

When History Becomes A Standing Joke: Mo Yan's Reflection on China's Historical Changes Throughout the 20th Century

ZHANG Yong, YANG Fang
Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China

Since the end of the 20th century, Mo Yan has made an attempt to reflect on China's historical changes throughout the 20th century as a whole. Centered on such several novels as *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Frog*, this paper explores the author's thinking of the interruption and repetition phenomena in China's 20th century history. Differing from viewing the history in a modern linear progressive perspective, Mo Yan regards the interruption of history as a sign of human degradation, which derives from the loss of folk history subjectivity. When history is treated rudely, its repetition will occur, and the one who treats history as laughingstocks will be written into history as part of a "farce".

Keywords: Mo Yan, the 20th century, interruption of history, repetition of history

Introduction

In *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (2006, Shengsi pilao, 生死疲劳), Mo Yan exclaims from the mouth of a character, "many holy things in the past seem to be nothing today" (Mo Yan, 2008, p. 455). Coincidentally, similar expressions appear in *Frog* (2009, Wa, 蛙) again as the narrator's direct statement, "during the past decades, this country has changed dramatically. Many things that you could not dream in the past come to true, and many sacred things become a standing joke" (Mo Yan, 2009, p. 242). These repeated expressions represent Mo Yan's basic judgment on China's modern historical changes. What *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Frog* have in common is that the author attempts to grasp the changes of modern social life as well as the ups and downs of the characters' fate throughout a long time sequence. In other words, social and historical changes themselves are the topics the novels directly express. In fact, as early as in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1995, Fengru feitun, 丰乳肥臀) when the 20th century is ending, Mo Yan had the impulse to take the century as a whole. The rapidness and dramaticism of China's historical changes provide best materials for the author but also pose an unavoidable question to him—how to understand and evaluate these changes? By focusing on the above-mentioned several novels, this paper tries to analyze Mo Yan's whole consideration about China's historical changes throughout the 20th century.

ZHANG Yong, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University; Visiting scholar at Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University.

YANG Fang, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Foreign Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong University.

The Interruption of History

The change from “holy” to “laughingstock” is a reflection of the radical negativity of China’s modern history. To be specific, it includes two periods with upheaval: socialistic practice after the founding of PRC negated previous history, and market economy reform since the 1990s has subverted 30 years’ practical targets after the founding of PRC. The two radical changes were both related to socialistic practice period after the founding of PRC. Thus if this period was excluded from history as “Age of Extremes” (by the title of Eric Hobsbawm’s book), China’s 20th century history might not have been so dramatical. Virtually, the thoughts of “Bringing Order out of Chaos” (boluan fanzheng, 拨乱反正) in the “new period” (xinshiqi, 新时期) has cleared up the erroneous tendency in previous history and the literature trend represented by “Scar Literature” (shanghen wenxue, 伤痕文学), “Introspection Literature” (fanshi wenxue, 反思文学) in early new period has also played the role of fuelling. However, basing on the correctness of the present, this ideological trend’s critique of the erroneous tendency in the past just tends to confirm the correctness of the present, clearly distinguishing the present from the past by way of interruption. For that matter, this way of observing and narrating history actually inherits from its critical object, both based on transcendence of previous history, which is evident in the terms such as “leap”, “revolution” appeared in “the Great Leap Forward” (dayuejin, 大跃进), “the Great Cultural Revolution” (wenhua dageming, 文化大革命). Its basic defect lies in lack of self-reflection but instead establishes itself as some absolute standard. With the elapse of time, it has to appropriate itself repeatedly to ensure the logic of progressive history development.

After the short honeymoon with the ideological trend of “Bringing Order out of Chaos”, the literature in the New Period broke off with the hidden historical view behind it. “Root-seeking Literature” (xungen wenxue, 寻根文学), somewhat later than “Scar Literature” and “Introspection Literature”, inspired by the successful experience of Latin American literature (Chen Sihe, 1999, p. 279), has certainty in its appearance: it is not only literature’s direct consideration of and response to modern society, but also indicates the shift of historical view in literature, meaning that literature is seeking some other perspectives to examine modern social life. No matter the “Root-seeking” points to which “tradition”, virtue or evil root, modern society and life is by no means self-evident, but becomes the object needed to be examined. No matter what historical views the “Root-seeking” has formed, interrupted, continued or degraded, they are different from the linear progressive one. Mo Yan’s *Red Sorghum* (1986) sometimes is regarded as “master work of new historicism fiction” (Chen Sihe, 1999, p. 310). But on a more general level, it can be categorized into the “root-seeking” literary trend, especially when taking the *Red Sorghum Clan* (1987) as a whole. Rather than broadly speaking that Mo Yan has found a folk world full of vitality, we can say he constructed a folk tradition belonging to a specific history period, which is put before Liberation, not far than the period of Boxer Movement, within the scope of the 20th century, a not too far-away past.

