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“Contemporary Australian Indigenous Women’s Life Writing”

Key words

Australia Indigenous women, life writing, feminist thoughts

Abstract

Indigenous women’s life writings are their self-presentations in which feminist theories and principles including their identities, communities, culture, education and security and others else are presented and advocated. Taking ‘life writing’ as a broader term rather than ‘auto/biography’, which incorporates auto/biography account, collaborative oral history projects, confessional and trauma narratives, testimonies, as well as collective and communal life narratives, this project mainly aims at studying how Indigenous women’s narratives write Australian Indigenous womanhood, motherhood and sisterhood from the most primitive and real stories. Indigenous women’s life writings are their self-presentations in which feminist theories and principles including their identities, communities, culture, education and security and others else are presented and advocated, therefore, by exploring the narratives, we can recognize the important role Indigenous women’s life writing plays in presenting aboriginal feminist thoughts.

Secondly, theorizing Indigenous women’s life writing from a wider, comparative perspective, linking the narratives to a larger framework of human rights, social injustice, the process of healing from the colonization trauma, and subsequent reconciliation can also guide the mainstream readers to interpret Indigenous women life stories through the lens of aboriginal people. Furthermore, Indigenous people’s life stories are mementos of both individual fates and of the global process of Indigenous population, thus they are the raw historical and cultural material for Indigenous social development with its educational function to the younger generation of Indigenous people as well as the public.

Thirdly, telling history is a common practice in pre-contact Indigenous storytelling, it is primarily about the history of colonization and long-term oppression that permeates implicitly or explicitly most Indigenous life writing narratives today. In contemporary Indigenous women’s life writing, narrative strategies like oral forms of recording historical stories, autobiographical portraying, information presenting resourced from archival documents and records, using a typical narrative structure or narrator in telling stories may be adopted to construct the re-writing of Indigenous women’s life as well as history. Thus this project would also probe to the narrative techniques and thematic innovations by analyzing certain storytelling discourse such as *My Place* by Sally Morgan or *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington, so as to reveal how Indigenous women life writing presents its feminist thoughts.

Finally, Moreton Robinson makes the point in *Talkin’ Up to the White Women: Indigenous Women and Feminism* that the opposition of White women/Indigenous women is a matter not simply of difference but of domination. Indigenous women were subjugated, dehumanized, objectified and exploited by White women

during the process of canonicalization, in particular through the domestic relationship of mistress and 'servant'. Thus this project would organize the analysis of the position of Indigenous women within white Australian women and the position of white Australian feminism in relation to Indigenous women through the representations and self-presentations in Indigenous women life writings.

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DU Hongbo is Lecturer of Department of Basic Courses, Jincheng College of Sichuan University. She received her Master degree of Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, from Xihua University in Sichuan, China. Her recent publications include: *Translation Collection of Beverley Farmer's Short Stories* (World Publishing Cooperation, 2013) ; *History of Australian Women Writers' Novels*(China Social Science Press, 2012); *A Woman River* (Poem Collection, Cooperated with Prof. Glen Philips from Edith Cowen University, ECU Press, 2012). 'Feminist Thoughts reflected in KSP's 'Intimate Stranger' ' ', *Youth Literator*, (April,2013); 'The Feminist Consciousness of Dorothy Hewett' , *Overseas English*, (April,2013); 'A Brief Introduction of Australian Feminist Writer Dorothy Hewett', *Jian Nan Literature*, (June,2013); 'Comparative Study on the "Left-over" Ladies in Australia and China', *Youth Literator*, (April,2013); 'Maritime Preoccupations in Western Australian Literature', *Journal of Xihua University*, (Auguet,2012); 'Comparative Analysis of the Miserable Destiny of Coonardoo and Sifeng', *Journal of Xihua University*, (August,2010); 'The Distance between Emotion and Reality---Studies on Coonardoo's tragical emotional life in the Australian Novel "Coonardoo" ', *Journal of Sichuan University*, (August, 2009) Her current research interests are in the field of Australian Literature and Media.