% of all Internet users. The number of video clip users amounted to 934 million, an increase of 60.80 million over December 2020, accounting for 90.5% of all Internet users.” [4]

The number of online video users, accounting for more than 90% of the total netizens, provides a massive market for the creation and production of online video program content, and the state has upgraded the high-quality and innovative development of online audiovisual to the national strategy, which has pointed out the direction for the development of online audiovisual programs. *Report on the Work of the Government (2022)* pointed out, “We will promote and observe the core socialist values and carry out public initiatives to promote cultural and ethical advancement. We will see that the press and publishing, radio, film and television, literature and art, philosophy, social sciences, and archiving flourish. A love of reading will continue to be fostered among our people.” [5]

Online audiovisual programs in the new era are a new driving force and engine for the development of online literature and art and have become an essential part of people's spiritual life. Online audiovisual programs overcome the impact of the epidemic on the offline film and television entertainment industry and use new technologies such as 5G, AI, MI, VR, and MR to create a new form of film and television entertainment that is immersive and interactive, allowing users to enjoy high-quality audiovisual enjoyment online.

In external communication, online audiovisual programs play a huge role in shaping the country's image. The rapid development and broad application of new technologies such as digital, network, and information have changed the existing media pattern and the way of spiritual communication among audiences. The international dissemination of China's online audiovisual programs has been improved, and the ability to tell Chinese stories well has been continuously improved.

The development of international network audiovisual programs is in full swing. Statista predicts that by 2024, Netflix users will account for 23% of all SVOD (subscription video on demand) subscriptions worldwide. Amazon Prime Video is at 13%, Disney+ at 8%, and Apple TV at 1%.

According to a 2020 survey by data firm Grabyo, about three-quarters of global video subscribers (74%) plan to discontinue pay-TV services in the next five years in favor of streaming services [6]. For example, YouTube is divided into music, sports, games, movies, and programs, news, live broadcasts, fashion and beauty, learning, focus, 360-degree panoramic videos, etc. Other columns can be watched for free, except for the movies and programs that require payment.

Due to the different languages and cultural backgrounds, how China's online audiovisual programs can rank among the top in the world, tell Chinese stories well, and gain the right to speak is an important issue. Mining traditional Chinese culture, integrating oriental aesthetic elements, empowering online audiovisual communication to the outside world, and allowing foreign users to feel the charm of Chinese culture intuitively. For example, China's intangible cultural heritage has made remarkable achievements through online audiovisual communication and is sought after by netizens overseas. “So far, clips uploaded on Douyin¹ have featured 96 percent of China's national intangible cultural heritage projects, or 1,318 items. The number of videos related to intangible cultural heritage programs posted on the platform has hit 48 million, with more than 200 billion views and nearly 6.5 billion likes.” [7] The clips covering intangible heritage ink paintings, traditional dramas, Han-costume, traditional handicrafts, etc.

Although these situations are gratifying, according to the author's investigation, the lack of literary audiovisual and artistic reviews of excellent online video works has led to insufficient analysis of the success and shortcomings of creative experience and the professional evaluation of ordinary works is very lacking. In contrast, the “commercial comments” and “soft advertising proposals” produced by commercial communication agencies of public relations grow savagely, confuse people, distort aesthetic values, and take biased value orientations. Professional literary critics must speak out boldly, adhere to the aesthetic principles, standards, and aesthetic pursuits of online audiovisual works, and act as the mainstay of literary and art monitoring. So, what are the aesthetics of online audiovisual and literary criticism?

3. Aesthetics Is the Essential Attribute of Online Literary Audiovisual Criticism

The essential attribute of online audiovisual literature and art is aesthetics, which consists of aesthetic principles, standards, and pursuits. However, this does not deny factors other than aesthetics. These non-aesthetic forces may form the aesthetic utility of specific online audiovisual literature and art. Online audiovisual programs have the aesthetic properties of audiovisual programs, network characteristics, small screen, and fragmented viewing characteristics, which will affect the user's audiovisual and literary aesthetics.

