

About Non-fiction Writing: The Growth Possibility of Critical Poetics

Yaqin Zhang *

School of Chinese Language and Literature, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, 100875, China

* Corresponding author Email: zyq202211051061@126.com

Abstract: In the 1990s, faced with the crisis of the humanistic spirit and the inward tendency of literary theory under the background of market economy, cultural poetics fell into the dilemma of reality intervention under the framework of “aesthetic center theory”. In order to break through this limitation, academic circles have put forward the theoretical concept of “critical poetics”. By integrating the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Zhao Yong advocates the establishment of a “two-winged” research path between “aesthetic analysis” and “ideology criticism” in order to cure the “insufficiency of intervention” in cultural poetics. Sun Shicong proposed “returning to Adorno”, emphasizing that through historicization and institutional analysis, the critical edge should be directed at the power network that shapes artistic production, injecting critical poetics with problem awareness and methodological vitality to deal with China’s reality. The vigorous practice of contemporary non-fiction writing provides a solid textual carrier and realization path for the concept of critical poetics. It takes interventionist gestures as its core, responds to the call for “intervention in reality” through the “physical presence” of the writer, and practices “historical and institutional analysis” through solid field work. Through the in-depth description of marginal experiences and the connection with critical theory, non-fiction writing elevates individual dilemmas to structural criticism and explores the ethical possibility of “reconnection” in “collaborative writing”. It has thus become the realistic fulcrum of the critical poetics conceived by Zhao Yong and Sun Shicong. It not only embodies critical theory in Chinese experience, but also provides an operational practical paradigm for theory to intervene in reality.

Keywords: Cultural Poetics; Frankfurt School; Critical Theory; Non-Fiction Writing; Literary Theory; Humanistic Spirit.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Chinese society has faced a profound crisis of anomie in humanistic spirit and imbalance in the cultural system during the transformation of market economy. In this context, cultural poetics attempts to construct a critical path that not only adheres to literary standards but also intervenes in reality through the combination of aesthetic centralism and historical context. However, its theory gradually reveals its inherent limitations in practice: its insistence on classical aesthetics makes it difficult to effectively respond to the complex and diverse contemporary cultural phenomena. It lacks critical motivation and its demands for “intervention in reality” are often just words. In order to overcome this dilemma, academic circles have proposed the theoretical concept of “critical poetics”, which aims to return to the critical tradition of Marxism and the Frankfurt School and establish a dialectical tension structure between “literary intervention” and “artistic autonomy”, “aesthetic analysis” and “ideology criticism”. However, this theoretical dialectical conception still needs to face the challenge of how to fill the empty space between its theoretical presuppositions and realistic critical practice. At the same time, since “People’s Literature” advocated “non-fiction writing”, this writing form has gradually developed into an important cultural practice with its strong presence, interdisciplinary methods and formal experiments. Based on the in-depth examination of social structure and the aesthetic reconstruction of real perceptual experience in non-fiction writing, this article aims to explore whether non-fiction writing can build a realistic bridge from cultural poetics to critical poetics with a solid empirical foundation, formal consciousness and ethical intervention.

2. Thesis Construction of Critical Poetics

2.1. Background: Dilemma of Cultural Poetics

In the early 1990s, the “Humanistic Spiritual Discussion” symbolized by Wang Xiaoming’s “Ruins in the Wilderness” marked the collective reflection of the Chinese intellectual community on the spiritual dilemma during the transition period of the market economy. Faced with the contemporary symptoms of value vacuum, loss of faith and literary aphasia, this discussion completed the diagnosis of spiritual crisis with moral passion, but failed to achieve full success due to weak academic theory and the failure of enlightenment posture. After reflection, we found that the root cause lies in the imbalance of the three subsystems of material culture, institutional culture and spiritual culture in the cultural system. Pure economic determinism has proven to be dangerous. Economic development must be guided and balanced by “deep spiritual culture” to correct its “tragic” misalignment and make it develop in a “people-oriented” direction. At the same time, the literary theory community itself has also experienced the evolution of a series of ideological trends. In the 1980s, by countering the instrumental theory of “literature serving politics”, the central position of “aesthetic theory” was established; by transcending the mechanical “literary reflection theory”, “literary subjectivity” was promoted. However, in the 1990s, literature lost its sensational effect, and some theorists either turned to the “linguistic turn” of Russian Formalism and British and American New Criticism, seeking a safe haven in close reading of texts; or they introduced European cultural studies, but their research objects increasingly exceeded literature, and they faced the

