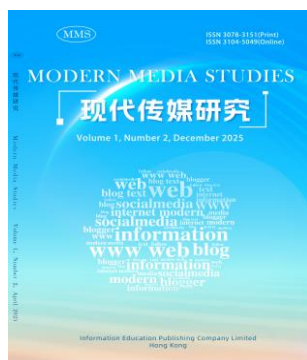




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Local New Culture and New Criticism in the Context of Media Transformation: A Review of Li Yangquan and Xu Miaomiao's *Media Culture*

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Abstract: The transformation of media has profoundly reshaped the landscape of human culture. By conducting research on the emerging media phenomena in contemporary China—such as bullet comments, ACG culture, online games, online literary language, and WeChat official accounts—the book *Media Culture* identifies the new dimensions of contemporary culture amid media transformation, namely the prominence of interactivity and emotionality, the deepening of identification with the virtual world, and the cross-media expression of traditional literature and art. It analyzes the localized characteristics of contemporary Chinese media culture: by examining the development stages of different media, comparing the characteristics of media in different regions, and engaging in dialogue with Chinese and foreign media theories, it highlights the uniqueness of localized media culture. Additionally, the book constructs a time-adaptive perspective of media criticism, advocating for penetrating the surface of media phenomena to conduct in-depth mechanism analysis, considering the interactive relationship between traditional and new media, and reflecting on the potential drawbacks of new media from a dialectical perspective. The work not only accurately captures emerging media phenomena but is also theoretically profound and grounded in a localized perspective. It holds significant importance for promoting the construction of a subjective Chinese media criticism system and understanding the evolutionary logic of human culture in the digital age.

Keywords: media culture; localization; media criticism

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题目: 媒介变革中的本土新文化与新批评——评黎杨全、许苗苗的《媒介文化》

摘要: 媒介变革深刻重塑人类文化面貌。《媒介文化》一书通过对当代中国涌现的弹幕、二次元、网络游戏、网络文学语言、微信公众号等新兴媒介现象展开研究，指出了媒介转型下当代文化的新尺度，即交互性与情感性的凸显、虚拟世界认同的深化及传统文艺的跨媒介表达；辨析了当代中国媒介文化的本土性特征，通过考察不同媒介的发展阶段、对比不同地域的媒介特点，并与中外媒介理论对话，凸显本土媒介文化的独特性；建构因时而变的媒介批评观，主张穿透媒介现象表层、深入机制分析，兼顾新旧媒介互动关系，并以辩证视角反思新媒介潜在弊端。作品兼具对新兴媒介现象的精准把握，以及理论深度与本土视野，对推动构建主体性中国媒介文化批评体系、理解数字时代人类文化演进逻辑有重要意义。

关键词: 媒介文化；本土性；媒介批评

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Introduction

Media is a product of technological and epochal development, as well as a foundational element of human culture and art. From early mnemonic practices such as knot-tying and oracle bone inscriptions to the papermaking and printing technologies that underpinned written culture, and further to the luminous images of film and television, each media transformation has profoundly reshaped the landscape of human culture. Placing media within the broader historical trajectory of human civilization to examine its relationship with human behavior, thought, and even existence constitutes a central theme in modern media studies. Numerous renowned scholars have offered insightful analyses of modern media culture. However, the evolution of media is also characterized by its contingency, temporality, and regional specificity, thus continually presenting new media phenomena that demand interpretation. Contemporary China is experiencing a cultural flourishing driven by media transformation. Emerging phenomena such as bullet comments (danmu), ACG (anime, comics, games) culture, online gaming, internet literature, and WeChat public accounts are permeating daily life, simultaneously raising pressing questions: How should we comprehend these new media forms? What cultural shifts do they signify? And what implications do they hold for constructing a contemporary framework for media and artistic criticism?

