

The Production and Viewing of Korean Dramas From the Perspective of Receptional Aesthetics Taking Surrealist Elements in Korean Dramas as Examples

Xinyang Li^{1,*} Yue Qi¹

¹College of Communication, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, Gansu 730060, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 14584360@qq.com

ABSTRACT

This article mainly starts from the theoretical perspective of receiving aesthetics, and analyzes and explores the popular surrealist elements in Korean dramas in recent years. The main contents of the study are: the spectacle aesthetic experience brought by "surrealism", and the audience's viewing experience and the horizon of expectations. The study found that the audience's aesthetic experience of film and television works will also change correspondingly with different acceptance schemes; the cognitive schemes accumulated by the audience form their directional expectations; surrealist Korean dramas have realized the call to audiences of previous Korean dramas in terms of style and subject matter, and formed a unique "horizon of expectations".

Keywords: *receptional aesthetics, surrealism, Korean dramas*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Korean drama "What is Love" was introduced to China in the early 1990s, Korean dramas and the cultural methods they brought have been enthusiastically sought after by Chinese audiences, and even formed a "Korean Wave culture" in China. Chinese video websites and individual television stations broadcast Korean dramas all year round, which is undoubtedly a very important booster for Korean dramas to become traffic. In order to regulate the introduction and dissemination of online overseas film and television dramas, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television has successively issued a series of departmental regulations and normative documents, especially the "Notice on Further Implementing the Regulations on the Management of Online Overseas Film and Television Dramas" issued in 2014, to make the dissemination of disorderly online overseas film and television dramas enter a standardized and orderly sound development track. But at the same time, it has also reduced the popularity of Korean dramas in the Chinese "regular" broadcasting.

With the promulgation of the "Limited Korean Order", the trend of remakes of Korean dramas in the mainland has resumed. In 2019, "More Than Blue" was remade from a Korean drama, and the mainland version of "You Who Came from the Star" was also announced. According to the TV series filing of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television in April,

the hit Korean drama "Reply 1988" will be reproduced by Tencent Pictures under the title "Let's Meet in 1998". In addition, the Korean dramas "I Hear Your Voice" and "Full House", "Incomplete Life: Prequel", etc., have also been reproduced. This phenomenon of "Hallyu rebirth" on the one hand illustrates the long tail effect of the original Korean dramas, and also illustrates the strong psychological expectations and viewing needs of Chinese audiences for Korean dramas.

This article takes surrealistic Korean dramas as the research object and uses the theoretical perspective of reception aesthetics to explore the interactive mode of Korean drama production and audience viewing (reception).

At present, the Chinese research on Korean dramas mainly has three aspects: the first is to study Korean dramas as a national cultural industry, mainly to study the marketing methods and cultural values of Korean dramas, and to explore cross-cultural communication as one of the success factors of Korean dramas. For example, Zhang Xingxing's "The Model of Cross-Cultural Communication-Comment on the Popularity of Korean Dramas in China" (2007), mainly discusses how Korean dramas, as an excellent cultural industry, are rapidly becoming popular in China. Zhang Wenchao's "Studying TV Dramas and Intercultural Communication from Korean Drama 'Reply 1988'" mainly uses Korean drama "Reply 1988" as an example to discuss the shaping of Korean drama cross-cultural communication on China from three aspects: subject connotation, emotional construction and artistic

conception creation, having reference significance to China in shaping its national image and enhancing its cultural soft power.

The second is to mainly study the ontological factors of Korean dramas, such as aesthetic value, plot itself, or character images. This kind of literature starts from the inner nature of Korean dramas and discusses the drama itself as one of its success factors. For example, Liu Liqiong's "Analysis of the Success Factors of Korean TV Drama 'You Who Came from the Star' Popular in China" mainly discusses the success factors of Korean TV dramas from the production and packaging and plot settings. Chen Yunping's "Research on the Innovation and Breakthrough of Korean Dramas" discusses the innovations and breakthroughs of Korean dramas in recent years in the three aspects of themes, plots and characters, and provides valuable reference and enlightenment for Chinese TV dramas. There is also Wu Lei's "On the Shaping of Female Roles in Korean Dramas and the Social Causes" starting from the character image, mainly discussing the cultural tradition of "male superior to female inferior" and the actual gender gap.