risk of “decoupling” from literature and literary theory. It is in this double dilemma that the theoretical community urgently needs a new path that can not only adhere to the literary standard but also effectively intervene in reality. As a theoretical and theoretical development of the great discussion on the humanistic spirit, the “new rational spirit” advocated by Qian Zhongwen and others advocates “using a new humanistic spirit to combat human spiritual degradation and mediocrity”, emphasizing that literature should care about people’s living conditions and make people become human beings. This concept lays the foundation of axiology for cultural poetics. At the same time, “New Historicism” represented by Greenblatt emphasizes the intertextual relationship between text and historical context, and advocates the cultural poetics of interpreting literature in the negotiation of power networks and ideology. It provides important inspiration for Chinese literary research to break through the formalism and reconstruct the connection between text and social history. Represented by Tong Qingbing, Jiang Shuzhuo, Liu Qingzhang, and Li Chunqing, they are rooted in Chinese soil and systematically put forward the theoretical conception of cultural poetics. Starting from Tong Qingbing’s theoretical assumptions, the general skeleton of the contemporary construction of cultural poetics is as follows: “One center” - aesthetics is the unshakable center of literature. This is not only a historical reflection on political instrumentalism, but also a resistance to the current ideology of commercialism. Cultural poetics requires that any literary criticism must first pass the “aesthetic test” and the text must have “poetic and artistic qualities” in order to become an effective object of criticism. “Two basic points” - one is the historical context, which requires going deep into the specific cultural texture, personal opportunities, psychological states and situations that produced the writer’s works. This view follows the Marxist historicist principle i, which regards literature as a “temporary product of history.” The second is to read and analyze the text carefully, and grasp the traces in the text that can reveal the author’s changes in thought, artistic pursuit, or internal contradictions, which are the “symptoms” mentioned by Althusser. “An appeal” - Cultural poetics has a strong practical character, calling for literary criticism to move from text to real-life intervention, criticize the ugliness in reality by digging out the cultural spirit in the text, and make up for the lack of real culture. Furthermore, the spirit of combination and balance (internal and external, structure and history, text and reality) contained in cultural poetics itself is a metaphor and academic demonstration of the various imbalance problems caused by one-sided development in contemporary Chinese society, calling for a comprehensive and balanced social development model [1,2]. This theoretical approach has greatly expanded the richness of poetics, enabling literary theory and criticism to have a wide range of “intervention” capabilities and a wide range of treatments. Therefore, some scholars point out that “cultural poetics” is not so much a “poetics” but rather a “cultural criticism.” It is more reflected as a cultural context of criticism and research without strict and clear disciplinary attributes. It is more suitable for the study of broader social and cultural issues than classical poetics, but it is difficult to conduct strictly self-disciplined and self-consistent “pure literary” aesthetic research [3]. So far, relevant research on cultural poetics has achieved fruitful results, but at the same time, many scholars have discovered the practical dilemma of this discourse system: because of “aesthetic centralism”,

“cultural poetics” can neither face more complex literary and cultural phenomena nor form effective intervention in reality. The so-called “intervention in reality” has basically become a paper theory. Regarding the difficulty of implementation, the overly gentle and honest temperament of cultural poetics lacks the power to intervene in reality, and the internal dynamic system of criticism is insufficient. Some contemporary scholars have discussed the lack of criticism, the core element of cultural poetics as a theory, returned to Marxism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and proposed the idea of moving towards a critical poetics.