As a whole, Mo Yan’s narrative of historical interruption in the 20th century’s China, is in accordance with the mainstream historical narrative in dividing historical periods. However, greatly different from the latter’s leaping historical narrative mode, Mo Yan views the interruption of history as a sign of human degradation. As early as in *Red Sorghum Clan*, Mo Yan realized the paradox of human “progress”: “Degradation of the human race is connected with increasingly rich and comfortable living conditions. But affluent and comfortable living

conditions is the target for humans to strive for and also to reach, which results in a shocking deep contradiction inevitably. Humans are abolishing their own some good qualities with efforts” (Mo Yan, 2005, p. 336). This “degradation” is represented by “character metaphoric system” characteristic of intergenerational attributes (Ji, 1992, pp. 238-240), and the degradation from the grandfather generation to the father generation corresponds with the gap between the main historical periods when they are active. At that time, Mo Yan still mainly observed historical changes from the perspective of somewhat abstract race and vitality, and his observation of the historic factor of race degradation was slightly simple, especially for he did not doubt that history is progressive in the aspect of material. With the 20th century coming to its end, history does not merely add a new material to itself, but also invalidates the way to explain history in a simple reverse relationship between “race”, vitality and material progress, and material progress itself has shown its historicity and politics, turning ambiguous in meaning. Therefore, since the end of the 20th century, Mo Yan has conceived the ambition of grasping the century as a whole, because he had to look for a new perspective to understand the 20th century.

The history of North-eastern Village of Gaomi (gaomi dongbeixiang, 高密东北乡) in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* mainly belongs to the 20th century. As the earliest explorers of this land, Sima Daya and Shangguan Dou created the history by leading the fight against German invaders in the period of Boxer Movement. The scene of these two characters fighting against German soldiers with “shit-urine” intersects with the scene that Sima Daya’s grandson Sima Ku led the special detachment fighting against Japanese soldiers, which implies the continuity of history. But historical interruption, from Sima Daya, Sima Ku to Sima Liang, from Shangguan Dou to Shangguan Fulu and Shangguan Shouxi, from the “mother” Shangguan Lushi to Shangguan Jinlong, still vaguely has the trace of human degradation in *Red Sorghum Clan*. However, Mo Yan began to change his focus, from on degradation to the pursuit of the reason behind degradation. The degradation was partly due to the loss of villagers’ autonomy. Firstly Sima Daya died in battle; afterwards Yuan Shikai’s soldiers caught Shangguan Dou, torturing him in public by forcing him to walk on burning iron plate barefooted, and then chopped off his head and sent it to Jinan for exhibition. Walking on the burning iron plate, Shangguan Dou “cried, screamed, but never begged” (Mo Yan, 2012, p. 99). His response is both a part of history, and also a struggle for history meaning. As Michel Foucault says, “Public punishment is the ceremony of immediate recording” (1995, p. 110). The rulers tried to shape Shangguan Dou and his resistance as chaos of mob through cruel punishment and exhibition, and show it to viewers for warning. But Shangguan Dou took the torture as the final struggle, and hoped to sow the seeds for struggle by his own model.

This is a tragedy doomed to fail and the interruption of folk history began. In Mo Yan’s eyes, real history is always full of complexity and ambiguity, totally different from simplified and distorted history written by winners. Mo Yan not only tries to restore historical truth, but also includes simplifying and distortion of history into history. In other words, history includes both real events and narratives of specific events, which cannot be separated completely. For the later generation, history is always presented through narrative and in this sense, historical narrative in reverse forms the key content in history. In *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, Sima Ku, once leading anti-Japanese special detachment and home-going corps, became a negative example of Class Education Exhibition (jieji jiaoyu zhanlan, 阶级教育展览) after liberation. By ways of picture illustration and the old peasants advising others by using their own experiences, the exhibition shapes Sima Ku as a cannibalistic devil in North-Eastern Village of Gaomi, not only concealing his resistance against the Japanese invaders, but also

exaggerating, fabricating the facts of his reaction. In this historical narrative with class struggle as its main thread, Sima Ku's evil was traced back to his father generation, and his family was taken as the chief culprit of the past, an abyss of complete darkness in North-Eastern Village of Gaomi.

