

# Constructing Liaoning Literature in the New Era: Comment on Professor Lin Yan's "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province"

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**Abstract:** Professor Lin Yan's book "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" brings together his thoughts on literary creation, literary concepts and the future of literature with over forty contemporary writers from Liaoning. In this book, the author takes a unique approach to literary criticism in the form of dialogue, combining both breadth and depth. The first part of this article discusses how the "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" combines critical discourse with creative practice. The second part discusses the theory and connotation of the "New Northeast Writers Group" proposed in the "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province". The third part discusses the suggestions made in the "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" on the creative posture of Liaoning writers under the new situation. The fourth part discusses the innovative role played by "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" in the construction of Liaoning literature in the new era, and elaborates on the spiritual orientation and artistic character of contemporary critics and writers as reflected in it.

**Keywords:** Liaoning literature; Intervention; Constructivity; Territoriality; Spiritual orientation; "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province"

## 1. Introduction

Professor Lin Yan's book, "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province", assembles transcripts of interviews he has conducted with Liaoning writers over a decade. This interview format breaks the rigid pattern of literary studies, liberating them from the difficult and obscure language of academia and painting a panorama of contemporary Liaoning literature in an approachable but uncompromising manner. The typicality of the selection of interviewees, the systematicity of the questions set, and the profundity of the dialogue themes reveal Professor Lin Yan's profound scholarship and abject love as a critic. His compendium and interviews with Liaoning writers cover many aspects of contemporary Liaoning literature, including the writers' creations, the context of the times and the cultural heritage. He has also combined the regional and literary aspects of writers' creations and innovatively proposed the concept of "New Northeast Writers Group", which offers new paths and ideas for the development of Liaoning literature, and is of great literary-historical significance. This article uses the dialogue between Lin Yan and Liaoning writers as a blueprint for his construction of Liaoning literature as a lens through which to explore the profound connotations of "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province"

## 2. The Strong Constructivity of "A Dialogue Between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" is a Key Feature of the Book

In "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province", Lin Yan actively brings out the critic's sense of subjectivity, allowing writers to sublimate their concepts of writing in dialogue. "Dialogue is an ancient form, whether in the form of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's The Ideal State or the ancient Chinese Analects, where profound ideas are expressed through the form of 'dialogue'. Particularly in the field of contemporary literature, dialogue with people in the literary scene

is also a mode of study of literature that is commonly used, and many of the dialogues have become important sources for literary studies. For example: Interviews from the 80s, Dialogues from the Literary Scene, Whispers of the Times: Dialogues on Contemporary Literature, New Dialogues on Mo Yan's Literature, Dialogues on Jia Pingwa's Literature, and Dialogues on Yu Jian and Xie Youshun. The previous Dialogues were all with famous writers, and the conversations were mostly summaries of creative experiences, without much criticism of the writers interviewed.

"A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" is not just a focus on major writers, but more of a way to explore and catalyze the potential of writers. In this book, the author breaks through various barriers and directly engages in dialogue with writers of different levels in Liaoning. This dialogue is different from previous academic studies that treat writers as isolated objects, but allows for the organic integration of critics and writers. "The construction-centered approach to criticism promotes a two-way collision and penetration between writers and critics through the "construction" approach, as well as the healthy development of critical theory." [1] In the interviews, Professor Lin Yan even directly uses the writer's writing style and characterization as entry points for detailed textual interpretation. This approach directly brings the critic and the writer closer together, achieving a direct collision of ideas between the critic and the writer, allowing the critic's views to be directly integrated into the writer's creative experience.

As Brandt said, "Criticism is a signpost on the journey of the human mind; it plants hedges and lights torches along the way; it cuts through the thorns and opens new paths." [2] When confronted with writers, Professor Lin Yan does not look down from above, but acts as a supporter. The form he chose for his dialogues balances the sensibility of literature with the rationality of criticism, in a free atmosphere that not only fully engages the emotions and interests of the writers, but also makes the discussion of the issues both strongly discursive. Argumentation is an activity of exchange and collision of ideas, through debating with others, participants' thoughts can be positively guided and inspired, logic is exercised, knowledge grows, and insights are sublimated." [3] The dialogues are often small in scope, focusing on various aspects of the writers' lives and creations to illustrate the production and development of literary works, reflecting the styles and concepts of different writers in a down-to-earth narrative. The dialogue with the writers also seeks to find each writer's unique place in the times, in an attempt to put Liaoning writers on the map of contemporary literary history, which is a great inspiration for the creation of contemporary Liaoning writers.

