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Published in the USA  
Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)  
Issued since 2005.  
ISSN 1994-4160  
E-ISSN 1994-4195  
2025. 21(2): 223-231

DOI: 10.13187/me.2025.2.223  
<https://me.cherkasgu.press>



## Argumentative Discourse of a Media Review

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### Abstract

Review, including media reviews, are traditionally analytical genre. Today, literary, artistic and professional art history magazines have lost their leading role in cultural processes. Media are increasingly becoming platforms for reviewing, which inevitably leads to a transformation of the genre and a lowering of the acceptable standard. Today, an expanded view has been adopted, according to which even the texts of announcements and annotations have begun to be included in reviews. The article raises the issue about the essence of the analysis that recipients expect from a review, and the essence of arguments acceptable in this genre, since it is here that the problem of evidentiary interpretation and verification of review author's opinion on a particular work is the most acute. Arguments to the logos, factual argumentation, and the possibilities of a comparison topos are used to correlate the characteristics of a reviewed artifact with aesthetic criteria and social needs. This correlation includes both methods of inductive reasoning, when a conclusion is based on a set of presented facts, and methods of deductive reasoning, based on the truth of generally valid positions. The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, television and film reviews published in the media. The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, TV and film reviews published in media (first of all in first of all in Literary Newspaper, Komsomol Truth, Arguments of the Week). Semantic-stylistic and cognitive-pragmatic analysis is used. The problem of media literacy formation is in the centre of attention in modern society. The review culture is closely connected with media literacy formation and media education including literary and media critics. It is necessary for this to provide training, aimed at the formation of stable skills of perception and analysis. It is necessary to identify directions of media educational work that can proceed in creating the platform for teaching media literacy; to analyze media education technologies that can be used when creating the platform for teaching media literacy.

**Keywords:** media discourse, media communication, media literacy, media education, analysis, argumentation, evaluation, media review genre.

### 1. Introduction

A considerable number of works are devoted to the genre of review, both in synchrony and in diachrony (Bashkatova, 2013; Erman, 2011; Grinfeld, 2015; Molitvina, 2017; Moreva, 2016; Nabieva, 2010; Nersesova, 2012; Novikov, 2012; Petrova, Moreva, 2014; Tertychny, 2016; Vanko, 2021; Zemtsova, 2006, etc.). In researches and journalistic articles, complains about the deformation of the review genre have become common, the drift towards greater information

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content and less analyticity, greater advertising, even entertainment and less argumentation and evidence. This is considered to be the degradation of the genre itself, as well as the circumstances surrounding it – the venality of the reviews and the bias of the reviewers. “The fashionable postmodern rejection of value imperatives and canons, the substitution of essential meanings with simulacra; the already habitual loss of authorship” (Bashkatova, 2013: 3), this is the reason that reviews have turned into advertising and announcing the very “standardized”, “conveyor” literary product” (Molitevina, 2017; Saburova, Golikova, 2015).

V.I. Novikov is quite right that modern reviewers don't have the originality of their own style, but are satisfied with a certain widespread pattern, limiting themselves to ordinary, trivial passages: “Now people are engaged in criticism, on the one hand, they seem to be philologically “completed”, but they have the same language for all. They did not set themselves the problem of individualizing the language so that the very first phrase would say “it's me”. Little rhetorical technique, little skill, very loose composition and lack of interpretation” (Novikov, 2023).

There are numerous confirmations of this, including in such publications as *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Newspaper). In review by E. Velichko on the book by D. Voronin “Auntie Life and Mother War” (Voronin, 2024) there is nothing but a set of platitudes: “*The life of modern Russia still needs to be understood. Many of stories by D. Voronin are dedicated to the villagers. The author draws them without embellishment, with all the flaws. The story “Serafimovich and Angelina” is a colorful sketch of provincial life, it reflects the inconsistency of human nature. The story “The Truth of Life” raises a difficult issue of interethnic relations... D. Voronin avoids dividing the world into black and white...*” (Velichko, 2015).

Such phrases, of course, could take place as leads to some more meaningful opinions, but they do not lead to anything, and such phrases exhaust the review. T. Moskvina believed that a review should be neither kind nor evil – it should be witty. “The fascinatingly written article at least a little bit, but it decorates the noosphere” (Moskvina, 2015).