The *Media Culture* (Zhejiang Gongshang University Press, 2025), co-authored by Professor Li Yangquan and Professor Xu Miaomiao, engages precisely with these emerging media phenomena in contemporary China. It provides a meticulous and innovative analysis, progressing from descriptive accounts to theoretical explorations of characteristic features, cultural experiences, media mechanisms, and critical theories. The

book is structured into six chapters, each dedicated to a distinct media cultural phenomenon: danmu culture, ACG culture, gaming culture, digital language culture, WeChat public account culture, and traditional culture in the new media era. The selected subjects are dynamic, still evolving and transforming, yet the two professors demonstrate nuanced observation and profound, reflexive engagement, enabling them to identify precise points of entry for their discussion. Situating contemporary Chinese media culture within the global context of cultural and media theory, and employing historical, comparative, and dialectical approaches, the work delineates new trends within Chinese media culture, highlighting its distinctiveness and avant-garde character. This book will equip readers with a specialized theoretical lens through which to understand contemporary media culture, clarify how to research temporally relevant and popular media phenomena, and pinpoint both the indigenous characteristics of Chinese media culture and its unique contributions to the global cultural landscape.

1. New Cultural Proportions in the Era of Media Transformation

Media influences how people connect with the world and shapes the ways in which art and culture are presented to humanity. When new media give rise to novel cultural phenomena, researchers must first achieve a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena, and then delve into how the contexts, behaviors, and understandings associated with cultural and artistic activities are being transformed. As Marshall McLuhan posits, “Any extension [of man] ... of the personal and social life... is an intensification... a new scale is introduced into our affairs” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 7). The development of new media has fundamentally altered the cultural “proportions” of contemporary society.

The advent of information technology and the internet have rendered contemporary cultural activities highly interactive, embedding social attributes deeply within artistic and cultural practices. Past modes of cultural consumption were predominantly one-way and personal. Reading printed books required the reader’s focused engagement with the text; while theatre possessed a degree of public interactivity, it still presupposed a quiet, seated audience in a state of contemplative observation. Similarly, with film and television, the content relies on the active choices of the camera, positioning the viewer as largely passive. In these scenarios, although readers and audiences could engage in communication about the works through gatherings, critiques, or online forums, such exchanges were not real-time. In stark contrast, bullet comments enable real-time interaction among viewers appreciating a cultural work. This interactivity is not only synchronous and situated within the immediate “live” viewing experience but also diachronic and cumulative. For a specific moment in a film or series, bullet comments aggregate feedback from past viewers, effectively forming a continuously expanding and accumulating community of exchanges. From TV series and short-form videos to games, comics, live streams, and even offline stage performances or ceremonies, bullet comments are increasingly permeating diverse media consumption contexts. Consequently, for those accustomed to activating bullet comments, the social dimension of cultural consumption is becoming ever more prominent—sometimes even surpassing the act of artistic appreciation itself in importance.

Ample interaction transforms the text-mediated reader-writer dynamic into an affect-mediated

interpersonal relationship (Xu Miaomiao, 2023), establishing affect as a more critical metric for contemporary engagement with media content. Within video bullet comments, alerts such as “high-energy scene ahead” frequently appear, serving to prepare subsequent viewers for an intense emotional impact. When such pivotal moments occur, audiences actively express collective resonance through a surge of messages, whether the shared sentiment manifests as amusement, excitement, fear, or profound movingness. In the realm of online fiction, despite its thematic diversity, narratives of the “underdog’s triumph” and the “primacy of romantic love” persist as core tropes in male-oriented and female-oriented genres, respectively. This tendency extends even to online fanfiction based on *Dream of the Red Chamber*, where the plot trajectories of familial restoration and romantic fulfillment represent the predominant authorial choices. This phenomenon underscores how online fiction strategically aligns with contemporary emotional needs. Similarly, on WeChat Public Platforms, accounts that amass substantial followings and articles achieving “100,000+ reads” typically succeed by resonating with readers’ diverse affective registers—be it anger, catharsis, curiosity, or admiration. Even everyday digital communication, through its incorporation of dialects, memes, emoticons, kaomoji, reduplicative, and the imaginative repurposing of characters like 囧 (representing awkwardness) and 犇 (conveying awesomeness), enables more immediate and vivid emotional conveyance. Ultimately, interactivity and affect are co-constitutive, forming the essential underpinning of contemporary media culture.