In fact, not just the rulers distort history, and folk history also is full of fiction and myth. Sima Ku talked to the villagers about his achievements of fighting against the Japanese in anti-Japanese war, "one more time he talked, he added some vivid details, which made the stories more abundant and more interesting, and finally the stories sounded like *The Investiture of the Gods*". For the gap never to be bridged between historical narrative and history, Mo Yan has clear understanding. In *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, the author delicately created a character named "Mo Yan". In the novel, "Mo Yan"'s narrative is not merely for filling the blank in the author's narrative, but more to reveal the essence of historical narrative, contributing to the novel's feature of meta-narrative and meta-history. Therefore, Mo Yan subverts the mainstream historical narrative from the perspective of folk history, and also views history as a field and a consequence of a game of the two competing. History is no longer a transparent object associated with events, but a field with violence linked with certain historical narrators and power.

The interruption of history thus has double meaning: for one thing, it's the interruption of historical practice; for another, it's change of historical narrative. The two are mutually confirming and complementing, but not appropriate to be simply divided into practice and theory, with the latter as a practice—practice of discourses. Many movements in China's modern history is accompanied by powerful discourse practice, and for Anti-Right Movement (fanyouyundong, 反右运动) and Great Cultural Revolution, discourse practice even forms the main content of practice, forming great control of ideology. From *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* it can be seen, in the stage of collectivization, in practice there may also exist such individual farming households as Lan Lian, but without different voices in discourse level. Lan Lian's sticking to the belief of farming by himself derives from his simple wish—"wants to be quiet, to do something by his own, and not to be controlled by others", at the same time also from Mao Zedong's order of "peasants are voluntary to join the rural cooperatives, and have rights to quit" (rushe ziyuan, tuishe ziyou, 入社自愿, 退社自由). Lan Lian is an ideal character in the novel, but the author didn't deliberately canonize him. In this character we can see part of Mo Yan's grandfather. Mo Yan's grandfather is a conservative peasant like Lan Lian, unwilling to join the rural cooperatives, once predicting neither "People's Commune" (renmin gongshe, 人民公社) nor the Sino-Soviet friendship can last long, and "these two predictions later were verified by reality" (Mo Yan, 2011, p. 96). In Mo Yan's opinion, folk wisdom originates from the people's personal experiences as practice subjects, and with the loss of folk society's autonomy and subjectivity, it is hard for real thoughts to appear, and history will inevitably go astray.

The Lan Lian's family in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* exist as anomalies and minorities in history, just as the blue nevus in the males' face of the family symbolizes the inharmonious factors in "red age". On the contrary, Ximen Jinlong in the novel is incarnation of the trend of thought in different times. In between is the character Hong Taiyue, a character really looking forward to socialism but falling behind in the new era. Mo Yan tries to achieve the effect of "polyphony" with different types of characters (Mo Yan, 2006, p. 28). Nevertheless, history can never achieve "polyphony" in the real sense. In the period of reform and opening, Ximen Jinlong made a deal of money and power with Pang Kangmei, the County Party Secretary. In Hong Taiyue's words, "Capitalism is restoring in North-Eastern Village of Gaomi, turning the Village from red into black". After failing

many times to petition, Hong Taiyue finally chose to die together with Ximen Jinlong, but history will not stop or change its course because of their death.

The restoration of capitalism makes the previous socialistic practice become laughingstock, because the latter is characteristic of thoroughly abolishing capitalism, even fighting against capitalism by regarding it as an imaginary enemy. Paradoxically, when there was no capitalism, society took it as the main enemy; while when real capitalism appears, society loses its resistance to it. Because capital and capitalism is created as new myth, in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, when the past “landlord, rich peasant, Baozhang, traitor, counterrevolutionary” got together in a restaurant in the period of reform and opening, dreaming of getting rich in the future, this new myth has loomed. When the once security officer, now a “ten-thousand householder” (wanyuanhu, 万元户) Yang Qi regretted for his wrong deed of beating others before after getting drunk, he completed the ritual of saying farewell to history rather than redemption. The crime in the past was easily put away as the era’s fault, as the “bad people” beaten by Yang Qi thought. Yang Qi just asked those he has beaten to beat him, but firmly refused the compensatory means of donating money to repair the temple, which proved his confession was fictitious and performative. It was really ironic for him to compare his redemption to the apology of Premier of West Germany for his nation’s fault to the Jew victims.