And in general, literary criticism, as has been the case since the time of V.G. Belinsky and N.A. Dobrolyubov, should be the most important cultural phenomenon. At universities, it is important at journalism faculties to revive the subject of Literary Criticism in its classical form, with the study of the examples by the “great masters” of this genre. If media rhetoric is based on knowledge of classical rhetoric, including knowledge of the speeches of great orators, then one can and should learn by imitating great examples.

It will be extremely fascinating journey called “media education” by studying the classics of reviewing, especially from the creativity of the “great critics”. And this, among other things, will develop a critical way of thinking, and will paint a worldview (Fedorov, 2001; Fedorov, 2009; Fedorov, 2010), and will show an algorithm for understanding many cultural processes, will help to form media literacy (Fedorov et al., 2014; Fedorov, Chelysheva, 2002; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015; Fedorov et al., 2019; Gálík, Gálíková Tolnaiová, 2022; Gálíková Tolnaiová, Gálík, 2022).

Today, literary, artistic and professional art history magazines have lost their leading role in cultural processes. Media are increasingly becoming platforms for reviewing, which inevitably leads to a transformation of the genre and a lowering of the acceptable standard. Today, an expanded view has been adopted, according to which even the texts of announcements and annotations have begun to be included in reviews. “With the advent of new media, the unstable boundaries of genres in modern media discourse make it possible to refer texts close to reviews, announcements, annotations, and comments to reviews” (Molitevina, 2017: 5). However, the genre of a classical review assumes an educational orientation, social and aesthetic significance, which is difficult to expect from an announcement or annotation.

## 2. Materials and methods

The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, TV and film reviews published in media (first of all in *first of all in Literary Newspaper, Komsomol Truth, Arguments of the Week*). Semantic-stylistic and cognitive-pragmatic analysis is used.

## 3. Discussion

Society cannot be satisfied with the displacement of the critical genre (Lane, 2020; Langer, Gruber, 2021; Macgilchrist et al., 2020; Stoumpos et al., 2023), the lack of media reviews (Ozbek et al., 2023; Švelch, 2022; Shin et al., 2022), their replacement with simple annotations (Kayal, Saha, 2023), and the fact that reviews sometimes get specific features. A great writer! It's a pleasure to

read it! He has his own telegram channel and a lot of subscribers, he posts something every day. The same goes for Rahim Jafarov. Islam Khanipayev constantly writes about Rahim Jafarov, and Rahim Jafarov constantly writes about Islam Khanipayev. This is such a cross-PR" (Solovyova, 2023). Or compare: "Sergey Chuprinin, the editor-in-chief of Znamya magazine, noticed that we never criticize each other: "Guys, do you all praise each other? "Great style", "amazing style!". And what will you leave for Gogol?! (Obuh, 2024: 17).

Thus, it is alarming that the author of a critical article may see his goal not so much in analyzing the source text (Kang et al., 2022; Kulikova, 2020) as in drawing attention to it, that "the bias of newspaper and magazine critics is becoming more and more obvious. Moreover, its source is not necessarily money.

According to A.B. Berstadt "Often, the "bias" essence of certain reviews is due to corporate interests, friendships, etc. This is a very disturbing phenomenon, because in the context of the variety of book products available on the market, it is especially important to be able to choose high-quality literature, high-quality book editions among hundreds and thousands of second-rate ones" (Berstadt, 2009: 8). The same applies to the abundance of film productions (Shin et al., 2022), among which it is not easy to choose worthy works. But even today, of course, the "classics of the genre" remain.

These are the media reviews by V. Matizen, D. Korsakov, A. Kondrashov, T. Moskvina, in which it is clearly seen by what argumentative means a powerful effect on the reader is achieved. In the obituary dedicated to the recently deceased Tatiana Moskvina, it is rightly said: "At her best, she wrote amazingly, and when you read, you felt such delight that does not imply envy... I remember I had to give Volodin a new issue of The "Cinema Art", sent with the opportunity ... and in the issue Moskvina's review on *The Siberian Barber* was contained, which caused such delight that I immediately called Volodin, read the text aloud to him, we laughed for half an hour in two voices — and only after that, waking up, I went to the subway with this magazine.... The magic of text. I have been giving it to students for many years as an exemplary one..." (Dmitrevskaya, 2025). In other words, Tatiana Moskvina's creativity makes us remember the times when criticism (first, before cinema, only literary one) made no less impression than the analyzed works themselves.