A further transformation precipitated by media is the growing acceptance of the virtual world. Historically, art imitated reality; even fictional works were fundamentally grounded in lived experience. The actual world served as the primary original, while artistic fabrication was its derivative copy. However, the rapid advancement of digital technology has led to the increasing virtualization of cultural works, with many now originating entirely within virtual environments. Contemporary animations, games, and comics born from this digital milieu exhibit more pronounced and autonomous fantastical qualities, effectively blurring the demarcation between the virtual and the real. The proliferation of the internet has further cemented this acceptance. Leveraging online networks, virtual technology not only simulates entities from the physical world but also reconstructs and even creates social relationships. As currency, language, personal identities, and virtual assets circulate online as data bits, identification with the virtual world has intensified significantly.

The rise of ACGN (anime, comics, games, novel) culture epitomizes this virtual identification. While the term “二次元” originated in Japan, strictly referring to dedicated anime enthusiasts, its meaning has expanded alongside the industry’s growth and the widespread popularity of its content. It now broadly encompasses Animation, Comics, Games, Novels (particularly Light Novels), and their derivatives—collectively known as ACGN in popular culture. Consumers of ACGN not only engage with these virtual narratives but also purchase related merchandise and engage in cosplay, emulating their favorite characters. In a broader, more allegorical sense, the ACGN phenomenon reflects a reality where individuals, inhabiting the three-dimensional “real” world, increasingly rely on the two-dimensional virtual sphere for self-expression and social life. This is manifested in the use of avatars for self-representation, emojis and kaomoji for conveying affect, and virtual groups, circles, and forums for community formation. This acceptance of virtuality reveals that, under media’s influence, a new reality is coalescing—one where the virtual constitutes an integral part.

As identification with the virtual world deepens, its underlying logic subconsciously influences both users and creators. This is evident in the prevalence of works within both Japanese light novels and Chinese web literature that assimilate gaming conventions. These narratives often feature expansive alternate-world settings, multi-tiered power-leveling systems, continuous conflict, and emotional rhythms characterized by initial setbacks followed by triumphant progression—all fostering a reading experience akin to gameplay. This is not to suggest that the content of web literature directly mirrors specific games, but rather that gaming's mechanics, elements, and frameworks have become an inescapable imaginative and cognitive structure (Li Yangquan & Xu Miaomiao, 2025, p. 107). As Neil Postman observed, media “defines the world by the hidden but powerful suggestions of its form” (Postman, 2006, p. 10). The fundamental characteristics of games—such as agency, spatio-temporal constructs distinct from daily life, repeatable and actionable scenarios, and rule-based systems—have seeped into the unconscious of literary creation. Consequently, narrative itself becomes a form of play, unfurling a kaleidoscopic world of objects before the reader, who then experiences the shaping and mastery of this world through the text.

The changes driven by media transformation occur not only between games and literature but also manifest in the comprehensive cross-media expression of traditional art and culture through new digital platforms. A key advantage of the internet lies in its democratization of public discourse, coupled with its technical capacity to integrate the presentational modes of all prior media (Li & Xu, 2025, p. 229). The internet dissemination of the classic masterpiece **Dream of the Red Chamber** serves as a pertinent example. Upon encountering contemporary digital media, the novel swiftly spawned a diverse ecosystem of derivative content, including fanfiction, dedicated “Super Topics” on Weibo, discussions in the “Hong Lou Meng Ba” forum, and bullet-commentary videos on Bilibili. Crucially, this content does not represent a passive reception of the original text but constitutes active creative production by internet users. The original novel provides merely the foundational backdrop and framework for interpretation, while the specific expressions evolve according to the distinct affordances of each platform and the preferences of its users. Within the realm of fanfiction, authors engage in imaginative reinterpretations of the classic narrative. The predominant plot trajectories—familial restoration and happy ending—directly resonate with the young readership's desire for emotional catharsis and the articulation of love and resentment. Conversely, on Bilibili, derivative creations often take the form of character-focused video compilations, giving rise to personae such as the “sharp-tongued Lin Daiyu” or the “empowered female protagonist Wang Xifeng.” This format is intrinsically linked to the video medium's imperative to rapidly capture viewer attention and stimulate immediate emotional engagement. It is precisely through such cross-media practices that a canonical work like *Dream of the Red Chamber* continually reaffirms its relevance and demonstrates its evolving appeal in the new media landscape.