2.2. The Idea of Critical Poetics

“Criticism”, as Adorno pointed out, “criticism comes from the Greek word for ‘making decisions’. Anyone who equates the modern concept of rationality with criticism is not exaggerating.” This means that criticism is first and foremost an academic activity based on a clear rational spirit, analyzing and discriminating the research object and finally making value judgments. It is a kind of “poetic judgment” (Engels’s words), which requires critics to be like impartial judges, criticizing writers’ works from an aesthetic point of view, but not just aesthetics. This concept has gained the greatest theoretical vitality in Marxism, pointing directly at all forms of oppression, domination, and false ideologies. When it is included in the perspective of modern culture and literature research, it aims to reveal “the culture-power relationship hidden in the text” and is a “politics of text.” According to the Frankfurt School, the purpose of critical theory “is by no means just to increase knowledge itself. Its goal is to liberate people from slavery” (Horkheimer’s words). Therefore, the essence of criticism is “confrontation,” as Said said: “Criticism must envision itself as an improvement in the quality of life, and fundamentally resist any form of tyranny, domination, and abuse.” In terms of the philosophical foundation of critical theory, Adorno’s popular culture theory is the core part of Frankfurt’s social critical theory, but it has gradually become a “form of thought in the past” over the past few decades. The Birmingham School criticized its elitist stance, saying that it ignored the “subversive, daily and political dimensions” of popular culture, and that the public was not passively “idiotized” when accepting it; the global culture industry theory focused on its limitations of the times, arguing that in the information age, the integration of culture and economy has made the form of the cultural industry evolve. There have been fundamental changes, and “representation and materiality are no longer distinct.” Adorno’s thinking based on the early printing and electronic era has become “overwhelming.” When applied to the study of local culture, it questions the universality of its theory, and once called for “going out of the Adorno model” to avoid “narrow aestheticism” and criticism that is divorced from the local context. But it would be premature to conclude that it is completely outdated. As Martin Jay said, “It is a much better attitude to eagerly anticipate the creative ways of reconstructing original ideas than to lament the impending corruption of original ideas” [4]. The problem is that, on the one hand, the current cultural industry is prospering, but it has not yet emerged from the cultural reality of Adorno’s model. From this, some scholars have a keen insight into a more important point in the culture industry theory: Looking back at Adorno’s local acceptance, we can see that... in the too rapid and frequent discourse transformation to face the local mass culture practice, the theoretical starting point of

Adorno's question of mass culture has been ignored. The culture industry theory is divorced from philosophical thinking, leaving only the appropriateness of the criticism of mass culture. Adorno's questions about popular culture have two clues. One is the reflection and criticism of popular music, especially jazz, and the other is the philosophical thinking that runs through academic research, with the latter as the ideological basis of the former. From the "Meta-Criticism of Epistemology" of critical phenomenology in 1934, which was republished in "Negative Dialectics" in 1966, to the criticism of the cultural industry and the promotion of modernist art utopia, human freedom has been regarded as a consistent measure and reference. Obviously, only by re-seeing Adorno's insistence on individual freedom and understanding of human beings in the culture industry theory, and returning to criticism, will it not become an abstract value preaching and empty humanistic promotion, but can be recognized by the current individual's concrete survival practice.

Sun Shicong absorbed the ideas of subsequent theorists such as Peter Biegel, emphasizing that critical poetics must have a strong historical consciousness, and guided criticism from within the text to the analysis of the "art system" - closely linking the concept of art with the art system, and showing how the art system related art to bourgeois society. Biegel reveals that "only the institution itself, and not a priori concepts about the work of art, can explain the nature of art in a precise, historical, and repeatable way" [5]. This means that the critical edge should be directed towards the entire institutions, routines and networks of power that shape and frame artistic production. At the same time, he also borrowed from Biegel that the standard he set for all contemporary aesthetic theories lies in the "strong historical nature" of the theory itself. He believes that Adorno's theory itself is also historical. When the development of art exceeds the historical avant-garde movement, "aesthetic theories based on it (such as Adorno's theory) also become history." In this way, it is necessary and possible to reconstruct critical hermeneutics [6,7]. Here, Sun Shicong proposed a dialectical practical strategy: after "stepping out of the Adorno model", one must "return to Adorno". This is not a simple return, but a creative transformation with an awareness of China's problems. He took the reconstruction of cultural industry theory in Taiwan as an example to show how to activate the classic theory: "The cultural industry context highlights the 'insincerity' of popular culture: 'The real core of cultural industry theory is the issue of sincerity.'... And the issue of standardization of cultural industry products has also been reinterpreted as 'quasi-Standardization': 'The production mechanism of the cultural industry moves towards a fixed model, but it cannot freeze itself in this model. It must constantly mutate.'" This interpretation closely follows Adorno's core concerns (authenticity and control), and accurately describes the new characteristics of current cultural production [7]. At the same time, the reconstruction of critical poetics was raised to the level of cultural politics, quoting Cao Weidong's discussion: "According to the opinion of domestic scholar Cao Weidong, the answer is yes and necessary..." The Frankfurt School has always been concerned about: why capitalism is neither "rigid" nor "dead", that is, how capitalism overcomes the crisis of legitimacy. Based on this, we might as well reflect on ourselves: if socialism wants to prove that it has a universal internal logic of modernization, how should it solve it? We are facing legitimacy issues, and the key lies in the issue of socialist cultural leadership, or how to realize cultural

modernity [8]. Sun Shicong's critical poetics has injected new vitality into the seemingly "outdated" critical poetics by returning to the theoretical point (individual freedom), updating methodology (historical and institutional analysis), and implementing it in local reality (creative reinterpretation), making it a sharp weapon that can effectively respond to the cultural reality of China in the 21st century.