The third is to study the audiences of Korean dramas, mainly focusing on Chinese audiences as the main body to study, thinking that Chinese audiences are the most representative audience groups, and studying the popularity and success factors of Korean dramas from the perspective of audience psychology. For example, Zou Shujuan's "The Reasons for the Popularity of Korean Dramas and the Psychological Analysis of the Audience's Acceptance" (2008), mainly analyzes the reasons for the popularity of Korean dramas from the audience's acceptance psychology. In Lu Xiao's "Audience Analysis of the Korean Drama 'You Who Came from the Star'", based on the popular Korean drama "You Who Came from the Star", it is concluded that Korean dramas can satisfy the audience's motivation and needs of emotion, aesthetics, curiosity, novelty, and participation.

In the study of Korean drama, scholars mainly discuss from the above three aspects, but ignore the three dynamic processes of Korean drama text, production and acceptance. This article mainly starts from the theoretical perspective of receptional aesthetics, analyzes and explores the popular surrealist elements of Korean dramas in recent years, summarizes its success factors, and provides certain reference and inspiration for the development of Chinese TV dramas.

II. SPECTACULAR AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE BROUGHT BY "SURREALISM"

Surrealism originated from the French art school of Dadaism, and other art fields were also deeply influenced by it. Its main feature is to explore the

illusory inner world. Surrealism believes that only this kind of unconsciousness that transcends three-dimensional time and space can most rationally and objectively reflect the original reality of the world. The theoretical founder of surrealism is Breton. He has published three "Manifeste du surréalisme" (1924, 1930, 1945), and many other articles on surrealism. The theoretical proposition of surrealism was put forward by him. Breton wrote in the first "Manifeste du surréalisme": Surrealism: noun. Purely psychological automation, through it, either verbally, or in words, or in other ways, people intend to express the true function of thinking. Not under all the control of reason, exclude all aesthetic and ethical considerations, and record thoughts. [1]

Breton emphasizes the subconsciousness in human psychology, and the subconsciousness is associated with dreams, so later surrealism was deeply influenced by Freud's psychoanalysis. In Freud's "Analysis of Dreams", he digs deep into the human subconscious and the deep world in the heart. Dream, as a normal physiological phenomenon, is characterized by confusing and confusing, and has a clear deviation from the real world. Surrealism believes that people's dreams can best reflect the most secret things in people's hearts, and can reveal human nature. [2]

The theoretical proposition of Surrealism is: first, it rejects all conventions; secondly, it advocates the full expression of artistic conception, which is one of the main poetic expression methods used by surrealism; finally, it advocates that art should produce amazing effects, and it is a means of expression that is abnormal in reality.

To sum up, Surrealism is a rebellion against tradition. It seeks to penetrate deep into people's hearts and project things that cannot be expressed in ordinary life. Therefore, the language it uses is trivial, unconventional, and irrational.

In recent years, the surrealist elements in some Korean dramas have quickly become popular and unanimously won praise from the audience. Since "You from the Stars" opened up this "bizarre" road, this type of Korean drama has followed one after another: "Touchlove", "Goblin", "When You Are Sleeping", etc. The biggest feature of these Korean dramas is that the protagonist has superpowers that are different from ordinary people, or the protagonist is an inhuman god and monster. In modern society, they use their superpowers to heal pain, resolve suffering, and help others. The aesthetic experience of this spectacle different from reality to the audience is different from the usual dramas. For example, the dramas of the same love theme, the love story of people and gods and monsters may be more attractive than people. The biggest reason is that this kind of things that are

different from reality give the audience more intense aesthetic stimulation.

In the initial stage of aesthetic experience, the audience must first have the motivation to accept external things, and the same applies to film and television acceptance. Common motives for accepting films and televisions mainly include leisure and entertainment, seeking knowledge and education, following the trend of the crowd, avoiding and hiding, criticizing and learning from others. In addition to the most basic motivation of leisure and entertainment, the thirst for knowledge of the unknown world is one of the reasons for the popularity of this kind of Korean dramas, because this kind of drama shows a different picture to the audience. For example, the heroes and heroines in "When You Are Sleeping" both have superpowers to predict what will happen in the future with their dreams, so it is this kind of surreal vision that attracts the audience. When watching, it seems to open up a new world. Another important motivation-avoiding hiding is also one of the reasons. Due to the modern fast-paced social environment, people are under heavy psychological pressure. And this kind of Korean drama brings a sense of "safe haven" to the audience that is abnormal in the modern environment, and the huge contrast with real life makes the audience forget the tension and oppression in real life for a while.