#### 4. Results

The well-known publicist T. Vojvodina recently complained that "even people with a formally high level of education (with a diploma) do not feel the need for rational evidence of any statement. They don't need any facts or logic, shamanic shouts are enough, something like the universal way of argumentation that has recently become widespread: "That's right!" (Voevodina, 2021).

According to Ya.I. Tyazhlov "Argumentation in media criticism, in the strict sense, is not an analogue of scientific arguments, however, it should certainly include that in classical rhetoric is called arguments to the logos. In other terminology, these are factual arguments" (Tertychny, 2016: 48), that is, the involvement of facts, the analysis of cause-and-effect relationships.

How vivid is the critic and publicist T. Vojvodina in proving her position, how vivid are the images she draws, depicting how she imagines the so-called activities of social scientists "at work" and actions to reform this "activity" to make that social scientists benefit the state. In her review on the article "Dead Sciences and their Servants" by Denis Sukhorukov, she supports the author when he gives his definition of this activity, calling it pleasant communication, in simple terms "discussion clubs". And this metaphor makes possible T. Voevodina herself, as the author of the review, to draw a new picture expanding Sukhorukov's metaphor using a rhetorical means – a parabola: *"They say scientists aren't paid enough? They get paid a lot! Compared to the achieved result. When I started participating in a scientific and humanitarian gathering about ten years ago, I was amazed. People (very nice, cultured, and likeable; I've come to love them from the bottom of my heart) gather in clean rooms, lighted and heated at government expense, and just talk about this and that. Mr. Sukhorukov correctly identified it: a discussion club. I've always enjoyed participating in these casual discussions, there's something ancient Greek about it. Free contemplation of reality and friendly discussion of what I've seen with pleasant people. Do we need discussion clubs? I think so. ... A discussion club is a kind of intellectual leisure and should take place, like any leisure activity, in their free time and at the own expense of these vacationing citizens. ... No one asks humanities social scholars for any result in the real world. They are probably being asked for some kind of game results: publications, participation at these conferences and symposiums, filling out such reports, but they do not participate in the real*

world, although we were taught in school half a century ago that science has become a direct productive force of society. Well, let's say university scientists teach, but those from research institutes don't do that either. However, the training of humanitarians, who later will become couriers and sellers, can hardly be considered a socially useful activity. <... > Social sciences should be organized in the same way. Is it impossible? No people? People usually show up when there is a clear request backed up by resources. Can't they? Don't they want to? No qualifications? No issues? Close it within a month. And the government money will be safe, and there will be no illusions. It goes without saying you have to pay for a scientific result. But it is for the result, not for the beat about the bush “... keep in mind, dear Shura, I do not intend to feed you for nothing. For every vitamin that I feed you, I will require a lot of small services from you” these wonderful words of Ostap Bender (The hero of the satirical novel-dilogy by I. Ilf and E. Petrov *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*) should be an unshakeable principle of the relationship between the state and scientists. And with the humanitarians, too” (Voevodina, 2023).

The review by A. Kudryashov on the film *Vertinsky* is based on a list of inconsistencies with the truth (known from Vertinsky's memoirs), absurdities and absurdities: “... in the series, Vertinsky absolutely accidentally gets on an ambulance train and goes to war. It wasn't true, it was a deliberate, strong-willed step... but why was his real wife Lydia presented as such a moody and stupid hysterical woman? ... oh my God, in the series Slashchev turned into a woman, the head of counterintelligence, played by Anna Mikhalkova. If it is allowed that the whites had their own Rozaliya Zemlyachka, then... everything is allowed. This madame sends Vertinsky into exile, later she turns into a Soviet agent, then into an employee of the embassy in China, who sends the hero to the USSR. A brazen falsification of Vertinsky's life story. Do not denigrate his name, name the hero, for example, Smertinsky and come up with whatever you want (Kondrashov, 2021).

Very often, the facts are such that they give rise not only to irony, but also to caustic sarcasm:

“...along with the sound and colour, the aroma or smell of Mexican serial soap spreads from the screen...” (Matizen, 2025). For example, D. Korsakov gave the title “Just a son of a bitch” to his review on the film *The Prophet. The story of Alexander Pushkin*.