Zhao Yong was inspired by this "critical poetics" and implemented it in cultural poetics. He pointed out that the "aesthetic center theory" of cultural poetics upholds a classical and pure aesthetic view and pursues "poetry and painting". This makes it either unable to deal with the "non-poetic" and "anti-poetic" existence and complex mass digital cultural products in the contemporary literary ecosystem, or excludes them from the critical field of vision. As a result, cultural poetics "can only interpret the works of Zhong Zhengping and writers in traditional literature." In order to cure this "insufficiency of intervention", Zhao Yong returned to Marxism and the Frankfurt School, and proposed to recast the great tradition of criticism into the contemporary cultural poetics discourse system. Pursue the methodological dialectical integration of the two critical theories and the local theory of cultural poetics, forming a "two-winged" research path. The first is aesthetic analysis, that is, facing pure literature and high culture, adopting "internal research" or "appreciative analysis", mainly pointing to popular literature and popular culture, and implementing "immanent criticism" or "representational analysis" of cultural studies. Furthermore, in order to more concretely implement the operation plan, Zhao Yong deeply analyzed the famous debate between Sartre and Adorno on "intervention" and tried to transcend its binary opposition. Special advocates that literature must be "useful" and must be involved in reality. Its essence is the embodiment of the role of intellectuals. "Sartre calls for what writers do in an intellectual sense." His writing is "written for today" and the pursuit of timeliness is similar to Lu Xun's "for life." "s literary view. Sartre actively embraced the mass media in order to convey his ideas to the working class. This was similar to the later "Grasian turn" in British cultural studies. They both recognized that "popular culture is not only one of the fields of its struggle, but also the stakes of winning or losing this struggle." Adorno criticized Sartre's "intervention" for subject-first, which hurts literariness. He firmly believed that "art confronts society through it, and it becomes social only when it stands as autonomous art." He used Kafka and Beckett as examples to illustrate that autonomous art through formal innovation, Can produce deeper critical power: "Once crushed by Kafka's wheel, people will permanently lose the sense of living in harmony with the world." The "inner criticism" he advocates is an important methodology of critical poetics [9]. The key to critical poetics is "literary intervention." and 'artistic autonomy', in fact, it means maintaining a balanced relationship between the role-playing of writers (scholars) and intellectuals, finding a running-in space between formal innovation and popular expression, and pursuing a tension structure between 'internal criticism' and 'external criticism'. "We must not only absorb Sartre's courage to intervene in reality and the critical spirit of intellectuals, but also learn from Adorno's insistence on artistic autonomy and formal innovation, as well as his sophisticated "inner criticism" method [10].

Finally, let's return to Tong Qingbing's original theoretical assumption of cultural poetics: "Cultural poetics' is still 'poetics', and it is necessary to maintain and develop aesthetic