### **3. "A Dialogue Between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" Takes Literary Studies to a New Level of Depth and Breadth**

At present, there is a fragmentation and dissonance in the creation and criticism of Northeastern literature, and a lack of systematic and holistic research on Northeastern writers. "On the one hand, it is related to the fact that the proposal of the contemporary Northeast Writers' Group as a new concept has yet to be justified and recognized; on the other hand, it is also due to the fact that the development of theory and criticism has lagged relatively behind compared to the prosperity of creative works, resulting in the marginal and disembodied situation of Northeast regional literature in the contemporary Chinese literary field, and a truly great Northeast literature has yet to be fully constructed." [4] "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" by Professor Lin Yan is a book that brings Liaoning writers into the realm of 'Northeast literature' by forming a 'new Northeast writers' group' and highlights the interaction between writers and critics in Liaoning province. The book includes interviews with 46 well-known writers and critics from Liaoning. "To talk about literary criticism in the context of Liaoning is not to have a narrow regional complex, but because literary criticism does have certain regional characteristics." [5]

The selection of interviewees in "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" is highly representative and at the same time reflects the true level of Liaoning writers. In the afterword to his book, he sets out the criteria, namely the 'three realms and five elements'. By 'three realms', it should mean that the work produced by a writer has a certain influence in the 'writer', 'researcher' and 'reader'. The so-called "five elements" generally refer to the "main idea", "structure", "plot", "characters" and "language" of the work. As the saying goes, "if you can't jump out of the three realms, you must be in the five elements." [6] The writings of these writers include not only novelists, essayists and poets, but also literary critics. Although the subject matter varies, all of these dialogue writers have a strong 'northeastern sensibility' and their writing has been crucial in shaping the 'Great Northeast narrative'. This comprehensiveness of the interviewees allows the book to elaborate on the current state of development of Liaoning literature from the perspectives of different genres and fields,

and to present criticism in relation to the characteristics of writers in different genres. The multiple perspectives and different voices make the book full of contention, raising the depth and breadth of literary studies to a new level.

The book combines serious theory with laughter, and incorporates literary criticism into the scope and path of literary creation, so that writers and critics can form a synergy and promote the cluster development of Liaoning writers. At the same time, the interviewees selected for "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" are also generational in nature. Professor Lin Yan selects writers from different generations, such as the older generation of writers, such as Bai Tian Guang, Gao Haitao, Wang Bendao, Bai Xuesheng and Wang Chonglu, the middle-aged writers, such as Teng Zhengfu, Zhang Hongjie, Liu Qing, Li Hao, Yu Xiaowei and An Yong, and the young writers, such as Ban Yu. Through conversations with writers of different ages, Professor Lin Yan reflects not only the influence of social circumstances on writers in different eras, but also the transmission and transmutation of literary concepts and literary spirit in the minds of older, middle-aged and young writers. The innovation of Liaoning literature should not only rely on old writers and inherit excellent traditions, but also discover new people, so that the saplings of literature can grow into a forest and improve the level of Liaoning literature as a whole.

#### **4. "A Dialogue Between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" Points out the Way to Break the Barrier of Literary Creation in the New Era**

In "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province", Professor Lin Yan offers a position on the writing stance of writers in the new era. In this era of literary marginalization and the increasing formalization, kitsch and flattening of literary works, the question of how Liaoning writers can break the mold, how to face society and how to represent the current society of the Northeast becomes a central one. Professor Lin Yan offers an insightful explanation of how these elements are implemented into the text.

##### ***4.1. A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" Identifies the Necessary Elements for Contemporary Writers to Write***

The essential elements of contemporary writers' writing are an independent and free mind, a realistic and caring spirit and a simple and innocent attitude to writing. Writers should have independent values, the ability to think independently and an individual way of expression. "Independence of character and freedom of thought, which is the most fundamental moral code not only for poets but also for the entire academic community and enlightened society, is necessary for humanity to progress and for the arts to flourish. It represents conscience, courage, creative power and pioneering spirit, and specifically also includes contempt for the powerful, questioning authority and promoting the dissemination of one's own thinking and artistic insights." [7] Only when artistic freedom is upheld can creativity be dynamic. Moreover, writers must have a strong spirit of realistic concern. Writers should enter into life, pay attention to the hidden humanity of life, and make a "metaphysical" artistic transformation, profoundly expounding the philosophical connotations of realistic experience.