D. Korsakov gave the title “Just a son of a bitch” to his review on the film *The Prophet. The story of Alexander Pushkin* (D. Korsakov used allusion on the well-known Pushkin's words which he addressed to himself after completion the historical drama “Boris Godunov”: “*Aj da Pushkin! Aj da sukin syn!*”). Literal translation: Heigh Pushkin, Heigh son of bitch! These Pushkin's words are an example of antiphrasis. The expression *son of a bitch* is offensive in another situation. The author in his review used both a precedent words, referring on Pushkin's words, and characterized the main character by expressing, выразив his attitude towards the interpretation of Pushkin, presented to the audience).

The facts of aggressive modernization cause rejection: “... there is a lyceum here, everyone is stomping, puffing, rapping to the beat, they are trying to ban Pushkin from performing in front of Derzhavin, but he gets to Derzhavin, and he also reads texts in front of his fair <...> ...Nicholas I, who teaches Pushkin to play tennis while rapping (Korsakov, 2025).

The classics of modern peer review actively use the comparison topos as evidence. Thus, the text of the review on the opera *Eugene Onegin*, staged by the Astrakhan Theatre, is based on a comparison of the reviewed performance of a classical opera with other productions of this opera, discusses what art is, and cites a poem by A.K. Tolstoy.

“The performance turned out to be beyond all praise. The first thing that strikes me is the scenery. This is a wonderful painting – an old noble house. Wooden, with columns. A.K. Tolstoy wrote about such a house in a poem that I love very much.

It is so naturalistically painted that you can see: the wooden paneling has been washed by rains for many years, dried by the sun and wind. It is curious that in the last act, before which several years pass, this house reappears, and it has aged, and the foundation bricks seem to be visible.... This “special effect” is probably achieved by light, but I don't want to think about it and it's not interesting. This is the very house, a real noble nest. And everything that happens there is real. So, it seems. Although what could be more conventional than an opera? But, curiously, when you watch this performance, you forget that they are singing. They don't sing, they live their lives. I don't understand anything about opera singing, but this feeling that they are live means that they sing well. In general, it's a steady sign of craftsmanship and high quality when you don't notice how it's done. When you notice technology, what our literature teacher called “artistic features” means that it has not been done very well. Carefully done, with effort. But when



it is not noticed, then it is art... Is there any "innovation" in the performance? There is. Well-known events take place not exactly in the setting to which we are used and in which they occur in the novel. For example, the famous last declaration of the characters does not take place at Tatiana's house, but on the street, against the background, it seems, of an ice drift on the Neva. Tatiana is writing a letter on the balcony. And the declaration with Onegin in the garden in the play takes place... in a boat. That is, the director changed a lot, treated the original text as if at ease, but quite in the spirit of Pushkin. It could have been. It is not for nothing that the corresponding fragment of the novel, written by Pushkin's hand, appears on the backdrop of the stage at the beginning of each scene. The text is quite readable, especially through binoculars".

Further Tatiana Voevodina discusses the modern "reading of the classics": "This is the difference from those entertainers who cover their own wretched fantasies under the guise of classics. To be honest, I was afraid to get to something where Onegin and Lensky are gay friends, and Onegin kills Lensky out of jealousy, because he "traded him for a woman".

After all, somebody constantly writes that such performances are played out here and there by quite respectable masters. Praise God, that didn't happen. But the other day I heard on TV: some great modern director's "Queen of Spades" was shown at the Bolshoi Theatre, where the case takes place in a madhouse, some nurses hang out there, Herman lies on a bed, something like that... I've been wondering for a long time why, in whose interests such an ugly thing exists. It is present in painting, too, and, in fact, everywhere, in all forms of art. It seems to me that it is the fruit of combining the incompetence of the "creators" with the mental timidity and phobias of the philistine – consumer of art". T. Voevodina poses an eternal question of "poet and poetry", in terms of literature: "When art was a cult, no one raised the issue of cost, labour costs and other such prosaic matters. There was any cost. Michelangelo, who was lying down painting the famous ceiling, did not raise the question of how long it would take, what the opportunity cost of this working time was, and what the labor protection conditions were. He served: God, the great and eternal art, against which he was small and insignificant. When the hack became institutionalized, and the works of art turned into art objects, it means ordinary goods, all the usual production criteria began to be applied to them. They began to reduce costs, simplify technology, etc." (Voevodina, 2015).