¹ Douyin is a Chinese short-form video hosting service owned by ByteDance Ltd. It hosts a variety of short-form user videos, from genres like pranks, stunts, tricks, jokes, dance, and entertainment with durations from 15 seconds to ten minutes. TikTok is an international version of Douyin.

Specifically, the aesthetics of online audiovisual programs can be viewed from two perspectives. From the perspective of creation, it includes network audiovisual language, literature, and art, characterization, narrative methods, cultural genes, and humanistic feelings. From the perspective of acceptance, it includes the fusion of horizons, expectations, and audience creation. The works that bring beauty to the audience resonate with them and sublimate their emotions are all works with truth, goodness, and beauty.

Due to changes in communication media, aesthetic carriers, work forms, and audiences, online audiovisual works follow the trend. It innovates in scene scheduling, scene composition, editing rhythm, and visual style to meet the current audiovisual aesthetic needs – using concise and lively picture narrative instead of pursuing gorgeous camera language to plot too complicated and tortuous scenarios. We have explored an audiovisual language style that is different from traditional film and television works by closely following the characteristics of online audiovisual programs.

There are essential differences between online audiovisual literature and art reviews and online audiovisual commercial hype reviews. The former focuses on audiovisual literature and art aesthetics, which puts social benefits first. Online audiovisual literature and art reviews must adhere to aesthetic orientation and socialist core values, tell the truth and reason and create a good atmosphere for literature and art criticism. On the other hand, business reviews are oriented toward seeking capital interests. The “online reviews” concocted by marketing agencies are soft articles or PR drafts, deviating from the right track of audiovisual program value orientation.

In stark contrast to the successful development of online audiovisual programs, literature and art criticism lags far behind. According to CNKI² search statistics, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television of China announced 162 outstanding works in the four quarters of the 2021 excellent online audiovisual works selection activity, of which 60 have professional reviews, including *This! Slam Dunk 4* has the most significant number of single reviews, 37 pieces. However, the number of commentaries for 102 programs was 0, accounting for 63.0% of the total number of programs.

There is such a dearth of professional reviews that it must be thought-provoking. With the improved appreciation of taste, users' demand for high-quality content continues to increase. At the same time, the quality of online audiovisual literature and art reviews varies greatly, and professional audiovisual literature and art reviews that insist on artistic aesthetics and value pursuit are very scarce. Excellent audiovisual works have not attracted the attention of online audiovisual literature and art critics. While vigorously promoting the creation of excellent audiovisual works, it is a critical mission to cultivate the academic research and professional review team, and conduct professional and authoritative reviews on effective

online audiovisual programs, attracting the attention of people from all walks of life, and cultivating the audience's online audiovisual literature and art aesthetic sentiment.

4. New Features of Online Audiovisual Program Literary Criticism

The internet has transformed literary audiovisual criticism in every aspect. Digital technology makes “everyone is an audiovisual critic” come true. Due to the diversification of the development of audiovisual programs, it is difficult for literary audiovisual criticism to keep up with the changing rhythm. The users of online audiovisual programs may be all over the world, and the audience's cultural background, personal beliefs, education level, and aesthetic level determine that online comments on the artistic level of the works are flourishing, but the good and the bad are mixed. Therefore, what kind of stand and comment standards are adopted are the basic requirements of professional critics. Evaluating online audiovisual art programs as objectively as possible is both an opportunity and a challenge.

Unlike traditional film and television criticism, online audiovisual program literature and art criticism can freely comment on any online audiovisual program without worrying about the limitation of text space. Another advantage is interactivity, the use of hypertext links can provide readers with relevant background information, and the body of the online critique section is more like the author's suggestion, not an arrogant judgment because the reader can always post their opinion later. It is easy to overstate the differences between traditional essays and audiovisual essays, but there is something distinctive about writing with sound and vision [8].

