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中外 媒介批评

董天策
主编

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CHINESE-FOREIGN
Media CRITICISM



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写在卷首：搭建学术平台，促进媒介批评

董天策

自中国大陆学界1995年明确提出“媒介批评”概念以来，媒介批评就成为中国新闻传播学研究格局中的一个新兴领域：专业性报刊发表媒介批评的研究文章，开设媒介批评专栏，推进媒介批评的话语实践与学术研究；新闻传播院系开设媒介批评课程，编写媒介批评教材，出版媒介批评专著；媒介批评研究不仅成为新闻传播学博士、硕士学位论文的选题领域，而且成为申报国家社科基金项目与省部级社科规划项目的研究课题。

媒介批评在世纪之交的当代中国蓬勃兴起，充分彰显出反思理性在新闻传播学界与业界的觉醒。在中国语境中，人们的感受向来都是媒介去批评别人，批评社会，哪有媒介成为被批评的对象？因此，“媒介批评”概念的提出，特别是随之而来的媒介批评话语实践与学术研究，表明新闻传播学界与业界无论是在观念层面还是在行动层面都具备了自觉的反思理性。在中国古代报刊和现代报刊的发展过程中，都曾出现对报刊的一些批评性言说。但是，那些批评性言说往往是根据当时的现实需要来谈论报刊的某些利弊，大都是感性的、零散的、不成体系的，并未把对报刊的批评作为一个独立的言说系统加以从理论到实践的整体性建构，只能说是一种自发的媒介批评。只有对媒介的批评成为一个独立的言说系统，一方面进行媒介批评的话语实践，一方面开展媒介批评的学术研究，媒介批评才能真正走向自觉。

对于新闻传播业来说，自觉的媒介批评是促进其健康发展的重要力量。在现代社会，媒介是联结政治力量（政党/政府）、经济力量（工商企业）、社会力量（社会公众）的重要纽带，也是深受这些力量制约的组织机构。在这些力量的制约下，媒介既可以是天下公器，也可以是某种帮凶；既可以为善，也可以为恶。当然，在公器与帮凶之间，在善与恶之间，还存在着形形色色的中间状态。媒介的中间状态，同样充满了各种各样的问题。因此，开展媒介批评，反思媒介的所作所为，反思媒介的性质与功能，反思媒介与政治力量、经济力

量、社会力量的关系,反思媒介所建构的文化环境,就成为正视媒介现实的一种学术理性。媒介要强化社会责任,要践履时代使命,要加强行业自律,要提升职业伦理,要保持专业操守,要守望社会正义,要促进人类文明,都离不开媒介批评的价值引导。

对于新闻传播学来说,自觉的媒介批评是促进其完善与深化的学术领域。传统上,新闻传播学分为历史、理论、应用(或曰业务)三个次级学科,并未划分出一个独立的媒介批评领域。事实上,媒介批评正是理论联系实际不可或缺的中介。一方面,媒介批评是对鲜活的新闻传播现实进行学理性的审视,剖析、判断其利弊得失,为业界提供有价值的参考意见,帮助业界弘扬优势,正视问题,修正错误,从而促进媒介的健康发展,同时丰富和深化新闻传播学的业务研究;另一方面,媒介批评又在批评媒介的过程中发现问题、分析原因、提出对策,从而为新闻传播史论研究添砖加瓦,或储备素材,或增添新说,或完善旧说,或更新观念,推进新闻传播史论研究的不断深化乃至重构。可见,媒介批评是沟通学界与业界、贯通新闻传播学历史、理论与业务研究的有效途径。有理由相信,媒介批评必将在完善与深化新闻传播学的过程中发挥越来越重要的作用。

作为一个重要的学术领域,媒介批评包括两个基本方面:一是媒介批评的话语实践,一是媒介批评的学术研究。从目前国内媒介批评的现状来看,媒介批评的话语实践相对充分,因为已有多种专业性期刊先后开辟《媒介批评》专栏,专门发表媒介批评文章。不过,由于性质与定位的缘故,专业性期刊发表在《媒介批评》专栏的文章大多偏重于实务性批评,对媒介发展中的深层次问题,对媒介批评的学术研究,并未给予足够的重视。加上我国的媒介批评研究起步不久,许多似是而非的看法充斥在某些论著与教材之中。譬如,有的论著把“媒介批评”混同于“报刊批评”(指报刊的批评性报道与评论),有的论著把报刊史上的一些政治、思想、文化斗争也纳入媒介批评的范畴加以论述,有的论著把媒介批评等同于传播学的批判学派,有的论著把媒介批评等同于文化研究……所有这些,不仅造成媒介批评学术研究的某种混乱,而且让新闻传播学的青年学子不得要领。在这种情况下,搭建新的学术平台,促进媒介批评的话语实践与学术研究,便成为摆在中国新闻传播学界面前的时代使命。

