

OTHERNESS FROM A CHINESE PERSPECTIVE AND MO YAN'S HALLUCINATORY REALISM

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Abstract:

The purpose of discussing concepts such as “otherness” can be viewed as a need to deconstruct some of the incumbent elements of our own culture, surpass the limits of our own understanding, and bridge gaps, otherwise insurmountable. However, besides discovering biased elements and great metanarratives that can lead to skewed or wrongly framed discourse on the “other” from within our own culture, there is also value in taking the opposite stance. When placing the discussion on the Far Eastern cultural space, we are already beyond “orientalism”, and have a different and new understanding of, or just repudiating ideas related to, different forms of exoticism. The following presentation aims at simply bringing forward into discussion the “view on otherness of the other”. “Occidentalism” refers to the way established Eastern cultures may have their own narrative of understanding “the other”. The emphasis is laid on Chinese history and literature, from the Opium Wars, going through the Maoist era, until the present day. As a case study, we shall take a glimpse at the Chinese critical perception of Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan, which tends to radicalise itself towards two conflicting ways of understanding his work, as either a product of the great Chinese tradition, with little to nonforeign apport, or, the other way around, as an imitator of the West. The more balanced views can be overwhelmed by these two radical opposing teams, this having to do with deeper issues in the Chinese theoretical space, such as Westernization and authenticity within Chinese contemporary Literature, Chineseness and foreign import, among others.

Keywords: *Otherness; Other; Occidentalism; Mo Yan; Chinese literature.*