“Aunt” in *Frog* has shown real consciousness for historical redemption. As a family planning worker once, she felt her hands full with the blood of the babies forced to be induced abortion by her. In “Aunt”’s redemption consciousness there appears complaint about time error occasionally. However, this never shakes her absolute loyalty to the party and country, even if she had suffered a lot in the Great Cultural Revolution. As for this, “Aunt” is the same type of person as Hong Taiyue in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, with the difference lying in that “Aunt” felt redemption or even terrified for her past while Hong Taiyue’s consciousness still stayed in the past era. Thus, “Aunt” will surely suffer endless inner torture, and there exists uncontrollable contradiction in her loyalty to the party and country and what she had done, just like the contradiction in the two identities of family plan worker and midwife doctor.

Mo Yan is deep because he didn’t draw a clear distinction between “Aunt” and the present era just due to her sincere redemption consciousness. On the contrary, the author found the historical redemption consciousness can also become the conspirator of the present times. In the latter part of *Frog* there was a conspiracy planning incest: with the arrangement of surrogacy center, my sperm was put into the womb of Chen Mei, my former classmate Chen Bi’s daughter. After the birth of the baby, it was immediately taken away from Chen Mei. “Aunt” chose to keep silent as an insider, and took the work of delivering the baby, becoming a part in the conspiracy. Mo Yan thus put forward a thought-provoking difficult proposition: without real reflection on history and putting it into practice, the interruption of history will be just a representation, and the suffering of history will come back, and even never leaves us.

The Repetition of History

Karl Marx wrote in the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce” (1995, p. 594). Here involves the repetition of history and its meaning. Kojin Karatani also found the phenomenon of repetition in his study of Japan’s modern history. He

even tried to define the cycle of historical repetition as 60 years at the beginning, but later in Preface to Chinese Edition of *History and Repetition*, he felt 120 years may be a more exact period. Actually, if what he says is true that “it is the structure of history, not the historical event that repeats” (2011, p. 2), and this structure is related to other structures such as the periodic circle of “crises—depression—prosperity” in capitalist economy, what is important is not whether there is specific periods, but the fact the repetition of history is the common phenomenon throughout the world.

Throughout the 20th century history in China, we can also see similar phenomena of repetition, but its period can never be the 60 or 120 years as Kojin Karatani said, but surely shorter than this. In *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, when “All Round Contract Responsibility System” was put into practice at village, Hong Taiyue who swore to abolish “the only individual farming household” in the Cooperative Period, had a meaningful conversation with Lan Lian. In Hong Taiyue’s eyes, the historical change trend was proved to be like what Lan Lian said, that is “All Round Contract Responsibility System” (dabaogan zerenzhi, 大包干责任制) is in fact individual farming (dangan, 单干). Hong’s description may not be a norm, but modern China has experienced significant transformations in the past 30 years. When great changes happen repeatedly, the clue of historical repetition is implied, thus Hong Taiyue compared the 1980s with the age before liberation. Wang Hui has found “a spectacular view” when taking a whole view on China’s 20th century, that the 1990s looks more closely related to the long 19th century, but more distant from the 20th century (2008, p. 2). In other words, the 1990s looks like a return to the 19th century, rather than the beginning of a new century.

The intuitive experience we obtain from history and society is always separating from the modern concept of history we have learned. Hannah Arendt has pointed out, the modern concept of history “arose in the same sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which ushered in the gigantic development of the natural sciences”, and was deeply imprinted by the natural sciences such as biology and geology. With the key words of “development” and “progress”, the modern historiography was built on a basic assumption that “the process in its very secularity tells a story of its own and that strictly speaking, repetitions cannot occur” (1961, pp. 53-67). Specifically speaking, the process of history is always described as a linear progress and development, shown in narrative pattern as “the secular linear divisions of history into ancient times—middle ages—modern times” which play a dominant role even till now. In terms of this, rather than saying “Repetition can never appear”, we can say “Repetition” is sheltered by modern history concept and its narrative pattern.

