

## JUVENILE LITERATURE IN THE LIGHT OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND MUTUAL LERNING BETWEEN CHINA AND THE WEST

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*Abstract : Juvenile Literature, namely, children's literature, is in the real sense world literature because it is a kind of literary writing based on childlike innocence and genuine "common language." Therefore, children's literature is of a global vision, and meanwhile, it is also based on different national cultures, so it is both contemporary and national, artistic and childlike. The significance of children's literature as world literature is evident. It highlights the exchanges between Chinese children's literature and foreign children's literature in the early 21st century to strengthen the theoretical exchange between Chinese children's literature and foreign children's literature and to introduce foreign academic resources of children's literature. Today, China has become a veritably great country for children's books publishing and children's literature and is playing an increasingly important role in developing children's literature worldwide. In the process of cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the West, it is undoubtedly of practical significance and cultural value to perceive and understand contemporary Chinese children's literature.*

In the present age of popularized networks and information, it is more important to have cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the West. In the 21st century, with China becoming the world's second-largest economic union, China is getting more and more attention from the world. The worldwide "China fever," "Oriental fever," and "Sinology fever" come to show that Chinese culture is revealing its due position and value in the world culture. "Introducing Chinese culture and Chinese literature to the world" is becoming a popular discourse. China's juvenile literature, namely children's literature, is, of course, part of Chinese culture and Chinese literature.

It turns out to be a highlight of the exchanges between Chinese children's literature and foreign children's literature in the early 21st century, to strengthen the theoretical exchange between Chinese children's literature and foreign children's literature and to introduce foreign academic resources of children's literature. In the 1980s and 1990s, more than ten works of western children's literature study were translated and introduced into China. There are four kinds of biographies and research papers about Andersen, including *Selected Research Papers of Andersen* in Denmark, edited by John Dimitrius. Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, translated by Shu Wei and others, was the most important in this period. It is a world-famous book on children's literature theory. Western critics thus commend it: "For those who care about children's growth and children's literature, it is an

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essential desk book; For anyone who cares about the inner world of human beings, it is an exciting and fascinating reading.”

In the recent ten years, the following three sets are the most important works of western children's literature study and science fiction study that have been translated and published in China.

One set is the six-volume translation series of *the New Theories on Contemporary Western Children's Literature Study*, edited by Professor Wang Quan-gen and Professor John Stephens of Macquarie University in Australia (published by Anhui Children's Publishing House in 2008). John Stephens recommends all the books in this series. Professor John Stephens is a famous theorist of children's literature, the former president of the International Children's Literature Research Association, and the editor-in-chief of *International Children's Literature Research*, the Journal of the International Children's Literature Research Association. He has a profound understanding and grasp of contemporary western children's literature. Therefore, these six translated works can be said to be the representative ones of the academic frontier of western children's literature study in recent ten years, covering culturology, rhetoric, communication, feminism, psychoanalysis, Lacan's subjective theory, and Bakhtin's subjectivity, language, and Narrative theory, etc. These six works are as follows: *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* by John Stephens of Australia (translated by Zhang Gong-shan and Huang Hui-ling), *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* by Roberta Seelinger Triles of the United States (translated by Li Li), and *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* by Robin McCallum of Australia (translated by Li Ying). *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* by Maria Nikolayeva of Sweden (translated by Liu Jian-bo and Yang Chun-li), *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* by Jack Zipes of the United States (translated by Shu Wei), and *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* by Karen Coates of the United States (translated by Zhao Ping).

In the general preface of the series, Professor John Stephens introduces the works as follows:

Professor Wang Quan-gen in Beijing Normal University is an outstanding scholar in the field of children's literature study. He has noticed an urgency, that is, the urgent need to strengthen in-depth reading of related books and to promote closer communication between scholars in various academic fields. Therefore, he envisaged the translation of a variety of major works of literary criticism from English to Chinese. These translated works provided Chinese scholars with methods of western scholars in interpreting children's literature, which could serve to be successful examples of interpretation. The books selected for translation offer Chinese scholars a good sample of the different ways Western scholars strive to expound the significances of children's literature. They are major works which have been selected especially for the diversity of theoretical approaches to the recurring question, what is the potential influence of children's literature in mediating or challenging the cultural discourses of power, race and gender that are influential in constructing a child's sense of self? Each of these books is primarily concerned with principles of literary understanding, and hence, with varying emphases, they consider language, narrative form, genre, gender, psychology,

and cultural influences such as the importance of community in a child's growth.