The review title "Art crooks and suckers" itself includes the argument, which accurately substantiates that "There is a simple effect at work here: it seems rubbish to everyone separately, but he/she is afraid of being considered retarded and says that it is very interesting and wonderful. Otherwise, they'll think he/she is a provincial jerk. With proper marketing, a little boy who can shout that the king is naked is neutralized in a timely manner. He is being neutralized by the same philistines who are afraid of being known as suckers who are unable to understand Gauguin or Picasso" (Voevodina, 2015).

And it is extremely important that the argumentative discourse of a qualitative review offers generalizations, that is, the critic sees a social or cultural (anti-cultural) phenomenon in a particular case. "Art crooks have been unable to forgive Khrushchev for decades for expressing with simple directness what he thought of the Soviet abstractionists. And this is understandable: Khrushchev played the role of the boy from the tale of the naked king, and this should not be allowed in any way. But Khrushchev was not a timid philistine, he felt in his right. And the philistine is not what to say, he's afraid to even think". But Khrushchev was not a timid philistine, he felt in his right. And the philistine not only can't say he's afraid even to think" (Voevodina, 2015). In her generalizations, T. Voevodina clarifies the meaning of the word "culture" on the basis of its etymology, drawing parallels: "Culture is not only etymologically, but also essentially connected with a cult. Culture and art were born out of a religious cult, and the artist used his/her art to create a religious cult. That's how he/she felt about it. An artist (of any profile) served art as something higher in relation to him/herself. It is not necessary for him/her to serve God, he could serve a Great and Eternal Art" (Voevodina, 2015).

According to A. Kondrashov "our films, which are created as if for our audience, are marked by a passionate desire to attract attention somewhere "out there" (Kondrashov, 2020).

According to T. Voevodina in her article "Art crooks and suckers" who writes: "There is no art in this, because art is a artistry, skill. And it just isn't there. Not to mention thoughts and feelings. Is that what they say it's meant to be? Children, having drawn something unsuccessful or misspelled, also say: "But I didn't try!" So do modern daubers". Tatiana Voevodina is a master at exploiting substandard. "THIS is a universal marketing formula that can be used to vtyuhat'

(jargon: sell) everything, and at exorbitant prices. Because people do not buy a product or its useful properties or remarkable quality at all – they buy an increase in self-esteem. And the self-esteem of a modern philistine is always sick and inflamed... If there's any art in all this, it's probably marketing, the ability to prodvnut' (jargon: market) this maznya (jargon: daub). That is, to convince a timid philistine that he/she is a fool and does not understand anything about higher life. After all, the philistine is constantly concerned about his/her "status" – so that he is not mistaken for ... by the way, for what? In a broad sense, for a loh (jargon: sucker)". She proves very vividly why this happened: "And when a person is the navel of the earth, and the purpose of life is money, that's when art becomes ugly. In short, art died when God died. A certain higher authority has died in the souls of people. Culture arose from a cult and died with the death of the cult. And a new barbarism began – lack of culture." (Voevodina, 2015).

T. Voevodina, with her numerous reviews, asserts an irrefutable fact: now there is a transition from competence to incompetence. An essential part of a high-quality review is argumentative discourse, filling the artistic process with new meanings.

## 5. Conclusion

A review cannot be just a recommendation, informing the addressee about the need to get acquainted with something (watch a movie, read some text). The peculiarities of this genre are to evaluate a certain phenomenon in terms of linguoculture, to evaluate its significance for society. In a high-quality media review, an evaluation is the result of correlating the characteristics of a creation with aesthetic criteria and social needs. This correlation includes both methods of inductive reasoning, when a generalizing conclusion is based on a set of presented facts, and methods of deductive reasoning, which are based on the truth of generally valid positions. At the same time, criticism becomes "not only a means of broadcasting interpretative and evaluative content, but also a source of formation of new competencies for a mass audience" (Tyazhlov, 2016: 5), this helps to enhance the activity of personal perception of art. A review as a special genre of media discourse has parameters, the description and development of which is obligatory for media professionals, despite of their individual, professional preferences. The review culture is closely connected with media literacy formation and media education including literary and media critics. It is necessary for this to provide training, aimed at the formation of stable skills of perception and analysis. It is necessary to identify directions of media educational work that can proceed in creating the platform for teaching media literacy; to analyze media education technologies that can be used when creating the platform for teaching media literacy. This approach also determines a significant expansion of the effectiveness of media techniques.

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