The reason behind history repetition instead of developing in a linear and progressive pattern as people expect, is related to that history is often rudely treated. When history becomes a farce, its result will be history repetition, and whoever quipped was recorded in history as part of it. Although history is usually an awkward predictor, not telling us the scene of the future world, but according to E. H. Karl, the British historian, “it is a presupposition that man is capable of profiting (not that he necessarily profits) by the experience of his predecessors”. However, the precondition for it is not confining it to “a one-way process”, “to learn about the present in the light of the past means also to learn about the past in the light of the present” (1961, pp. 111, 62). Otherwise, history is simply imprinting of the present on the past, caught in a circling construction of self-confirmation. *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Frog* all include plots how history became the objects of conspicuous exhibition and consumption. “Class Education Exhibition” in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was mentioned above, the tourism culture village with Great Cultural Revolution as its

theme in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is similar to it, as well as the village in People's Commune period preserved as a scenic spot in *Frog*. Although they present different objects, they all take history into object of cultural consumption.

What is called "cultural consumption", in Jean Baudrillard's eyes, "may thus be defined as the time and place of the caricatural resurrection, the parodic evocation of what already no longer exists—of what is not so much 'consumed' as 'consumated' (completed, past and gone)". Cultural consumption separates "cultural substance" from "autonomous practice", turning culture into empty signifier, and "it exalts signs on the basis of a denial of things and the real". It at the same time also plays a productive function, just as Jean Baudrillard sees through mass communications, how "the pathetic hypocrisy of the minor news item heightens with all signs of catastrophe (death, murders, rapes, revolution) the tranquility of daily life" (1998, p. 99). Suffering can only exist after being symbolized, but the root of causing it evaded, and the ghost of history will definitely be haunting the real world. Thus in *Frog*, villages in the period of Cultural Revolution and the Goddess temple razed to the ground during that period but rebuilt in the 1990s can coexist in parallel. In fact, the latter is the real symbol of present culture, and what people bow in worship is individual life and selfishness, rather than life itself. After disenchanting the previous socialistic practice as a whole, the belief in "public" (gong, 公) in society collapsed accordingly, resulting in the great vacuum in social and personal spirit field. This is why the Goddess Temple appears inevitably, as well the rebuilt church in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, but they can't fill the emptiness of social and personal spirit. When Mo Yan is writing about the church, he ingeniously mingles market noise in the street with it, indicating the church cannot be silent land and refuge in the society. Refuge may coincide with the criminal hiding in the church in its literal sense, but even then he did not forget to show off his wealth.

The infinite expansion of "selfishness" (si, 私) looks like a crazy revenge after being depressed, as if it comes out without experiencing any transition, swiftly pervading in the whole society. The only reasonable explanation is that it actually always exists, but merely in different forms. Just like Ximen Jinlong in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, on the surface, he took great efforts to make progress in collectivization and cultural revolution period, as if incompatible with the image of hero of the age after the reform and opening-up policy; actually, no matter which time it is, he never stops pursuing his personal reputation and status, unscrupulously and at whatever cost. By this character as the embodiment of the time spirit, Mo Yan implies some continuity behind the time's significant transformations. The first four parts in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* are named separately as "Donkey Miseries", "The Strength of An Ox", "Pig Frolics" and "Dog Spirit", from the perspective of animals into which landlord Ximen Nao reincarnated time and again, reflecting on China's historic changes in the latter half of the 20th century. This structure arrangement itself contains the meaning of repetition, just as Mo Yan says, "structure never is a pure form, sometimes it is content", or it can even be said "structure is politics" (2006, p. 28). The four periods share one common spirit status, that is, madness of the times, although the objectives are different and even completely contradictory to each other, they all form powerful trends, making real valuable choice, thinking and practice have no place of refuge. If it is another repetition from Lan Lian, Lan Jiefang to Lan Kaifang, representing different choices in crazy eras, then its fate will inevitably be defeated. Similarly, Shangguan Yunv, the blind girl with extreme beauty in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, is the repetition of the blind girl flowing with river inside an urn in historic exploring period in North-eastern Village of Gaomi, but could not bear the suffering in reality, finally going away with the river.

Conclusion

History is showing its odd character, seemingly always making ahead by choosing evilness and orienting extreme. Eric Hobsbawm also saw these extremes in “the short twentieth from 1914 to 1991”. The rivalry and shift between socialism and capitalism form the main thread of the century with the dislocation of the socialism camp as the end. Hobsbawm points out insightfully, without the October Revolution, “the Western world today would probably consist (outside the USA) of a set of variations on authoritarian and fascist themes rather than a set of variations on liberal parliamentary ones”. The appearance of socialism and revolution, “was to save its antagonist, both in war and in peace—that is to say, by providing it with the incentive, fear, to reform itself after the Second World War, and by establishing the popularity of economic planning, furnishing it with some of the procedures for its reform” (Hobsbawm, 1995, pp. 7-8). What will capitalism be like without its antagonist? Will it be like what Francis Fukuyama asserts, “liberal democracy” will become “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and “final form of human government” (1992, p. xi), “end of history” will thus appear? Decades of years have passed since Fukuyama’s assertion, but “the end of wars and bloody revolutions” he expected never came true, and sufferings in the world are far from ending. From this perspective, we can say socialism and revolution is far from completing their missions.