The second set is "*Translated Series of the Classical Theories of Science Fiction*," published by Anhui Publishing House of Literature and Art. They are *Asimov on Science Fiction* by Isaac Asimov, England (translated by Tu Ming-qiu, etc.), *Trillion Year Spree: the History of Science Fiction* by Brian Aldiss with David Wingrove, England (translated by Shu Wei and Sun Fa-li, etc.), *Criticism and Construction of Science Literature* by Robert Scholes & Fredric Jameson, England (translated by Wang Feng-zhen, etc.), and *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* by Darko Suvin, Canada (translated by Ding Su-ping, etc.). *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* by Darko Suvin, Canada (translated by Hao Lin, etc.)

*Translated Series of the Classical Theories of Science Fiction* selects the theoretical masterpieces of the most influential science fiction scholars and writers in the contemporary world, including the collection of the world-famous science fiction master Asimov; the famous history of science fiction by Brian Aldiss, the representative writer of the new wave of British science fiction; the works called "cornerstone" of the science fiction theory of Canadian Marxist literary theorist Darko Suvin; and the works on science fiction by American postmodern literary theorist Fredric Jameson. It can be said that this set of translations fully reflects the cutting-edge achievements of contemporary western science fiction research, and is of great significance to the research of science fiction literature, children's literature, fantasy literature, utopian literature, and comparative literature. Because science fiction literature is closely related to the artistic spirit of children's literature and children's science fiction is a wing of children's literature, the publication of this translation series will undoubtedly provide critical academic resources, knowledge pedigree, and research methods for domestic research of science fiction literature and children's literature.

The third set is *Translated Series of Hyacinthus Orientalis Children's Literary Theories*, published by Shanghai Children's Publishing House. This set includes *The Pleasure of Children's Literature* by Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer of Canada (translated by Chen Zhong-mei), *Fairy Tales as Myths/Myths as Fairy Tales* by Jack Zipes of the United States (translated by Zhao Xia), *You're Only Young Twice: Children's Literature and Film* by Tim Morris of the United States (translated by Zhang Hao-yue), and *Understanding Children's Literature* edited by Peter Hunt of the United Kingdom.

An open China needs to be integrated into the world, and the world needs to understand China. China's distinctive modern children's literature needs to go to the world, and children with different skin colors also need to know and have a perception of Chinese children's literature.

Chinese children's literature has its own unique historical resources, cultural heritage, and oriental expression. The hundred years in modern times is when Chinese children's literature has gained the fastest development and outstanding artistic changes and achievements. In 1900, Liang Qi-chao uttered the insight that "the teenagers' wisdom means the country's wisdom, and the teenagers' strength means the country's strength," which opened the curtain of awakening and educating the people in modern China and also opened a new chapter in Chinese

children's literature for a century. In 1918, Lu Xun advocated that "all facilities should be children-oriented"; In 1935, Lu Xun also affirmed that Ye Sheng-tao's fairy story *Scarecrow* "opened up a way for Chinese fairy tales," thus laying a foundation for Chinese children's literature to carry out the child-centered ideology and the realistic spirit.

Modern and contemporary Chinese children's literature in the past century, through the creative work of several generations of writers with great artistic ingenuity, has composed an artistically gorgeous chapter full of vivid Chinese characteristics and aesthetic interest in the stage of the world's children's literature and art. There have appeared five generations of iconic writers, such as Ye Sheng-tao, Bing Xin, Zhang Tian-yi, Chen Bo-chui, Yan Wen-jing, Ren Rong-rong, Sun You-jun, and Cao Wen-xuan, have established the artistic level of modern Chinese children's literature; as well as a large number of novelists, fairy tales and prose writers, play writers and poets of children's literature with their own characteristics. Their original and high-quality achievements obtained by their arduous artistic creation in the field of our national children's literature have become the spiritual food for generations of children in China.