Ultimately, researchers of media culture must look beyond surface-level “content” to discern the concealed “background” the tangible elements of the media environment itself. While a thorough understanding of content remains indispensable, evidenced by the substantial space devoted in *Media Culture* to describing and analyzing specific phenomena and case studies, which forms the essential foundation for deeper inquiry—this must be complemented by a dual perspective: the analytical rigor of scholarly

investigation and the experiential viewpoint of the actual audience. Only through this integrated approach can one truly decipher how media shape the discourse, behaviors, and cultural-artistic practices of contemporary society.

2. The Local Specificity of Contemporary Chinese Media Culture

While new media have reshaped contemporary social culture globally, media cultures retain their distinct particularities across different regions and forms. As observed, online literature and WeChat public accounts represent indigenous media phenomena originating in China. Meanwhile, other forms—such as bullet comments, ACG culture, online gaming, and internet linguistics—while not unique to China, have developed a series of localized characteristics. Therefore, the study of media culture cannot remain confined to isolated interpretations of phenomena, nor can it merely apply foreign media theories uncritically. By adopting a diachronic approach to trace the development of specific media forms, engaging in synchronic comparisons with media cultures in other regions, and conducting meticulous analysis and dialogue with relevant theories both domestic and international, *The Media Culture* systematically demonstrates the local specificity of contemporary Chinese media phenomena.

In the study of contemporary media culture, diachronic investigation and synchronic comparison are necessarily conducted in tandem. This dual approach is necessary because contemporary media are complex, diverse, and rapidly evolving, with platforms from different developmental stages coexisting in the same period and maintaining distinct audience constituencies. Taking video bullet comments (danmu) as an example, their core function is to facilitate viewer interaction. Similar communicative functions centered on specific works are also fulfilled by platforms such as Douban discussion groups, Baidu Tieba, and Weibo Super Topics. While bullet comments gained popularity slightly later than these other formats, they now coexist in contemporary online life, thus enabling cross-sectional comparison. The distinctive characteristic of the bullet comment model is its real-time, embedded nature within the media content itself. In contrast, the other platforms predominantly operate on a “post-and-comment” model, where viewing experience and interactive communication remain separate. Users immerse themselves in a private, individual world while consuming content, transitioning to a collective space only when posting. From an interaction perspective, the bullet comment model proves more avant-garde, enabling cultural consumption to unfold within group conversation and generating a collective emotional experience seldom achieved in traditional cultural consumption. A more pronounced manifestation of this dynamic occurs in the linguistic evolution of online literature. Early online literature featured two representative linguistic modes: one relied on digital technology to “produce language,” as seen in “digital poetry” and “.com literature” that utilized animated graphics, hyperlinks, and programming techniques; the other, exemplified by the early online novel *First Intimate Contact*, operated independently of multimedia technology, employing colloquial expressions, widely accessible symbols, and keyboard-based language. These two discursive modes initially coexisted online, with the latter eventually flourishing due to its alignment with mainstream internet discourse conventions, ultimately shaping the prosperous Chinese online literature we witness today. Nevertheless, the former never completely disappeared—its distinctive

“produced language” continues to resurface in contemporary game narratives and interactive fiction.