"Literary creation, in the end, is a visit to life, a docking of souls, and therefore requires deep excavation from the perspective of human nature, with profound spiritual and life experiences, rather than being satisfied with a retelling of general life situations." [8] In terms of creative attitude, the work written by the writer should reflect the writer's practical feelings and should allow the work to convey the writer's honesty to the reader. Literature is not entertainment, and works should not be the result of showmanship, but rather a presentation of the writer's soul. "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" suggests that "literature is only a re-creation of the spiritual world of the complex spirit, and without concern for suffering, for the fate of the individual, for compassion, for sympathy, literature cannot find a reason to exist." [9] The suffering makes literature, and literature should express the sweetness and sourness of the world with great compassion for the individual, creating works that reflect a strong sense of the people, speaking for the individual and writing for life.

##### ***4.2. A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" Digs Deeper into the Region and History of Liaoning***

The deep excavation of the region and history of Liaoning reflects Professor Lin Yan's profound

regional concern. How to write about culture without falling into clichés is a test of a writer's ability; writing about history is not a list of historical facts, nor can writing about the region be merely an exhibition of folklore and culture. Professor Lin Yan said, "I have always believed that literature as the quintessential symbol of culture is the cultural calling card of an era, a region, a nation and a country. Those literary works that make every effort to showcase regional cultural characteristics will undoubtedly become the most vividly charming and colorful of this cultural card." Liaoning has a long history and distinctive regional characteristics, which provide good resources for writers to create, and also provide a spiritual fulcrum for the creation of Liaoning writers.

"The more national, the more global", writers should sublimate their local experiences to make them typical and universal. "The literary spirit of Liaoning is, to a certain extent, determined by the qualities of the regional culture. At the same time, the main body carried by the literary works of Liaoning writers as a cultural carrier is the culture of Liaoning, such as customs and people, local customs, social landscape and living conditions, etc., which will also be taken in and reflected by the literary works, thus further exploring and enhancing the qualities of the regional culture. "[10] Professor Lin Yan continues to discover the highlights of Liaoning writers' northeastern narratives, exploring the possibility of combining writers' creations with the cultural heritage of Liaoning, drawing from the rich resources of the region and history, and combining the spirit of literature and humanistic concerns with the history of the region, in order to promote new developments in Liaoning literature.

### **5. The Significance of "A Dialogue Between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" for the Development of Liaoning's Literary World**

As Lin Yan says in his book, "I have always looked forward with enthusiasm to facing up to our academic reality, especially the reality of contemporary literary creation in our province, under the guidance of an academic spirit that is sincere, perceptive, comfortable, and distinctly critical, and to returning to life, to writers, and to works with a relatively rational attitude, adhering to the spirit of scholarship, persevering in exploration and research stance, establish a new genealogy of reality research, and make a practical effort for the literary creation and research in our province." [11]

The author has done a detailed survey of Liaoning writers and works in his own right, and this work is bound to contribute to the future development of the Liaoning literary scene. Although Liaoning has produced many writers and works since the new century, the situation of plateau without peak still exists. Moreover, it is not that the works of many Liaoning folk writers are not good, but that they have not been noticed by mainstream criticism. "In order to understand and identify deeply with China, one must necessarily understand and identify deeply with place." [12] This face-to-face dialogue is a comprehensive scan and distillation of the local writing of Liaoning writers, constituting a folk history of contemporary Liaoning literature, and providing valuable first-hand information for the study of Liaoning literature.

In "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province", Lin Yan examines the current state of development of Liaoning literature with his unique vision, offering many innovative insights in dialogue with contemporary Liaoning writers, and these insights about literary creation provide new ideas and models for Liaoning writers. Importantly, it explores how the revival of Liaoning literature is possible. The discovery and promotion of Liaoning writers by Professor Lin Yan has provided a broad platform for Liaoning writers to showcase their work, which has helped Liaoning literature to "go global", creating a flagship of Liaoning literature and polishing the Liaoning literary brand. It will certainly influence contemporary writers in Liaoning and even in China to create more excellent, humanistic and contemporary classics, thus promoting innovation and development in the field of contemporary literary studies.

### **6. Conclusions**

The shoulders carry the righteousness of the word, and the wonderful hands write the articles. Professor Lin Yan's "A Dialogue between the Contemporary Writers of Liaoning Province" reflects his profound academic qualities, deep concern for Liaoning literature and ardent expectations. As a scholar working in a university, his love for the land of Liaoning is sincere, his faith in literature is strong, and his concern for the times is strong. There is a poem by Ai Qing: "Why are my eyes full of tears? Because I love this land so much." His words were like that, and he was such a man.

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