The literary audiovisual commentary allows viewers to experience linearity or synchrony of moving images and sound in real time. Online audiovisual argumentation involves the articulation of arguments, selection of evidence, montage and arrangement of scenes, arrangement of titles, sound editing, and other creative effects. Online audiovisual literature and art reviews mobilize readers to observe on the spot, providing a positive viewing and appreciation process.

Raymond Bellour famously declared that the film's text is unattainable because it is an unquotable text. For Bellour, film criticism is inherently reductive since, concerning its soundtrack, for example, it cannot cite tone, intensities, timbres, pitches, or everything that constitutes the profound solidity of the voice. The film is a text that might receive the same kind of attention as has been devoted to the literary text. However, the text of the film is indeed unattainable. “The film criticism is inherently reductive since, taking the soundtrack, for example, it cannot cite “tone, intensities, timbres, pitches, everything that constitutes the profound solidity of the voice.” [9] So, while a literary scholar can cite a passage from the classic work in its original literary medium, a film critic or scholar must make do with mere description.

Unlike literary critics, film critics cannot directly copy parts

2 CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) is a key national research and information publishing institution in China. Its first database was China Academic Journals Full-text Database, which rapidly became popular in China, especially in academic libraries.

of a work. Due to the rise of online audiovisual programs, critics can add moving images and sound clips to their review articles to assist their arguments, thus overcoming the long-standing defect that traditional film and television reviews cannot cite the audio and video of the research object. There is a substantial equivalence between film and film criticism for the first time in the digital age, as both exist only as media files.

Proto-cinematic writing preceded the invention of cinema itself. Sergei Eisenstein famously observed that the cinematic techniques most closely identified with Griffith's innovations in narrative cinema – dissolves, close-ups, cross-cutting – are present in Charles Dickens' prose. He writes, "Dickens may have given and did give to cinematography far more guidance than that which led to the montage of parallel action alone. Dickens's nearness to the characteristics of cinema in method, style, and especially in viewpoint and exposition is indeed amazing." [10]

5. Creating an Ecological Environment for Online Audiovisual Commentary

Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China pointed out that "We will take a quality improvement as the lifeline of literary and artistic works and improve our ability to create original literature and arts." [11] It is necessary to improve the quality and originality of literary and artistic work; at the same time, to establish and improve the incentive mechanism and evaluation system for the creation, production, and dissemination of cultural products; and promote the formation of a healthy and clear literary and artistic ecology.

Because audiovisual programs play a pivotal role in all human perception methods, audiovisual programs have minimized the cultural requirements of users. It forms another sense of vernacular in people's spiritual life, just as "the medium is the message," [12] a theory of McLuhan says that online audiovisual programs also affect people's understanding and thinking habits. The programs will play an indispensable role in spreading the core socialist values and promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Online audiovisual programs are crucial to the development of the world. In the era of the "global village," [13] a large part of human communication has turned to audiovisual communication based on the internet (especially mobile internet), which is an innovative development of "spiritual communication." Therefore, it has a vital practical significance in clarifying the essential attributes of audiovisual literature, and art is of great importance for creation and commentary.

Text cultivates rational thinking, and video images appeal to perceptual thinking. Short videos occupy much fragmented time for users, forming an irrational media environment. The high degree of interactivity and participation in this technology-controlled virtual space can easily make users

detached from the real space, lose themselves in the virtual space, and even lose essential thinking and critical skills.

Excellent online audiovisual works should primarily adhere to the people-centered orientation and integrate the core socialist values into creation by grasping the pulse of the times, demonstrating mainstream values and family-country feelings. The literary and art workers should walk into life, get close to the people, focus on the major national strategies, tell the characters' stories in the new era, and spread excellent traditional Chinese culture.

For online audiovisual literature and art criticism, the creators should adhere to the core of literature and art aesthetics and examine the aesthetic connotation and value of works and their social benefits. Online audiovisual literature and art reviews must adhere to artistic aesthetics and value standards. At the same time, content creators or institutions must seriously study the artistic aesthetics of audiovisual products, study audiovisual storytelling strategies, and launch excellent works to meet the audience's demands.

