

Approach-avoidance Conflict Writings in Chinese Literature on the Theme of Rural Migrants

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to review and interpret the approach-avoidance conflict in the Chinese literature of rural migrants in the 1980s and 1990s. With the use of research methods such as close analysis and social criticism, this paper classifies and explains the writings on approach-avoidance conflict. As a result, the writings on negative function of approach-avoidance conflict are about the pain, confusion and sadness brought to rural migrants by approach-avoidance conflict, belonging to the works on theme of pain and anger. The writings on positive function of approach-avoidance conflict have the value of fable admonition, persuading rural migrants to make a difference. Therefore, it is concluded that the Chinese literature of rural migrants in the 1980s and 1990s is mainly about the approach-avoidance conflict, which reflects the social reality, breaks through the traditional understanding of the underlying narrative in literary conventions, presents the multi-function and multi-orientation characteristics of literature, and maintains the health of the ideological content of literature on the theme of rural migrants.

Keywords: Literature on the theme of rural migrants, Approach-avoidance conflict, Positive and negative functions.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s and 1990s, there were some hot issues in the society of rural migrants in southern China. As a social narrative text, literature on the theme of rural migrants that showed the lives and feelings of rural migrants not only reflects these problems, but also makes them public and spread to the present day, helping readers better understand the Chinese stories at that time.

Under the oppression of the registered residence system, the system of repatriation and temporary residence permits and the working system, the rural migrants faced many social conflicts. Among them, approach-avoidance conflict has achieved a new discourse composition of conflict writing.

Lewis A. Coser, an American sociologist, first used the term "conflict theory" in "the function of social conflict". Georg Simmel, the German sociologist, believes that "conflict is not completely destructive, but also has constructive social functions" [1]. Starting from behavioural motivation, Kurt Zadek Lewin, a German American

psychologist, believes that approach-avoidance conflict means that individuals have two motives for the same target at the same time, namely, drawing on advantages and avoiding disadvantages [2]. In fact, approach-avoidance conflicts exist. For example, a hungry mouse is trained to run to eat food. When the mouse was given a mild electric shock while it was eating, it wanted to flee. With the precision of starvation and electric shock, the mouse produced two contradictory motives of "approach" and "avoidance", involved power and behavioural tendency at the same time.

The approach-avoidance conflict of rural migrants means that rural migrants are full of longing for working in the city (approach), encounter setbacks in the process of working, and are eager to return to their hometown or change jobs (avoidance). Accompanied by behavioural adjustment such as leaving and staying, approaching and avoidance, persisting or giving up, this kind of psychological conflict has become a reality that many rural migrants often cannot avoid.

In the literature on the theme of rural migrants, facing the dilemma of approach-avoidance conflict, rural migrants suffer from spiritual suffering and spiritual confusion, do not know how to do, linger in urban and rural areas, become migratory birds of the times, and are marginalized on the basis of underclass. Many rural migrants approach profits and avoid harm in the conflict, forge ahead rather than avoidance, and choose to stay in the city where they work to continue their efforts rather than blindly go home or change jobs, which has a certain upward leading effect on the spirit of rural migrants. Through text narration, literature on the theme of rural migrants is on stories of these character under the influence of positive and negative functions of approach-avoidance conflict, breaks through the traditional understanding and literary practice of the bottom narration, presents the multi-function and multi-orientation characteristics of literature on the theme of rural migrants, and maintains the health of the ideological content of literature on the theme of rural migrants.

2. WRITINGS ON THE NEGATIVE FUNCTION OF APPROACH-AVOIDANCE CONFLICT

The negative function of approach-avoidance conflict refers to its destructive function. In other words, it is unsuccessful to approach the benefits and avoid the harm. This kind of writing pays more attention to the negative impact of approach-avoidance conflict on rural migrants. In short, the writings are mainly on the pain, confusion and sadness brought to rural migrants by approach-avoidance conflict, which belongs to the works of pain, sadness and anger. In terms of length, there are more writings on the negative function of approach-avoidance conflict than the writings on the corresponding positive function in literary works on the theme of rural migrants, which is also in line with the reality of life in that era and consistent with Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez's argument that the novel has "a destructive function".