criticism; but it is also cultural. From an interdisciplinary cultural perspective, connecting the so-called ‘internal research’ and ‘external research’, through the analysis of literary texts, extensive and in-depth contact and contact with reality is still an important opportunity for the development of literary theoretical criticism. ‘Cultural poetics’ will have broad academic prospects... It is generally believed that foreign cultural studies can learn from Birmingham. The school began to rise, and its main feature is a kind of political criticism, which believes that in the late stage of capitalism, the early cruel exploitation and oppression have been replaced by the penetration of culture, which makes people alienated and become slaves comfortably without feeling it. Cultural studies is such a political criticism of capitalism. Its key words are race issues and Orientalism, gender issues and feminism, regional issues and socialism, class issues and socialism, ancient and modern issues and new historicism, etc.”; Can we not care about reality, and at the same time we are not satisfied with the “internal research” that focuses too much on the form of works and the aesthetic criticism that focuses too much on poetry and painting. We hope that literary research and criticism will touch more on real issues, urban and rural issues, East and West issues, clean government issues, ancient and modern issues, Chinese and Western issues, gender issues, popular culture issues, and value reading issues of texts... Not only that, but when interpreting ancient literature and foreign literary works, we must also grasp and analyze them in the original historical and cultural context. Analysis, revealing its true cultural implications, in order to help today’s people understand how ancients and foreigners solved the social and cultural problems of the era they lived in. In short, the current situation of contemporary Chinese literature requires the reconstruction of a rational spirit and a move towards cultural poetics [11]. The approach to regaining criticism in cultural poetics is to return to the critical tradition of Marxism and the Frankfurt School, and to establish a tension structure between “literary intervention” and “artistic autonomy”, “aesthetic analysis” and “ideological criticism”. How can the empty space between the explanatory power of reality and the critical practice of intervention be filled by this theoretical dialectical conception? Looking from the time when cultural poetics was proposed to the present, the emerging non-fiction writing in the literary world may, with its solid experience foundation, formal consciousness and ethical intervention, become a practical textual carrier for contemporary cultural poetics to move towards critical poetics. This idea will be explained below.

3. Growth Space for Non-fiction Writing

In 2010, “People’s Literature” magazine opened a “Non-fiction” column, and in the same year launched the “People’s Land·Activist” non-fiction writing project, officially starting the trend of non-fiction writing in the field of literature. This naming and organization from authoritative literary journals, and the subsequent publication of a series of non-fiction literary works, such as Liang Hong’s “Liangzhuang” series, Murong Xuecun’s “China, Missing a Medicine”, Xiao Xiangfeng’s “Dictionary: Southern Industrial Life”, Li Juan’s “Winter Ranch” and other works have not only caused a sensation in the fields of reader acceptance and literary criticism, but also promoted the spread of the concept of

“non-fiction” writing. Since then, this narrow sense comes from the book classification in the United States in the 20th century and the writing style of the “New Journalism” craze in the 1960s. In the past fifteen years, it has gradually become an important category that cannot be ignored in the reading experience and cultural life of contemporary Chinese readers. The expediency and inclusiveness in stylistic identification when “non-fiction” was first named also generated conceptual and formal creativity in the diverse practices across fields, disciplines, and media since then. At the same time, relying on the technological development of mobile Internet and the content production of new media platforms, non-fiction writing has produced a large number of representative and topical works. For a work like “I Am Fan Yusu”, which is close to a phenomenon-level event, the public issues triggered by the author’s class identity, destiny and literary practice have also aroused heated discussions in the public opinion field. Today, nonfiction writing has become an important cultural practice that attracts common attention in many fields such as literature, journalism, sociology, anthropology, history, and many other fields because of its strong public and social concerns, its methodological awareness of problematizing and historicizing empirical phenomena, and especially its demand for equality in breaking down professional barriers and seeking the self-expression of ordinary people [12].

3.1. The Cornerstone of Aesthetics: Interventional Gesture and the Reconstruction of “True Belief”

The aesthetic space of non-fiction writing is primarily based on a persistent pursuit of “truth” and ethical reconstruction. The essence of non-fiction writing is a unique field rooted in reality and excavated through narrative techniques. Writers can either return to the depths of historical memory and reveal the inner truth of various past events through re-excavation and combing of historical materials, or reflect on certain important figures and events, such as Li Hui’s “Visities of Clouds” and “Cover China”, Wang Shuzeng’s “War of Liberation”, “Long March” and “Resistance to Resistance Against China”. “Japanese War”, Alai’s “Zhan Dui: Two Hundred Years of Kham Legend”, Chen He’s “Miluo Mountain Camp”, Chen Tushou’s “The People of the Motherland Have Thoughts”, Yang Xianhui’s “Chronicle of Dingxi Orphanage”, “Chronicle of Gannan”, Zhao Yu’s “Looking for Ba Jin’s Daili” and various “family memories”, etc. Either stay inside the complex real life and present and think about some important social phenomena that people pay attention to on the spot, such as “China in Liangzhuang” and “Leave Liangzhuang” by Liang Hong, “China, Missing a Blind Medicine” by Murong Xuecun, and “Ten Ten Years of Life and Death” by Sun Huifen “Sunday Talk”, Li Juan’s “Sheep Road”, Xiao Xiangfeng’s “Dictionary: Industrial Life in the South”, Qiao Ye’s “Building a Building”, Liu Liangcheng’s “Aircraft Parts Sales Department”, Peter Heisler’s “River City”, “Roadfinding China: A Self-Driving Journey from the Village to the Factory”, etc. Whether they are traveling through history or facing reality head-on, these works embody a distinct interventional writing posture, emphasizing the presence and experience of the creative subject, and using the writer’s verification narrative to make the narrative irrefutable factual, thus achieving its inherent goal of “non-fiction” [13]. This posture requires the writer to place himself at the scene where the experience occurs, and