In short, in line with the development of the times, the trend of literary and artistic innovation and technological innovation encourage the creation of excellent online audiovisual programs, actively carry out professional online audiovisual literature and art reviews, create an excellent audiovisual review ecological environment, and breed more high-quality programs. At the same time, follow the rules of online audiovisual literature and art, and build a strong position for online audiovisual literature and art criticism. Praising the truth, the good, and the beautiful, denouncing the false and the ugly, stimulating the vitality of innovation, opening up a new realm of online audiovisual literature and art creation, and promoting online audiovisual literature and art criticism to distinguish between good and evil, appreciate beauty and ugliness, and promote prosperity.

6. Guiding the Development of Online Audiovisual Literature and Art Criticism

Online audiovisual literature and art reviews must firmly keep the correct direction and orientation and fully play a critical role of reviews in leading creation. "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Prosperity and Development of Socialist Literature and Art" pointed out that "There are still problems in the field of literature and art, such as value distortion, impetuosity, and vulgarity, intending all to entertainment, and marketization only. The task of value guidance is arduous and urgent. As some works involve plagiarism, imitation, stereotypes, and shoddy production, it is urgent to launch high-quality masterpieces. The literary and art critics sometimes neglect the masterpieces. Some excellent works are recommended insufficiently, while some bad phenomena receive a weaker criticism. The role of literary critics in distinguishing between good and evil, judging beauty and ugliness, and promoting prosperity need to be strengthened." [14]

In the era of convergent media, the authorities should emphasize the ecology of the online audiovisual industry, innovate online audiovisual literature and art reviews, and summarize the creative experience of excellent works. At the same time, the authorities should focus on amplifying the mainstream voice, strengthening the leading role of value, and promoting the new trend and uprightness of online audiovisual literature and art. So, how to do an excellent job of online audiovisual literature and art criticism? The author believes that online audiovisual literature and art reviews should achieve two innovations:

Theoretical innovation. Distinguish the nature of online audiovisual literature and art reviews and online audiovisual commercial hype reviews. The former is based on the aesthetics of audiovisual literature and art, while the latter is oriented to seeking capital interests, which often deviates from the right track of the ideological value of audiovisual programs. By adhering to the same strict standards as offline reviews, online audiovisual literature and art reviews should evaluate works seriously and objectively and continuously improve the professionalism of literature and art reviews. The authorities should keep creating online audiovisual programs in an aesthetic direction and achieve the perfect state.

Mechanism innovation. It should be guided by the Marxist literary and art theory criticism view, with the aesthetic value of literature and art as the evaluation scale by correcting the evaluation standards of judging the works only by traffic, clicks, and rankings to strengthen the role of online literature and art criticism in advocating superiority and suppressing inferiority. Qualitative and quantitative methods facilities to investigate and research excellent online audiovisual programs. We could study the value-oriented and leading function of audiovisual literature and art reviews for online audiovisual programs by analyzing the dimensions of audiovisual language, character building, narrative methods, cultural genes, and family and country feelings.

China plans to strengthen the work of literary and art criticism by keeping the steering wheel of literary and art criticism in the correct direction. Online audiovisual programs cannot simply pursue network traffic to make huge profits, as commercial standards cannot be used to replace artistic standards [15]. It was a decision made after due diligence because business models and strategic tools like big data that Netflix and other internet television companies employ may be the future of the audiovisual landscape. Thus it is vital to consider the possibility of a new hegemony in the audiovisual market, with traditional linear television being pushed into a marginal position. [16]

7. Conclusion

Online audiovisual programs will gain a new golden development period, and online audiovisual literature and art reviews will also receive unprecedented attention. The creators should adhere to the Marxist view of literature and art criticism, the socialist aesthetics of literature and art, and attach importance to the essential attributes of online audiovisual

literature and art criticism, by which the creators could produce an excellent ecological environment for online audiovisual literature and art criticism, build a professional and authoritative position for criticism. Thus, we could fully play the aesthetic value-oriented role of online audiovisual literature and art reviews and let the successful online audiovisual programs take on the critical mission entrusted by the new era.