There is no doubt that cities provide more opportunities for rural migrants, leading people nationwide to make a living in Guangdong. And mass migration occurs. On the other hand, a series of related institutional arrangements such as registered residence system and the attack and suppression of power on rural migrants caused physical and mental harm to rural migrants. Many

rural migrants had the "tendency to escape from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, and wanted to be people who got a refund for a ticket in the era of working. This is undoubtedly the psychological and behavioral approach-avoidance conflict. This kind of conflicts has restrained the process of rural migrants' urban integration, all-round development and nirvana rebirth.

The object without its own subjectivity is sad. Among literary works on the theme of rural migrants, rural migrants are objectified by the mainstream discourse, comprehensively suppressed and distorted, and excluded by the society as the "others", resulting in that rural migrants have approach-avoidance conflict and cannot get rid of it, have language depiction, plot description and characterization of various bad emotions. This fact is very common.

Among them, Lin Jian used his works to explain approach-avoidance conflict earlier. In other words, his works showed this dilemma earlier. His works such as "other people's city" put the writing background into the great changes of China's urban and rural areas. The protagonist's identity has been impacted and squeezed unprecedentedly, resulting in two contradictory motives of "approaching" and "avoidance". Duan Zhi, the protagonist in "other people's city", came to the special economic zone from a small county to work. He rose and fell in the desire environment of the metropolis. The woman he loved was swallowed up by strong capital. He was frustrated both emotionally and physically. He had to leave the city and return to his hometown Phoenix. In the view of rural migrants, the city belongs to others, and they are just passers-by. It's better to be a person who "get a refund for a ticket" in the era of rural migrants. However, after the baptism of the city, he returned to his hometown and could not adapt to the original life of the traditional countryside. In his hometown, he became a stranger in the eyes of relatives, friends and aborigines. Finally, he returned to the city with all kinds of helplessness. This back and forth between urban and rural areas should not be due to the weakness of rural migrants' psychology and will. If it is not for a series of related institutional arrangements, no one is willing to be a migratory bird in the process of modernization and hover in vain in the tangle between new and old, guest and host, city and township.

People can think of "My city" wrote by Xixi, Hong Kong. Why do migrants in Hong Kong regard this city as "my city"? However, the rural

migrants in the mainland metropolis have a strong feeling of staying in "others' city". This is mainly due to institutional arrangements. The vast majority of rural migrants do not enjoy the same city treatment and citizen treatment in the cities where they work. The hometown is declining day by day, and there are few job opportunities and life outlets. Rural migrants have to turn back to the city and continue the so-called "social reintegration". This is a typical performance of approach-avoidance conflict.

Anzi's poem "Singing While Walking" [3] expresses almost the same contradiction and involvement:

Don't ask me where I come from; Don't ask me where I'm going /walk quickly through the streets / walk quickly into the vast sea of people // yesterday human beings' lofty sentiments continue to the age of earth and the extent of heaven, today the journey is high as mountains and long as rivers--one's nobility lasts forever / the rainy season in the city wet my fantasy / the rainy season in the city water my hope // wandering, this working young man / wandering, this working young man // no matter where the wandering footsteps stop, I will sing while walking

After being composed, this poem became a popular song in the 1990s through the communication of media and the interpretation of singers, and was widely sung among rural migrants. On the surface, the lyrics of this song are still positive. And it is not necessary to use too much explanation on the helplessness, sadness and wandering contained in the song. "Singing While Walking" is just an exaggeration to show the living situation of rural migrants. Too many people in a country are helpless, sad and wandering. This reality and the literary works reflecting this fact will become a part of the ethnography. If they are forgotten collectively, it may be a deeper "national public shame".

