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“Australian Literature in China”

Key words

Australian, literature, China

Abstract

More than 30 years ago, when I started my journey of translating Australian literature, Professor Hu Wenzhong told me that Australian literature was still an untouched area in China.

Now, 30 years have passed, what's the current situation of Australian literature in China? My paper seeks to give you some information in this field.

Dramatic changes have taken place, As everybody knows, the relationship between our two countries is getting closer and closer. China and Australia have been cooperating in various areas including the economy, business and culture, and particularly in education. More and more students from China now are studying in universities and colleges in Australia. Australia is not far away from us anymore, and Australian people are not alien to Chinese people anymore. People in China are eager to know more about Australia. Since 1988, more than 23 Australian Studies centers have been set up across China. Not all these centers are specialized in studying or introducing Australian literature, but there are many people who have worked on translating and introducing Australian literature to Chinese people. There are universities, like Beijing University, Qinghua University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Shanghai's East China Normal University, Renmin University, Anhui University, Suzhou University, Xihua University of Chengdu and Inner Mongolia University have courses on Australian literature, where many students got their master or PHD degrees studying Australian literature. Obviously these people are pioneers in exploring the relatively uncharted territory of Australian literature.

But this doesn't mean that Australian writers are as well known in China as American or English writers. With the development of market economy in China, the translation and study of Australian literature have been shadowed by American and British literature once more. Many great works that have significant impact in Australia and elsewhere are unable to find a market in China. It seems that we're living in a time when market decides everything. No reader means no market, which also means that Australian literary works have little chance to be published. If some works are published, the print run is very small, usually around 5000 copies, which have very little influence on 1.3 billion Chinese people. Thanks to the help and the subsidies from the Australia-China Council and the Australia Council, we have published many important Australian works. But there is still a long way to go, I hope that Australian scholars may cooperate with us, and turn our wish into reality.

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Yao Li is Visiting Professor of Australian Studies Centre, Beijing Foreign Studies University. He is Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) awarded by the University of Sydney, Senior Translator, member of the Chinese Writers' Association and has served as a council member of the Australian Studies Association of China since it began in 1988. His publication include: Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*, *A Fringe of Leaves* and *Flaws in the Glass*. The list includes work by Brian Castro, Colleen McCulloch, Richard Flanagan, Alex Miller, Alexis Wright, Kim Scott and Anita Heiss, as well as history and non-fiction, and under his guidance, key works of children's literature such as *Blinky Bill*, *Dot and the Kangaroo* and *Seven Little Australians*. He won the Australia-China Council's inaugural Translation Prize in 1996 for *The Ancestor Game* by Alex Miller, and won it again in 2012 for *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright, both Miles Franklin-winning novels. He was awarded the Council's Golden Medallion in 2008 for his distinguished contribution in the field of Australian literary translation in China. His current research interests are in the field of Australian Indigenous Literature and Culture.