Comparative analysis proves valuable not only across different media forms but also within the same medium across temporal and typological dimensions. In the chapter on “WeChat Public Account Culture,” the authors examine four representative accounts: “Mimeng” “Feng Tang” “Liu Shen Leilei Reads Jin Yong” and “Serious Gossip” each projecting a distinct persona. “Mimeng” catered to popular trends through blunt, often profanity-laced language, becoming a covert outlet for readers’ negative emotions. The “Feng Tang” account centered entirely on the personal image of Feng Tang himself, crafting an illusion of intimacy with a celebrity by showcasing his private activities and possessions. In contrast, “Liu Shen Leilei Reads Jin Yong” presented a humble, ordinary persona; despite the account’s substantial commercial value, he maintained content purity, incorporating even advertisements as conspicuous “hard sells.” “Serious Gossip” positioned itself as an entertainment news source supporting women while offering sharp-tongued criticism of men, typically aligning with mainstream netizen sentiment though occasionally demonstrating stance inconsistency when serving advertisers. The commonality among these diverse accounts—and indeed a defining feature of WeChat public accounts in general—is their highly personalized and emotionally-driven nature. This characteristic stems from two primary factors: first, these accounts are often operated by individuals, whose personal traits are inevitably imprinted on the content; second, mobile devices provide a private communication context, which is further amplified by WeChat’s robust interpersonal networks. This characteristic of WeChat public accounts aligns with contemporary shifts in advertising—from broad dissemination toward personalization and emotional appeal. Consequently, certain individual public accounts have “naturally” assumed advertising functions under the operation of capital and market mechanisms (Li & Xu, p. 215).

Theoretical analysis is indispensable. While media scholars have conducted extensive research on various new media and put forward numerous insightful perspectives, these viewpoints are by no means definitive. Given the interdisciplinary nature of media culture, the analysis of a specific media phenomenon often gains new significance through the interaction of theories from different disciplines. Furthermore, as media cultural phenomena evolve according to geographical and temporal contexts, they continually demand new theoretical discourses for interpretation. The research in *Media Culture* elucidates a localized media theory for contemporary China precisely through such theoretical interaction and discernment.

Information technology has spurred the development of electronic language, which exhibits distinct colloquial characteristics. The media theorist Walter J. Ong proposed the concept of “secondary orality,” which stands in contrast to “primary orality” and refers to an oral culture derived from electronic media. We can observe many features of oral culture in electronic language. However, it is crucial to note that Ong’s work originated in an era preceding the widespread development of the internet; his discussion of secondary orality was situated within the context of television media, leading him to characterize the mode of media communication as one-way. In contrast, online media is markedly more interactive. Additionally, while Ong’s secondary orality primarily emphasized the residual traces of orality following media evolution, the secondary orality within the context of network media places greater emphasis on regeneration and reconstruction. It is

necessary to examine both whether the new context revives traditional features of oral culture and whether it generates new forms and content of orality (Li Yangquan & Xu Miaomiao, 2025, p. 164).

Many foreign scholars argue that both the consumption and production of contemporary media content exhibit a trend shifting from narrative towards a “database” model. The concept of the “database” was initially proposed by the American scholar Lev Manovich, and theorists such as Hiroki Azuma and Henry Jenkins have subsequently elaborated on this trend. Its fundamental characteristic is that the object of artistic and literary experience is transitioning from formerly unified, coherent narratives towards fragmented, desire-driven elements. These elements, as if stored in a cultural database, can be arbitrarily invoked, combined, and interpreted in a piecemeal fashion, rendering narrative itself increasingly dispensable. This trend is indeed observable in China’s contemporary media culture; for instance, danmaku (bullet comments) feature a plethora of content involving “meme-play” that often transcends the original spirit of the work. However, it is important to note that in the discourses of scholars like Azuma and Jenkins, this type of database consumption is “fan”-oriented, constituting an obsession pursued for virtual immersion. In contrast, the majority of Chinese users who post danmaku while watching videos or leave segment comments while reading novels often do so not for immersion and obsession, but rather to detach themselves from the single work, displaying a distinctly detached attitude. Moreover, narrative is by no means unimportant; a compelling story remains the core of artistic and literary consumption, worthy of users turning off danmaku and comments to savor the narrative itself. It can be argued that while local media culture possesses postmodern characteristics, it simultaneously retains traditional and classical orientations. This hybrid nature of local culture is also manifested in other aspects, such as the issue of ludicity in media life.