暨南大学新闻与传播学院审时度势,2007年在讨论学科建设的过程中明确提出,要把媒介批评作为一个新的学科生长点大力培育。为此,学院2007年首倡并在珠海特区报社组织召开了国内“首届媒介批评国际学术论坛”。来自美国、日本、爱尔兰和中国北京、上海、广州、南京、成都、兰州、济南、南昌、

苏州、深圳以及香港、澳门等地的六十多位专家学者和业界精英出席了论坛。论坛以“媒介社会与批评精神”为主题，就“我国媒介批评的学科建设”、“中外媒介批评的历史发展”、“当前中外媒介批评的现状”、“中外媒介批评的个案剖析”等重要议题进行了深入研讨，受到专家学者的高度评价。2008年春，在学校的支持下，又成立了媒介批评研究的专门机构——暨南大学媒介批评研究中心。研究中心以新闻与传播学院的专业教师作为基本研究队伍，同时吸纳其他学科（比如文艺学）有志于媒介批评的专业教师参与，共同推进媒介批评事业。暨南大学新闻与传播学院、暨南大学媒介批评研究中心认为，不仅要继续办好媒介批评论坛，而且要创办一种学术集刊。经过充分酝酿，最终决定编辑出版《中外媒介批评》。

《中外媒介批评》的编辑方针，可概括为三个方面：其一是开放平台。在语种上，中英文混合编排，以便同时发表国内外的媒介批评文章与研究成果，促进中外媒介批评的交流；在内容上，既重视媒介批评的学术研究，也重视媒介批评的话语实践。其二是多元取向。在学术立场上，秉持“浇花除草”的精神，既重视否定性、批判性的媒介批评，也重视肯定性、赞扬性的媒介批评；在批评方法上，既可以是实证取向，也可以是思辨取向，还可以是阐释取向。其三是学术理性。不管是中文或英文，不管是话语实践或学术研究，不管是什么批评取向，媒介批评都必须张扬学术理性。学术理性是现代科学和现代学术的核心内涵，既包含学术的方法理性，也包含学术的价值理性。前者的内涵十分丰富，譬如反省的、批判的精神，通过理智锲而不舍地追求真实与发现真理的意志，确定并严格依循一以贯之的分析与构建的认知方法，都是其范畴；后者的内涵主要体现为社会关怀和人文关怀。只有具备这样的学术理性，媒介批评才具有真正的价值与意义。

《中外媒介批评》第一辑选编的是提交“首届媒介批评国际学术论坛”的部分论文。入选论文以匿名评审的方式选出，并经作者修改润色，从而使其质量有一个基本的保证。当然，由于种种原因，《中外媒介批评》第一辑肯定存在着这样那样的不足。好在中国有句俗话，“草鞋没样，边打边像”。我们相信，初成规模的《中外媒介批评》，在中外学者的共同关心与大力支持下，一定会越办越好。让我们以现代学术的良知、理性和智慧，共同培育《中外媒介批评》这个崭新的学术平台，促进媒介批评事业的茁壮成长。

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媒介批评理论研究

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- 媒介批评：新闻职业道德建设的新视角
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Abstract: This paper uses metaphor to expatiate the subjects, methods and effects of media criticism. “The fantastic ten” are especially recommended by the author as research methods of media criticism, including Semiotic Theory, Aesthetic Theory, Psychoanalytic Theory, Sociological Theory, Political Theory, Anthropological Theory, Literary Theory, Philosophical Thought, Historical Perspectives, Comparative Perspectives and Statistical Methods. The author holds a viewpoint that professional media criticism should be boundless, and it’s an interesting area worth deeper research and discussion.

Key words: media criticism electro-hermits electro-social-butterflies the fantastic ten

媒介批评的形态

亚瑟·伯格

摘 要 本文用隐喻的手法阐述了媒介批评的主体、媒介批评研究的路径以及媒介批评对于媒介的效用等问题。在媒介批评的主体论述中，作者认为当今时代媒介批评真正的主体应当是“电子遁世者”（electro-hermits）和“电子社会闲散者”（electro-social-butterflies），为了将这两个主体描述得更加清晰，作者将媒介批评从专业和业余两个维度加以佐证，并用马克斯·韦伯的思维路径将媒介主体从“依据资料行事者”（data man）和“非受资料控制者”（data-free man）两个对立面进行延展性说明。在媒介批评的研究方法上，作者主张从“黄金十理论领域”出发思考专业性媒介批评的路径。这十个理论领域是：符号学理论领域、美学理论领域、心理分析学理论领域、社会学理论领域、政治学理论领域、人类学理论领域、文学理论领域、哲学理论领域、历史学理论领域、比较学理论领域和统计学理论领域。此外，作者还主张专业性的媒介批评不应当有刻意的界限存在。就媒介批评对于媒介的效用，作者坚持的是理清媒介和改变媒介的观点。在文章最后，作者指出，媒介评批作为一个能够唤起人兴趣的领域，值得学术界进一步探讨和研究。