The narration under the influence of the negative function of approach-avoidance conflict in the literary works on the theme of rural migrants refers to the writing expressing meaning, things and heart, which reflects the helplessness, hesitation and silent sadness ignored by the mainstream society in rural migrants' life. For the rural migrants in the works, there are many factors that make them impossible to get a foothold in the city. For a non-immigrant country, it is impossible to accept immigrants as citizens, and rural migrants are almost always rural migrants. However, Chinese

rural migrants enjoy the treatment in their own land, which is the top-level pity of national policies and regulations in any case. Literature should provide spiritual opinions and make the bottom voice for the "local citizenization" and "social reintegration" of rural migrants.

From the above citations, it is not difficult to see that the writing under the influence of the negative function of approach-avoidance conflict include many thoughts about the fate of rural migrants. Also, the life pictures in the works and the social reality reflected in it have constructed a critical reflection.

3. WRITINGS ON THE POSITIVE FUNCTION OF APPROACH-AVOIDANCE CONFLICT

The positive function of approach-avoidance conflict is its constructive function. At the same time, the conflict is no longer the conflict in the traditional sense, and the content has been replaced. Under certain conditions, conflict has the positive functions of ensuring social continuity, reducing social opposition, preventing the rigidity of social system, enhancing the adaptability of social organizations and promoting social integration.

In the view of many rural migrants, compared with the contradictions and conflicts encountered in the city, the urban culture that nurtures them is more precious. Therefore, this kind of writings contains such social and aesthetic contents. When facing the approach-avoidance conflict, the protagonist of the story approached conflicts and didn't avoid them. Through his efforts, he obtained a turn for the fate, sought profits and avoids harm, objectively reduced the opposition with the society, prevented the rigidity of the mental state, avoided spiritual degradation, and enhanced his adaptability to the city where rural migrants were located. He also promoted the integration with the working society, and improved the establishment of a more reasonable and humane social order, which reflected the constructive role of approach-avoidance conflict. The writer's writings mostly include the positive impact of approach-avoidance conflict on rural migrants. Although there are few writings on positive function of approach-avoidance conflict, its aesthetic form, text organization and discourse structure have benchmarking significance and are also needed by the times.

The positive functional writing of approach-avoidance conflict can also be regarded as a positive writing that leads people upward. The importance of positive writing was also recognized by Xia Zhiqing: "if rural literature focuses on the ugly side of poor society, it is not necessary to be written down. Only in the seemingly desperate life, can we find hope and love, which is the real 'human literature'." [4] The same is true of literature on the theme of rural migrants. In addition to writing about the ugliness and poverty of working society, it is necessary to give people hope, and write more new things in the sun. At the same time, these things must have a positive force that affects people's hearts. For example, the rebirth of rural migrants in the approach-avoidance conflict can convince readers in spirit. In other words, the writing on approach-avoidance conflict is not limited to the narrative of bottom suffering, but also reflects the spirit of the times of progress and struggle, turning conflict into a driving force, seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages, and surpassing the story level and pointing to the spiritual height.

If most of the writings under the influence of the negative function of approach-avoidance conflict are pale reality and poetry of statement, the writing under the influence of the positive function of approach-avoidance conflict is a poetic dream full of upward spirit, an implication poem, and a more tasteful structure full of longing for spiritual reconstruction.

Anzi achieved the most in the positive writing, and expressed the objective social status and subjective life experience of rural migrants incisively and vividly. From the perspective of "looking at the world with a smile", she adopts a relatively identity towards the city. For example, "youth post" shows the opportunities provided by the modern new town to migrant girls and the joy of realizing self-worth in the process of "seeking urban dream". Also, it asks "everyone to have the opportunity to be the sun" [5]. Rural migrant writers cut into approach-avoidance conflict by means of their own subject construction and the subject construction of the characters in their works, carry out creative writing, convey exciting themes such as "I want to hold the throat of bad luck, and it can't make me yield" and "the city also belongs to us", add highlights to the bottom narration and have a positive force that affects people's hearts, which would reflect the sublimation of rural migrants' personalities.