conduct exploration and verification in a “physical presence” manner. In “China in Liangzhuang” and “Leaving Liangzhuang”, Liang Hong did not write from the nostalgic perspective of a returning wanderer, but pre-designed two sets of sociological observation frameworks, “outside-in” and “inside-out”, actively arranged the search path, mobilized interviewees, and detailed what he saw and heard. Her writing is an active intervention and investigation into the structural changes in China’s rural society. For example, in “Legend of Liangzhuang”, she traveled to Guangdong, Shaanxi, Beijing and other places, like an anthropologist, to track and record the living conditions of migrant workers in Liangzhuang in various places. This “walking” itself is the source of its narrative legitimacy and aesthetic power [13]. Another example is Murong Xuecun’s “China, Missing a Medicine”, with the intention of exploring the inner causes of MLM evils. The writer took the initiative to go deep into the tiger’s den and went to Shangrao, Jiangxi to join a MLM den to directly experience the disciplinary strategies and emotional arousal methods of MLM organizers [14]. Another example is Li Juan’s “Winter Pasture” and “Sheep Road”, which also embody the exploration process of “physical presence” with the ultimate personal experience, which constitutes the original beauty and convincing power of non-fiction writing. The rise of non-fiction writing is a multiple resistance to the “materialization” of experience in the information age, the “hyper-real” simulation culture and the “quick decay” fate of news. It refuses to reduce life experience to exchangeable symbols, and instead restores the original richness of experience through narrative reconstruction, thereby resisting the smoothness and closure pursued by commodity aesthetics. At the same time, it confronts the “hyperreal” world described by Baudrillard and attempts to reconstruct a true belief that has been obscured. In the field of news, it uses in-depth narratives to fight against the fast-foodization of information. As Nan Xianghong said, it is “news that fights against quick death” [14]. In the era of artificial intelligence, its material insistence on the field restores the rich sociality and humanity of news through details, storytelling and in-depth analysis of human nature, and pursues a deep truth that touches the core of reality, thus extending the life cycle of news and becoming a “slow media” aesthetic practice that adheres to depth and warmth in the era of fast food culture.

3.2. Innovation in Interdisciplinary Vision and Narrative Strategies

Nonfiction writing breaks the paradigm of traditional literature to a great extent and approaches a broad social science paradigm. This methodology effectively overcomes the “desocializing” tendencies of critical theory that Honneth accuses because it penetrates deeply into the middle realm of social behavior through solid fieldwork. In “Liangzhuang Trilogy”, Liang Hong made it clear that his working method is: “Every day, I eat and talk with the elderly, middle-aged people, and teenagers in the village, and do sociological and anthropological investigations on the surname composition, clan relationships, family members, housing status, personal whereabouts, marriage and childbirth in the village” [15]. Her writing is a contemporary response and deepening of the issues raised in classic works such as Fei Xiaotong’s “Native China”, making “China in Liangzhuang” not only a literary work, but also a “rural history” that aims to “track and record the people and things involved from beginning to end” and reflect “the helpless current situation of rural China.” This