关键词 媒介批评 电子遁世者 电子社会闲散者 “黄金十理论”领域

It's at the extremes that things are most interesting for cultural critics. In trying to un-

Brief Introductions of Authors: Arthur Asa Berger, Professor Emeritus, Broadcast & Electronic Communication Arts, San Francisco State University, USA.

derstand the evolution of media studies and the problems media critics face, let me suggest that we now have two rather extreme types of media consumers to deal with in contemporary societies—what I call “electro-hermits” and “electro-social-butterflies”. If you examine great novels, films, plays, television shows, comic books and other fictional texts, you will find that authors are not terribly interested in people in the center. Leading lives, as Thoreau suggested, “of quiet desperation” people whose lives are “minor events in the ongoing universe” to quote the late senator William Fulbright.

The Evolution of Media Studies

In dealing with the development of media criticism in recent years, we can see a considerable change in media departments from professors who got their advanced degrees in various disciplines such as psychology or sociology or literature and were interested in media and taught courses on it from time to time to those who get advanced degrees in communication and focus all their attention on media and popular culture. Communication departments are relatively late arrivals on the academic scene, and many scholars in “traditional” disciplines feel they don’t belong in universities. Media scholars often are treated like “second-class” citizens by scholars in traditional disciplines, such as history, literature and sociology.

I would describe these two camps of media scholars as containing amateurs (and the “love” or “affective” aspect must be considered here) and professionals. In some departments, men and women who have had important careers in the media are hired as professors, but I will not be considering them since this is not the dominant way to find professors to teach courses in the media. There is, I might add, some question in my mind about what is the best way to prepare scholars to deal with the media. I speak, let me confess, as an amateur with a doctorate in American Studies, a field where scholars learn many “little” things.

Amateurs

Various disciplines
Apply to media
Fresh ideas
Know many kittle things
Foxes hedgehogs (Isaiah Berlin)

Professionals

Ph. D. in communications
Apply to other areas: politics, etc.
Prisoners of their Ph. D. seminars
Know one big thing

The media criticism “Amateurs” are what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin called “foxes”, who know many little things. While the media criticism “professionals” are closer to what he called “hedgehogs” creatures that know “one big thing” having studied communication at a graduate school.

There is another polarity of importance related to the increased professionalization of media criticism, and that involves the matter of data and statistics and how one does media criticism. Let me propose two more extreme “archetypes” or ideal-types, as Max Weber would put it, to deal with this polarity: data-man and data-free man. Amateurs and Professionals can be either, though I would imagine that professionals tend to be Data-man types. . . or perhaps data-obsessed-man and woman types. In recent years, the development of cultural criticism which spread from the University of Birmingham in England has given data-free scholars a big psychological boost.

Data-man

Information

The mean

$N = \text{Infinity}$

Quantitative

Ingenuity in design

Focus on audiences

Statistics

Quantifiable subjects

Certainty but triviality

Getting data a problem

American pragmatic tradition

Mass communications

Counts all the grains of sand in the universe

Data-free man

Interpretation

The meaning

$N = 1$

Qualitative

Ingenuity in analysis

Focus on art work (texts)

Concepts from various disciplines

Subjects useful for theorizing

Uncertainty but significance

Getting ideas a problem

European philosophical tradition

Media criticism

Sees the universe in a grain of sand

The best of both worlds, I would suggest, involves being able to be both when data is important. I think we must consider how, when we train media critics, to find ways of enabling them to do both when doing research and teaching.

Round Up the Usual Disciplines or “the Fantastic Ten”

Let me suggest some of the approaches and disciplines that we might use in studying

the media and doing media criticism. What follows is a chart based on an article I wrote for *The Journal of Communication* in the early 1970s. I did not know, at the time, that I would spend the next forty years, writing books and articles based on the items on this list.

Semiotic Theory, which deals with signs and how we find meaning in phenomena such as films, songs, fashions, and so on.

Aesthetic Theory, which deals with how lighting, color, cutting, sound, music, camera shots and related matters generate ideas, feelings and emotions in audiences.

Psychoanalytic Theory, which deals with unconscious elements in our thinking and behavior.

Sociological Theory, which deals with institutions and groups and matters such as race, gender, religion and class.

Political Theory, which concerns itself with power, control, and resistance in groups and societies.

Anthropological Theory, which focuses on culture and the enculturation process by which people are taught to fit into their cultures.