The essential attribute of online audiovisual literature and art is aesthetics, which consists of aesthetic principles, standards, and pursuits. Online audiovisual literature and art reviews must firmly keep the correct direction and orientation and fully play a critical role of reviews in leading creation. Authorities should strengthen the construction of literary and art criticism positions and play the guiding role of literary audiovisual and art criticism, such as paying attention to the comments on new works and new works and organizing literary and art comments in a timely response to hot literary and artistic phenomena.

Note

This paper is the research result of the project “Study on Literary Aesthetics and Creation Mechanism” (Project Number: 21Y022) of the Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education Research Center of the Key Research Base of Social Sciences in Sichuan Province, China.

References

- [1] Budzinski, O., Gaenssle, S. & Lindstädt-Dreusicke, N. (2021). The battle of YouTube, TV and Netflix: an empirical analysis of competition in audiovisual media markets. *SN Business & Economics*, 1, 116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43546-021-00122-0>
- [2] Lavik, E. (2012). The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?. *Frames Cinema Journal*, 1 (1).
- [3] Medina, M., Herrero, M., & Urgellés, A. (2017). *Current and emerging issues in the audiovisual industry* (p. 6). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- [4] China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC). (April 24, 2022). *The 49th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development*. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from <http://www.cnnic.com.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/202204/P020220424336135612575.pdf>
- [5] Li, K. (March 5, 2022). *Report on the Work of the Government – At the Fifth Session of the 13th National People's Congress on March 5, 2022*. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from <http://english.www.gov.cn/atts/stream/files/622c9400c6d0cc300eea7894>
- [6] Research and Markets (September 12, 2019). *Global SVOD Markets, 2010-2018 & 2019-2024: Netflix will Contribute 23% of the Global Total, Amazon Prime Video 13%, Disney+ 8% and Apple TV+ 1%*. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/global-svod-markets-2010-2018--2019-2024-netflix-will-contribute-23-of-the-global-total-amazon-prime-video-13-disney-8-and-apple-tv-1-300916913.html>

- [7] Zheng Haiou & Qing Yuan.(June 24, 2020). China's intangible cultural heritage goes online, gains new vitality. *People's Daily*. <http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0624/c90000-9703648.html>
- [8] D' Cruz, G. (2021). 3 or 4 things I know about the audiovisual essay, or the pedagogical perils of constructive alignment, *Media Practice and Education*, 22: 1, pp. 61-72.
- [9] Bellour, R. (1975). The Unattainable Text. *Screen*, 16 (3), pp. 19–28.
- [10] Eisenstein, S. (1949). Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today. In *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (1944, pp. 195-255), edited and translated by Jay Leyda. London and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- [11] *Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 of the People's Republic of China* (2021-08-09). Retrieved June 27, 2022, from http://www.fujian.gov.cn/english/news/202108/t20210809_5665713.htm
- [12] McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man* (p. 7). MIT press.
- [13] McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man* (p. 93). MIT press.
- [14] Xinhua News Agency (October 19, 2015). *The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Prosperity and Development of Socialist Literature and Art*. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-10/19/content_2950086.htm
- [15] Xinhua News Agency (August 2, 2021). *The Publicity Department of the Central Committee of CPC and other five departments jointly issued the "Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Work of Literary and Art Criticism in the New Era."* Retrieved June 27, 2022, from http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-08/02/c_1127722893.htm
- [16] Richeri, G., The Audiovisual Industry and the Structural Factors of the Television Crisis (pp. 143-144) from *A Companion to Television*. Second edition. Edited by Janet Wasko and Eileen R. Meehan. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020.

Biography

Qiangchun Wang, Master of Arts, an associate professor at Sichuan University of Media and Communications, mainly engaged in literature, culture and media studies. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5309-2103>