influence even feeds back into fictional creations. When Qiao Ye wrote the novel “Bao Shui” that won the Mao Dun Literature Award, his preparation work involved both “fields of history” and “fields of the scene.” He not only read rural research works by scholars such as Li Changping, Wen Tiejun, and He Xuefeng, but also conducted in-depth observations through “running in villages” and “visiting villages.” The narrator of the novel is also set as an outsider who has lived in the village for a long time. With an anthropologist-like attitude of observing and listening, he opens his subjective perception to the rural life world and real structure. This shows that the method of “understanding society” advocated by non-fiction writing has profoundly reshaped the basic mode of perceiving reality in contemporary literary creation. In terms of narrative strategy, nonfiction writing achieves a crucial internal perspective shift. It abandons the condescending “preacher” posture of intellectuals in Enlightenment realism and turns to a narrative ethics of equality and empathy. Creators like to use character names as chapter titles, and every ordinary person is the protagonist in their novels. This choice marks the transfer of narrative authority. The writer actively abandons the intellectual perspective and achieves the greatest empathy with the characters through the civilian perspective. At the same time, non-fiction writing inherits and innovates the “speaking” tradition of Chinese classical vernacular novels. In “Ten Years in Liangzhuang”, a “double-layered discourse structure” is constructed through a large number of character dialogues (such as street talks about the death of “Xiuzhong”) and the author’s supplementary notes on the fate of the characters. However, nonfiction writers have transformed from traditional “voyeurs” and “spokesmen of social dimensions” to “participants” and practitioners of “social criticism and intellectual contemplation.” This makes “speaking” not only to create a sense of presence, but also to present the texture of social public opinion and conduct historical in-depth excavations. Non-fiction writing embodies the characteristics of “anti-avant-garde” in form, which lies in its “all-inclusive” hybridity and anti-essentialist tendency. For example, “The Story of Leaving Liangzhuang” is both documentary literature and can be regarded as a reportage novel and novelistic reportage; Qiao Ye’s “The Story of Demolition of a Building” tells the story in the form of a novel, using the novel’s scene rendering and psychological description techniques to enhance the expressiveness of real events; Zheng Xiaoqiong’s “The Story of a Female Worker” adopts a “combination of poetry and essays” to create biographies of female workers, and the poetry is concise. It captures the spiritual moment of the female worker, and the essay unfolds the story of her destiny, and the form and content are highly consistent. The highly open nature of this style is, as the editor of “People’s Literature” said, because “there are not enough drawers in the Chinese medicine cabinet” [14]. It reflects the practical rationality of selecting the most appropriate genre according to the content to be expressed in non-fiction writing, which is itself a criticism of the rigid literary order.

3.3. The Realization of Critical Poetics: From Social Revelation to Perceptual Reconstruction

The aesthetics and methods of non-fiction writing have become the core values of the carrier of cultural poetics towards critical poetics. Through the in-depth description of marginal experiences, the emergence of structural issues, and

the linkage with critical theory, it profoundly reconstructs our perception of society and attempts to achieve “reconnection” in a fractured society. It appears when the mainstream news narrative fails to reach its vision and power, making up for the blind spots of the mainstream narrative [14]. Nonfiction writing constructs a textual space that can carry out “inner criticism.” This aesthetic space responds to the most fundamental “intervention” appeal of critical theory. When Zhao Yong called for literary criticism to draw on Sartre’s spirit to intervene in reality, non-fiction writing, with its practice of “going out of the study and going to our land and our people,” became the most powerful response to this call. It fills in the blind spots of mainstream narratives by creating biographies for marginalized groups. For example, Zheng Xiaojiong uses specific individuals to resist society’s disregard and indifference in “The Story of a Female Worker”. On new media platforms, non-fiction writing has formed a close linkage with the social critical discourse of scholars such as Xiang Biao, Chizuru Ueno, and Han Bingzhe. These theories provide explanatory frameworks for individual or group empirical phenomena, as well as ideological paths of criticism or resistance [16]. This allows works such as “Talk Delivery Rider, Trapped in the System” to go beyond the description of phenomena and become a systematic critique of platform capital and algorithmic governance. The utopian impulse to reconstruct social perception and achieve “reconnection” is the highest expression of the critical power of non-fiction writing. By going deep into the field, it breaks through the individual-oriented experience model and provides an opportunity for the shaping of new subject consciousness. The “Postscript” of “Ten Years in Liangzhuang” records the writer’s mental journey: “One of the most obvious changes is the change in the relationship between ‘I’ as a writer and a living person and the people of Liangzhuang.” Every thing and every person is endowed with countless mirror images. Now, it has returned to the state of ‘Looking at a mountain is a mountain.’ [17]. It can be seen from this that the “I” of the intellectual has shifted to the “I” centered on the individual, integrating into it and truly recording the living existence of each individual. The “collaborative writing” paradigm provided by Zhang Xiaoman in “My Mother Works as a Cleaner” is an excellent practice that goes deep into the “middle field” of society. Through this process, she realized that “they are also the majority of us in this world.” This kind of writing reveals the deep social structure and destiny connections beneath the superficial class distinctions. The act of writing itself is a practice of “reconnection.” It begins with generational and class “rifts” but ultimately creates a deep sense of connection through dialogue and collaboration. When the illiterate mother Chunxiang reads her daughter’s first draft through silent recitation and guessing and puts forward revision suggestions, when her language and observations directly constitute the “golden sentences” and core materials of the work (for example, the mother said “working people are glorious, and the money we earn by cleaning toilets is glorious money”), non-fiction writing breaks the monopoly of knowledge production and highlights the subjectivity and expression of ordinary workers. This enlightens us that the ultimate goal of criticism is not only to reveal problems and smash the current old machinery, but also to help rebuild social connections based on equality, dignity, and friendship. This practice itself is a constructive political vision. In a sense, this practice is a creative return and activation of the socialist