Literary Theory, which investigates how literary works (of all kinds) generate their effects, the various artistic devices writers use, and the role that “readers” play.

Philosophical Thought, which concerns itself with matters such as how we know about the world, the status of knowledge, ethical issue, and principles of reasoning and logic.

Historical Perspectives, which study change over time—what happened, how it happened, and why it happened.

Comparative Perspectives, which deal with how a given text (such as the TV show *Dallas*) or other phenomena are perceived and the role that the text plays in different societies and cultures when considering media.

Statistical Methods, which deal with quantifiable aspects of topics of interest to us. Even if we’re data-free, by inclination, we can often make use of statistical data in our research and writing.

The problem we face in teaching media criticism is in applying the different theories and techniques of analysis to texts and other aspects of media that are of interest to us. Between the theories and techniques we use and the application of these theories and techniques “falls the shadow” .

One of the main difficulties I found when I taught media criticism was that my students could learn concepts and theories from semiotics and sociological theory and psychoanalytic theory but had no idea how to apply them. To deal with that problem I developed a number

of learning and games and exercises (generally played in groups of three or four students in class) that forced them to apply theories to texts and other related topics. This kind of teaching is now called “collaborative” learning.

Another problem media critics face can be called the “Rashomon” problem: who is right when you have different interpretations of a text or of the role of media in society or some other topic related to media, society and culture. What do you do when “experts” disagree which is often the case? The film *Rashomon* created a sensation in 1951 when it was shown, for it raised the question of whether we can ever know reality.

Two Important “Ideal Type” Tragic Figures——electro-hermits and electro-social-butterflies

I return now to the characters I mentioned earlier and with a discussion of tendencies in media usage of which all media critics must be mindful—agoraphobic media hermits and their opposites, what I call electro-social-butterflies, who are so involved with chasing around, continually being in motion, and with making “the scene” that they don’t focus on anything and often become slackers and misfits. When they are children, they possibly were highly “programmed” by their parents.

There are a considerable number of young people in Japan, called “hikikomori”, who are, literally speaking, hermits—they never go out of their houses or apartments and spend all their time cruising on the Internet, listening to music on their MP3 devices or high fidelity music players, playing video games, watching television, and involved with other electronic gizmos of one kind or another. They have a kind of virtual existence.

The other extreme is the electro-social-butterfly, continually talking on their cell phones, sending text messages without end, partying whenever they can, obsessed with “making the scene”, but also heavily involved with media, of one kind or another.

One of the tasks media critics face involves finding ways to make the center hold, to prevent either of these extreme types of media consumers from developing, to find ways to control the tendency of electronic media of all kinds, and especially the internet, from devouring young people (and in some cases older ones as well), from becoming media addicts, and this can be done, in part, by teaching young people how to understand the media and how to resist the mass-mediated sirens who seek to lure us to our destruction—by which I mean their complete absorption in the media our neglect of their social responsibilities.

Tying to Make Sense of Shifting Media

Another important task media critics face involves dealing with the rapid changes in the media that are affecting old media and new users. The ground is shifting beneath us and as I write the new Web. 2.0 electronic media are having a powerful, perhaps the best term is “devastating”, impact on the old media—newspapers, books, publishing in general, film, television, and music, to name a few of the industries being affected. Do we have a “democratization” of media or have media anarchy? Are we losing something when local bookstores go out of business, replaced by Amazon.com and when newspapers, with seasoned and professional reporters and editors, are replaced by bloggers? As media critics and media scholars, *how do we deal with rapid changes going on in the media and the impact of these changes on individuals and societies?*

Related to this is the matter of finding a way to design a curriculum that can deal with changes in the media and that has a proper balance between theory courses and studio courses. Both are needed, I would suggest, because if students never use cameras or other devices and don't have any experience with creating mediated texts, then what they learn becomes too abstract and seems unrelated to reality. Just as we need to teach students to apply theories to the media and to specific texts, we also need to teach them how to use media making devices and to consider matters like aesthetic and ethical problems related to the power of media.

I would conclude by suggesting that media criticism is one of the most important and most exciting areas in which scholars can work. There's always something new happening of interest to media critics—almost daily, it seems. We all recognize the centrality of media in our lives and in our societies, *but how we analyze and interpret the impact of this media*, as it shapes and shakes up our societies and cultures, and how we teach young people to study it and deal with it, is a matter of crucial importance. Thus, a conference such as the one in Zhuhai is a truly significant event for media scholars in China for it recognizes the power of media and it provides scholars with an opportunity to network and exchange ideas. It also gives them confidence that their work in media criticism is of great value since we all live now in media saturated societies. It was a great honor for me to participate in this conference which I believe will have great importance for the development of media criticism, in every sense of the word, in China.