In the end of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, the century baby Lan Qiansui was born. This big-headed baby is congenitally deficient, with a lean frame and a quite big head, has to depend on his grandmother’s hair to keep alive. As his body reveals, he is more an enormous shadow of history than a ray of hope for the new century. In this freak who born from historical mistakes, there is blood of the Lan family with enthusiasm and personality, and also sin of incest caused by errors of his grandparents (the affairs between Ximen Jinlong and Pang Kangmei). All in all, his survival or death, his prosperity and shame are all closely related to history. Will he be held back by the severe and lingering illness of history, or grow up vigorously with the nutrition of good tradition? Mo Yan gave us no answer, but only enlightened us: future is merging with the past into a whole, what the future will be like depends on how we treat history to some extent.

Nietzsche discussed three species of history in *On The Uses and disadvantages of History for life*, that is, “a monumental, an antiquarian and a critical species of history”. He pointed out, “only he who is oppressed by a present need and who wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history, that is to say a history that judges and condemns” (1997, pp. 67, 72). Like Nietzsche, Raymond Aron also criticized the intellectuals’ “fanaticism” of history in his times, and he thinks that different from “the idolatry of history”, real historical awareness requires us “respect for the facts, innumerable and incoherent, and the multiplicity of meanings which they possess or that one can ascribe to them according to whether one relates them to individual actors or crystallised traditions or the consequences they have developed” (1962, p. 193). Different from Nietzsche and Raymond Aron, Mo Yan is confronted with the circumstances that history has become a farce. Mo Yan’s return to China’s 20th century history by his novels is not intended to turn history as “farce” into history as “idolatry”. Both of the two ways of treating history are rude, and Mo Yan tries to reveal the ambiguity of history by creating his “the polyphonic novel” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 7). When the author starts from reality, reflects on history critically as Nietzsche said, he has gained real historical awareness and grasped the reality of the present China.

References

- Arendt, H. (1961). *Between past and future*. New York: The Viking Press.
- Aron, R. (1962). *The opium of the intellectuals*. New York: The Norton Library.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society: Myths and structures*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Carr, E. H. (1961). *What is history?* Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, Ltd.
- CHEN, S. H. (1999). *中国当代文学史教程* (A course in history of Contemporary Chinese Literature). Shanghai: 复旦大学出版社.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. New York: The Free Press.
- Hobsbawn, E. (1995). *Age of extremes: The short twentieth century 1914-1991*. London: Abacus.
- JI, H. Z. (1992). 神话世界的人类学空间——释莫言小说的语义层次 (The anthropology space of a myth world: On semantic levels of Mo Yan's novels). In J. F. LI & J. YANG (Eds.), *寻找的时代——新潮批评选萃* (Time of seeking: selections of criticisms of new tide). Beijing: 北京师范大学出版社.
- Kojin, K. (2011). Preface to Chinese edition. *历史与反复* (History and repetition). Beijing: 中央编译出版社.
- Marx, K. (1995). The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In R. Tucker (Ed.), *The Marx-Engels reader* (second edition). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- MO, Y. (2005). *红高粱家族* (Red Sorghum Clan). Shanghai: 上海文艺出版社.
- MO, Y. (2006). 捍卫长篇小说的尊严 (Defending the dignity of full-length novels). *当代作家评论*, 1, 25-28.
- MO, Y. (2008). *生死疲劳* (Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out). Shanghai: 上海文艺出版社.
- MO, Y. (2009). *蛙* (Frog). Shanghai: 上海文艺出版社.
- MO, Y. (2011). 从照相说起 (Starting from taking pictures). *我的高密* (My Gaomi). Beijing: 中国青年出版社.
- MO, Y. (2012). *丰乳肥臀* (Big Breasts and Wide Hips). Shanghai: 上海文艺出版社.
- Nietzsche, F. (1997). On the uses and disadvantages of history for life. *Untimely meditations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WANG, H. (2008). *去政治化的政治: 短20世纪的终结与90年代* (The politics of depoliticization: The end of short 20th century and the 1990s). Beijing: 三联书店.