For example, Anzi wrote in "Rural migrants in Shenzhen" [6]:

The story and plot are boundless blue / from today on, to be a Shenzhen person, write a letter to the future / the sun will rise for you every day

In her poem, Anzi called on rural migrants to "be a Shenzhen man". Although there is no registered residence in Shenzhen, they are not Shenzhen people in the legal sense. However, in order to alleviate the dissatisfaction of the rural migrants on the household registration system, the poet has assumed the responsibility of general discourse and enlightenment, and has played a role in reconciling the approach-avoidance conflict. She hopes that human beings should not overdo the legal status. Since working in Shenzhen, it is also good to be a Shenzhen person without identity. The sun does not rise for power, but also for vulnerable workers. With the sun in mind, the story and plot of life will be as clear as the blue sky, not just dark clouds and rainstorms. This is clearly a boost for rural migrants, hoping that human beings can prevent spiritual rigidity, avoid spiritual degradation, promote social integration, reduce opposing emotions and play a constructive role.

In addition to poetry, Anzi's most achievements are in documentary novels and reportage. Her documentary reportage works, such as "youth post — a portrait of migrant girls in Shenzhen" and "seeking urban dream", basically tell the stories of rural migrants. Their ups and downs of life, indomitable struggle and struggle against fate are faithfully recorded in Anzi's works. The struggle and resistance spirit of rural migrants has been amplified and carried forward in Anzi's works. Anzi's works became a best seller in the 1990s and a red treasure book for rural migrants. Coupled with the popularity of her song "singing while walking", the "Anzi phenomenon" has attracted national attention.

As for optimistic and resolute image of Qi Le, a migrant girl in Lin Jian's "other people's city" [7] and happy working spirit of "going to the next stop" in Zhang Weiming's "the next stop" [8] all help rural migrants overcome the approach-avoidance conflict, form a new subject and correct the stereotype of rural migrants in the social context, subvert the habit of "either despising or pitying rural migrants" in the mainstream discourse, provide new aesthetic materials, carry more positive functions of approach-avoidance conflict, and have greater aesthetic appeal.

In working literature, the positive function of approach-avoidance conflict reflects the dream of these bottom writers rather than the actual life of rural migrant writers. As Sigmund Freud said, he shaped his fantasies into a new reality, and people recognized that these fantasies were reasonable and had the value of reflecting real life. Rural migrant writers try to influence readers with their works, so that readers with rural migrants as the main group can accept the new outlook on life and world.

4. CONCLUSION

Different people have different opinions on the writing of approach-avoidance conflict in Chinese literature on the theme of rural migrants, which may not need a big and inappropriate positive conclusion. Among them, the writing on the negative function of approach-avoidance conflict is also on the rational appeal, not a fierce text with anti-system views. Hundreds of millions of rural migrants have devoted their youth, wisdom and sweat to the prosperity of the city, but they can't get a foothold in the city because of institutional factors. They have to go home or continue to wander elsewhere, which is not only the inevitable price of modernization, but also the trap of modernization. Rural migrants cannot avoid the desire of actual world and working, but also do not want to submit to it. Their hearts are full of contradiction and division. This negative function of approach-avoidance conflict brings about spiritual struggle, adding spiritual tingling to this writing.

Most beautiful things have practical utilitarian purposes. The writings on positive function of approach-avoidance conflict have the value of fable admonition, which persuades readers to make a difference. At the same time, it is also a consolation medicine, that is, it tells rural migrants that the suffering in reality is not destiny. As long as they keep working hard, approach profits and avoid harm, and redouble their efforts, life is still hopeful to be improved.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Yiwen Zhang.

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