literary and artistic tradition of “going deep into life” and “going among the masses.”

Therefore, the aesthetic space constructed by non-fiction writing essentially completes a dual construction of ethics and aesthetics. It takes respect for the experience of others as its ethical foundation, formal innovation and perceptual reconstruction as its aesthetic path, and refines criticism from a theoretical sword in the study room into a practical force with body temperature and dust that can establish a real connection with people. This practice is the most powerful response to the dilemma revealed by Adorno’s theory of culture industry—materialization of experience, automation of perception, and dissolution of critical consciousness. It convinces us that true critical poetics must return to specific historical situations and the suffering and hope of flesh and blood. Nonfiction writing not only expresses criticism, but also uses all narrative practices to persistently explore the difficulties and possibilities of “reconnection” in an era full of divisions and fractures, providing irreplaceable narrative power for defending humanistic understanding. For practitioners of critical poetics, this path reveals two key intervention postures: On the one hand, theorists can go into the field like anthropologists and personally engage in non-fiction writing, transforming philosophical and sociological concepts such as “discipline” and “alienation” into tangible daily experiences, thereby promoting the “phenomenological turn” of critical theory. On the other hand, they can also serve as curators and interpreters, using theoretical perspectives to plan and guide non-fiction writing, and by juxtaposing different individual narratives, theoretical documents and historical archives to construct a multi-voice critical discourse field. This move aims to reveal the shared structural dilemmas behind fragmented experiences, thereby elevating the public’s feelings at the level of common sense to the level of critical consciousness at the strategic level—this fulfills the core function of the “organic intellectual” expected by Gramsci. However, critical poetics needs to be wary of the risk of re-institutionalization of nonfiction writing. The critical energy of nonfiction writing stems from its marginality and fluidity. Once it is completely absorbed by the academic evaluation system or the cultural market, it may lose the experimental nature of its form and the sharpness of its issues. Future critical poetics should strive to maintain the wild state of non-fiction writing, prevent it from being codified and kitsch, capture the real conditions of contemporary society, politics, economy, culture and other aspects as well as the real feelings of the people living in them in the text, and explore the possibility of symptoms and healing in the perceptual experience writing of the existing system, so that it can continue to exist as a heterogeneous element within the cultural order. On this basis, the practice of critical poetics is expected to transcend the scope of literary research and become a comprehensive ideological action that connects aesthetics, ethics, political philosophy and technology criticism, opening up new ideological territories in response to the dilemma of modernity.

4. Conclusion

From its birth to the present, cultural poetics has always been closely linked to the humanistic spirit. Facing the complicated cultural ecology, the two-sided influence brought by “aesthetic center theory” makes the implementation of cultural poetics difficult. Scholars represented by Zhao Yong and Sun Shicong proposed moving toward critical poetics,

both starting from Marxism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. One chooses to start from literary criticism, seeking a balanced discourse field between “literary intervention” and “artistic autonomy”; the other focuses on the crisis of Adorno’s popular culture theory in China, and proposes to “get out of Adorno’s model” before returning: “Re-understand individual freedom and real survival under the logic of cultural industry in the context of the 21st century, think about reconstructing cultural industry theory from the starting point of Adorno’s questions, and explore a culture rooted in real life experience”. In today’s literary field, the ascendant non-fiction writing can provide a path to realize such critical hope - it uses interventionist posture as the ethical cornerstone, interdisciplinary approach as the cognitive path, aesthetic politics that pays attention to details and formal tolerance as the strategy, and ultimately realizes the reconstruction and connection of social perception as the value purpose, thereby providing rich space and ideal analytical text for cultural poetics to move towards critical poetics.

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