Western literary theory often adheres to a binary opposition when examining the issue of “ludicity.” Some scholars argue that what is called play is essentially still narrative, while others oppose this view, insisting that the interpretation of play should be liberated from the framework of narrative. Scholars like Marie-Laure Ryan adopt a mediating stance, acknowledging certain commonalities between play and narrative, but she subsequently distinguishes between “text as world” and “text as game.” The former emphasizes immersion, reaching its peak in realist literature and aligning more with popular traditions; the latter emphasizes the potential for manipulating and recombining the text, being more evident in hypertext fiction and postmodern literature and leaning towards an elitist orientation. The aforementioned theories possess a certain explanatory power for the media and literary phenomena occurring in China today, yet they cannot fully account for them. In fact, within media forms like light novels, online literature, and danmaku, ludicity manifests not merely in the “reader-text” interaction, but more significantly in a hybrid mode that intertwines “story” and “communication”. Readers, on one hand, immerse themselves in the story—what online literature emphasizes as the “sense of Identification”—yet, on the other hand, they engage in extra-textual play through real-time comments, interactions, and “meme-play.”

Theoretical analysis necessitates not only a dialogue with Western media theories but also a critical re-examination of traditional Chinese literary thought. Taking the ludicity of literature and art as an example again, the concept of “using literature as play” exists in ancient Chinese literary theory. On one hand, it can

refer to elitist textual play, somewhat analogous to Ryan's "text as game." On the other hand, it can also denote the characteristic of cross-layer narration in traditional Chinese arts, such as one actor playing multiple roles in opera, or the sudden direct address to the reader/audience in novels and storytelling. These can all be considered forms of "using literature as play," and this kind of "play" carries distinct communicative features. Through such theoretical analysis, it becomes evident that the ludicity inherent in our contemporary media life resists strict categorization as either popular or postmodern, possessing its own localized characteristics.

3. An Evolving Conception of Media Criticism

Having clarified the profound influence of media on contemporary audiences and delineated its localized characteristics, it becomes necessary to consider how to evaluate and respond to the current media culture, thereby opening up the dimension of criticism. Media cultural criticism requires us to establish a dynamic evaluation system that conducts a comprehensive assessment of both old and new media.

Today, new media, represented by the internet, often present a facade of mass appeal, entertainment-orientation, and consumerism, for which they face much denunciation. In fact, underlying these criticisms is an allegiance to the traditional cultural value orientation, which privileges a depth model of meaning, and a concomitant rejection of new media culture for failing to conform to this paradigm. However, this past value standard, centered on semantic depth, is not *a priori*; it is largely rooted in written and print media. Within the new media environment, it is imperative to engage in critical reflection and establish a new framework of values.

First, when confronting new media, researchers must look beyond surface-level phenomena and delve into their underlying mechanisms. For instance, while much content in the ACG (Anime, Comics, Games) realm is far removed from reality and appears illusory, "trans-dimensional criticism" should discern the structural elements reflected by this surface content: imagined worlds, spatiotemporal relationships, the multiplicity of the subject, and online communities with virtual interpersonal interactions. Similarly, while video games undoubtedly provide entertainment and leisure for players, a "ludic critical paradigm" needs to recognize that games also highlight meanings of participation, interaction, operation, and the breaking of immersion (Li Yangquan & Xu Miaomiao, 2025, p. 115). The reason new media can engender novel cultural phenomena is that they alter human sensory patterns and the modes of interaction between people and objects, and among people themselves. These elements are prior to media content and information, and they constitute the key to media studies not being confined to mere value judgments.