III. VIEWING EXPERIENCE AND HORIZON OF EXPECTATIONS

A. Emphasizing on the accepting subject of perceptual acceptance

The different receiving methods of the receiving subject will also have a certain impact on film and television dramas. Some scholars in China divide the receiving methods of film and television works into three types: watching, appreciating and interpreting. [3] Most audiences accept the first two ways, namely watching and appreciating. When watching, the audience will experience the excitement of the plot or the charm of the characters. For example, the two male protagonists in "Goblin", one is a general with the ability to "immortality" from the Goryeo period in South Korea, and the other is an amnesia envoy from the underworld, and the two surreal characters collide with a bizarre plot. However, the majority of the audiences of Korean dramas are women, so women often involuntarily place their feelings on the protagonist and pay close attention to the protagonist's emotions and fate. And the second way of receiving — appreciating is a sublimation of watching. Appreciating is not just about understanding the plot, but more importantly, experiencing the characters and stories in the play in an aesthetic manner. For example, the two male images in "Goblin" are both high-looking and romantic characters, so many women will involuntarily

pin their emotions on them. For female audiences who are perceptual and fanciful, they can integrate their true emotions into the play and temporarily forget the pressure of life, have a dream in such a plot that is different from reality, and obtain a sense of aesthetic psychological satisfaction.

The different acceptance schemes will directly affect the audience's aesthetic experience of film and television works. As it known to all, love has always been an unchanging theme in film and television dramas, and stories with love elements as the theme can often resonate with audiences and meet their emotional needs. The audiences in their teenage years are in the dual stages of physical and psychological development, and they are eager to pay attention to the other half psychologically. And such Korean dramas that incorporate surreal elements, the embedding of these elements such as monsters, superpowers, aliens, etc., sublimate love to a supernatural realm. Although a large part of the audience is well aware of this type of Korean drama story and the fictional and unreality of the characters, they are still willing to watch and be attracted. The most obvious feature of the perceptual acceptance method is that the aesthetic analysis and experience of the work are based on emotion and perceptualization. Different from rational acceptance, perceptual acceptance people will resonate with the characters and emotions in the work, and will change accordingly.

B. Expecting continuous breakthroughs in horizons

The founder of receptional aesthetics advocated: "The historical nature of art works must not be obliterated by the investigation and description of art production. On the contrary, art works should be regarded as a dialectical process of production and acceptance." [4] The popularity of surreal elements is a phenomenon that caters to the acceptance and aesthetic habits of the audience. The "complex image" proposed by Yvette Biro points out: Perception is not a direct reflection of things, but a composite image in which subject and object blend together. It is constructed by each of us based on all available internal and external information. [5] "Complex image" aims to emphasize the audience's initiative in watching movies as an aesthetic subject. On the one hand, the Korean dramas with surrealist elements in ta lead the audience to move closer to the plot and blend in with emotions through peculiar storylines, perfect characters and some modern high-tech special effects. On the other hand, the audience as the subject of aesthetics is also an individual with initiative. They carry out the "secondary creation" of the works according to their aesthetic habits and growth experience.

Piaget's "Generation Epistemology" believes that cognitive activity is by no means a unilateral subject's

passive acceptance or passive response to object stimuli, but the interaction between the subject and object stimuli based on the existing cognitive structure. [6] Taking Piaget's "Generation Epistemology" as the theoretical basis will help people understand the "horizon of expectations" in the aesthetic experience of film and television dramas. On the basis of the audience's own "cognitive structure", that is, the vision of expectation, through watching and absorbing the work, the audience's "horizon of expectations" will be continuously improved and improved, and the existing knowledge structure, aesthetic experience and habits will be continuously deepened and refined. Korean dramas bring this kind of surrealism to the screen, and they are well received by audiences and similar new works are constantly appearing. One of the reasons is that the audience's "horizon of expectations" constantly determines his viewing direction. The "horizon of expectations" must be constantly activated and refreshed. Therefore, due to long-term viewing of this type of Korean dramas, many audiences have accumulated a certain number of cognitive schemes and formed their own directional horizon of expectations.

In addition, the directional expectation and innovation expectation in the horizon of expectation are also two particularly important extensions. Directional expectation refers to the directional and narrower horizon of expectations formed by readers on the basis of the original aesthetic experience, while innovative expectation refers to the broader horizon of expectations formed on the basis of past aesthetic experience. [7] Psychoanalytic criticism believes that literature and art are essentially suppressed instincts. The function of literature and art is a kind of compensation. The unfulfilled desires of artists and readers (audiences) in life can be satisfied in disguised form by creating or appreciating literary works. Directional expectation is often manifested as a kind of aesthetic psychological conservative. This kind of psychological mechanism relies on the entire historical and cultural system condensed in our minds, and relies on the experience of predecessors. Directional acceptance is a kind of interest direction held by the viewer before. Therefore, this direction of interest plays a huge role in the entire artistic acceptance and aesthetic process of the audience (readers), which also explains the surrealism elements in Korean dramas that have received rave reviews. Because these film and television dramas meet the audience's directional expectations, batch after batch of audiences continue to identify with this image, and use this type of Korean dramas as their subconscious aesthetic psychological schema, unconsciously showing the trend and orientation of aesthetic taste. Generally speaking, these audiences are more inclined to watch what they have seen before.