Since the beginning of the new century, Chinese children's literature has ushered in unprecedented prosperity. Children's book publishing has entered the period of the fastest development and the most significant overall scale since the founding of New China. According to statistics, in recent years, more than 40,000 kinds of children's books have been published in China each year, with more than 700 million copies printed each year, accounting for about 10% of all books published in China. Among them, the most influential ones come from children's literature. For example, Cao Wen-xuan, the winner of the International Andersen Prize, has sold more than 10 million copies of *The Grass House*. It is particularly noteworthy that the number of published books of children's literature has reached half of the total literary books published in China. Internationally, the strength and influence of Chinese children's literature are increasing daily. In 2016, Cao Wen-xuan, a writer of children's literature, won the International Andersen Award for the first time in China. In 2018, science fiction writer Liu Ci-xin won the international Hugo Award for the first time in China; In the same year, IBBY, which Europe and America have long dominated, elected Chinese scholar Zhang Ming-zhou as its chairman for the first time. China has become a veritably great country for children's book publishing and children's literature and is becoming a vital force for Chinese literature to "go to the world" and play an increasingly important role in developing children's literature worldwide.

In cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the West, it is undoubtedly of practical significance and cultural value to perceive and understand contemporary Chinese children's literature.

The first is the significance for the world in understanding China.

Nowadays, people of the world come to know China through the Great Wall, Forbidden City, Terracotta Warriors, Peking Opera, Chinese martial arts, Giant Panda, as well as the achievements in "two bombs" (missiles and nuclear bombs), and the artificial satellites, high-speed railway and aerospace enterprises. However, this is far from enough. It should also be done through Chinese literature, which profoundly represents the real life, thoughts, feelings, and psychology of Chinese people today. Moreover, the best way to perceive the

future development of China is to understand Chinese children's literature. Children's literature is "the literature written by adults for children," Children's literature contains the spiritual dialogue and value expectations between two generations. Therefore, by reading the first-class works of children's literature in China today, people from around the world can not only get to know the real life and mental outlook of children, their ideals, pursuits, emotions, and living conditions in China today, but also get to know how Chinese culture and society come to reflect today's requirements, expectations and visions for the next generation of the nation using children's literature, and how the various cultural and social changes in China today have the influence and significance on the cultivation of the human foundation of the next generation of the nation. Lu Xun once remarked, "Childhood leads to the future destiny." Reading today's children's literature in China, people can naturally see the trends of China in the future.

Secondly, it is the significance of all children in the world looking at each other, getting to know each other, and holding hands together.

Childishness would have no boundaries. Children's literature is, in the real sense, world literature because it is a kind of literary writing based on childlike innocence and "common language." Therefore, children's literature is of a global vision, and meanwhile, it is also based on different national cultures, so it is both contemporary and national, artistic and childlike. The significance of children's literature as world literature is evident. In the profound world of children's literature, children all over the world with different colors, nationalities, languages, and cultural backgrounds can enjoy the happiness, dreams, and freedom of childhood together. Reading ancient Greek myths, Aesop's fables, Andersen's fairy tales, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Pippi Longstocking*, and *Harry Potter*..... children in China have learned the mystery, richness, and beauty of different regional cultures all over the world. Similarly, children all over the world have the opportunity to read Chinese children's literature. In that case, they can also get to know and feel China's youth, profundity, and beauty with its ancient and long history.

Once again, there is the significance of mutual understanding, perceiving, and communication among children's literature worldwide.

Children's literature in modern China embodies its own distinctive national characteristics and its aesthetic pursuit and norms of the times. With the power of aesthetic appeal, emotion, and language, it has moistened and influenced several generations of children in China. It has become their best spiritual companion, spiritual calcium, and spiritual food in the "dreamy age" and "thoughtful age." At the same time, although children's literature in different countries has its own cultural background and developmental path, it also has considerable consistency. After all, children's literature is literature for children, and children's issues can best display the common interests and basic tendencies of human beings. Especially in today's era of information and network, the problems confronting all countries are almost exclusively the same. In the same way, Chinese children's literature treats these contemporary world literary themes as its essential content and is fully reflected in a bildungsroman, animal fiction, Nature literature, etc.

Isaac B. Singer, a famous American fairy tale writer, believes that today "although adult literature has somehow declined, children's literature is still

struggling to preserve the merits from literary tradition, family beliefs, humanity value and ethics.” It is the fundamental aesthetic pursuit and value expectation of Chinese children's literature to adhere to the aesthetic concept of “taking kindness as beauty” in children's literature, to cultivate and optimize children's spiritual life world through artistic visual aesthetic pleasure, thus forming the most fundamental values, outlook on life, morality and aesthetics of being human, laying a good foundation for humanity and shaping the future character of the nation; it is also the foundation and premise for the exchange and mutual learning between Chinese children's literature and western children's literature and for entering the spiritual field of children in all countries of the world.