Second, media criticism should not only analyze the mechanisms of new media themselves but also consider how the emergence of new media has transformed old media. In classical literary theory, literary reception activities have long unfolded within the dualistic structure of "text-reader." However, within the ludic critical paradigm, some readers, through actions such as appropriation, parody, and role-playing of the text, become "performers." Consequently, some contemporary literary phenomena can only be better understood when placed within the tripartite structure of "text-performer-reader." Similarly, concerning literature's function as a tool for understanding the world, classical literary theory emphasizes the "theory of representation," positing that literature reflects, imitates, and reproduces the world. Yet, from this perspective,

literature presents only a static aspect of the world. Introducing ludicity into this critical framework allows for the proposition of a “theory of simulation,” distinct from the theory of representation. The difference between the two is akin to that between a photograph of an airplane and an airplane simulator. The “theory of simulation” emphasizes the generative, uncertain, and unfinished nature of literary works, viewing both literature and the world as dynamic. We can observe how numerous works involving time travel, reincarnation, and rebirth break linear time and singular space; how hypertextual presentations reveal multiple possibilities for event development; and how reader comments, secondary creations, and real-time exchanges fill the text with uncertainty, allowing new story content to emerge during the very act of reading.

It is not only literature but also other traditional media that have developed new critical modes due to the advent of new media. Regarding linguistic media, electronic language has introduced numerous new elements into the traditional lexical system, with new internet catchphrases and buzzwords entering everyday vocabulary annually. However, the changes brought by new vocabulary constitute only a minor part. The extensive use of line breaks, character deconstruction, symbols, and graphics has altered the audio-visual ratio in the reading process. The employment of reduplicated words, onomatopoeia, dialects, and classical Chinese has further blended written and spoken language within cyberspace. Therefore, the criticism of internet language needs to consider dimensions of secondary orality as well as visual and affective characteristics. The interactive and communicative nature of contemporary media has permeated all aspects of traditional artistic media, necessitating consideration from the perspective of an “interactive poetics.” Interactive poetics demands a break from the notion that only the artwork itself is the object of artistic consumption, instead viewing communicative activities beyond the work as part of the artistic content. It values the unique creativity of audiences in these communicative acts, regards the content created during interaction as part of the artwork, and recognizes public commentary as a significant component of art criticism. It treats interactivity and circulation as among the aims of art, even if the work might consequently sacrifice a certain degree of semantic depth.

Finally, a new conception of criticism similarly requires a dialectical perspective. While new media may have drawbacks, the critique of these drawbacks must also be explored at the level of media cultural mechanisms. From the perspective of ludicity, although readers’ playful engagement with texts demonstrates the agency of the artistic receiver, this agency can potentially devolve into “playbor.” Readers’ active creative acts may become resources for data updates and iteration; their comments, promotions, and secondary creations, often done “out of love” without expectation of payment, can generate value yet fail to receive due compensation. Play, ideally, should be free and disinterested, but these circumstances can transform the receiver’s playful activity into unrewarded digital labor.

4. Conclusion

Throughout its discourse, *Media Culture* anchors its analysis in emerging media phenomena in contemporary China, focusing on six key phenomena including danmu, the ACG realm, and online literary language. Adhering to a logical progression from phenomenon analysis through theoretical speculation to critical

construction, the book unfolds its explanations chapter by chapter. The work not only demonstrates a precise and comprehensive grasp of media phenomena but also uses these phenomena to elucidate the profound transformations that new media have wrought upon contemporary society and culture. It successfully anchors the localized characteristics of media culture within a broad theoretical horizon, while also proposing a timely, dialectical, and objective critical perspective. Thereby, it provides an academic model for contemporary media culture studies that integrates local insights with theoretical depth. In the field of media studies, many of the foundational and well-known seminal works originate from overseas. After understanding the fundamental principles of media culture, emerging scholars inevitably need to connect theory with local practice in their research. In this process, *Media Culture* will serve as a beacon. It is also crucial to note that media culture continues to evolve rapidly, constantly presenting new propositions. This signifies that *Media Culture* is inherently open-ended, requiring researchers to engage in critical reflection while reading, and to contribute to its refinement through further study. Within the dynamic tensions between tradition and modernity, the local and the global, researchers are called upon to construct a more agentic Chinese media cultural criticism system. Undoubtedly, this endeavor holds significant theoretical and practical importance for understanding the evolutionary logic of human culture in the digital age.

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