Psychologists believe that people tend to pay more attention to new things, and it is difficult to attract people's attention again to the same, recurring old things. [7] While many audiences accept and love the theme of surreal Korean dramas, they will also have certain new expectations for them. This is innovative expectations because that if similar themes are the same in terms of plot and personality, the audience is naturally unwilling to stick to old themes. In film and television works, works that are full of novelty, beyond imagination, can give the audience a new aesthetic experience, and can even form a new directional expectation for the audience to have a large audience. Korean dramas have done a great job in this regard. They fully consider the continuous improvement of the audience's expectations. They did not indulge in the imitation of old themes, but continue to create new ideas in similar themes to win a lot of praise. For example, after the surrealist theme of Korean dramas "Touchlove" and "You Who Came from the Star" became popular, later Korean dramas did not continue to imitate ghosts and monsters, but focused on ordinary people. For example, in "When You Are Sleeping", the youth can predict the future with dreams, and the male protagonist can hear sounds outside the hearing range of ordinary people in "I Hear Your Voice". These magical ordinary people once again stimulate the audience's aesthetic habits and tastes.

C. Ingenious setting of "summoning structure"

"Summoning structure" is proposed by Iser, one of the representatives of receptional aesthetics. He believes that there are a lot of "meaning blanks" and "uncertainties" in the works. Once the text negates the reader's habitual vision, it will cause the reader's psychological "blank". This is the negative structure in the work, which becomes the basic driving force that stimulates and induces readers to fill up and connect with imagination. This is the "summoning structure" of the work. [8]

Movies or TV series, in terms of subject matter or content, used to be based on reality, full of strong realism, and brought a sense of psychological reality to the audience. However, in recent years, the popular surrealist Korean dramas have completed the reconstruction of their "horizon of expectations" by the audiences of Korean dramas in a form of "negation". The "summoning" of the subject matter.

Surrealist Korean dramas mostly present a sci-fi and supernatural style, while at the same time, they retain their realistic side to the maximum. Therefore, the space of this kind of Korean drama "summoning structure" is very inclusive. It can be a fantasy story that takes place in the real world, or it can be a human reality story that takes place in another time and space. For example, "When You Are Sleeping" is about the

fantasy superpowers of ordinary humans in the real world, while "Goblin" simultaneously tells stories about the gods, monsters and humans in two parallel time and space of the real world and the different world. These different narrative modes correspondingly bring different "summoning structures", so the audience breaks free from the past realistic themes, and forms their own "secondary creation" through the perception of these different fantasy things. Therefore, surrealist Korean dramas have realized the call to the audience of previous Korean dramas in terms of style and subject matter, pulling them out of realistic subjects, and forming a unique "horizon of expectations".

IV. CONCLUSION

In short, the popularity of surrealist Korean dramas is inseparable from their wonderful content settings. More importantly, such Korean dramas fully cater to the expectations of the audience. And in the setting of "summoning structure", it negated the theme of "conventional" Korean dramas in the past, leaving the audience with more thinking space to the maximum.

References

- [1] (France) André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme* [M]. Yuan Junsheng trans. Chongqing: Chongqing University Press, 2010. (in Chinese)
- [2] (Austria) Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* [M]. Fang Housheng, trans, Hangzhou: Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing House, 2016. (in Chinese)
- [3] Qin Junxiang, *Film and Television Acceptance Psychology* [M]. Beijing: Communication University of China Press, 2006. (in Chinese)
- [4] (Federal Germany) H.R. Jauss, (U.S) R.C. Holub, *Receptional Aesthetics and Reception Theory* [M]. Zhou Ning, Jin Yuanpu, trans. Shenyang: Liaoning People's Publishing House, 1987. (in Chinese)
- [5] (Hungary) Yvette Biro, *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema* [M]. Cui Junyan, trans. Beijing: China Film Press, 2003. (in Chinese)
- [6] (Swiss) Jean Piaget, *The Principles of Genetic Epistemology* [M]. Wang Xiandian, etc. trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1981. (in Chinese)
- [7] Peng Jixiang, *Film and Television Aesthetics* [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002. (in Chinese)
- [8] (German) Wolfgang Iser, *Reading Activity: Aesthetic Response Theory* [M]. Zhou Ning, Jin Yuanpu, trans. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1991. (in Chinese)