

The other day I was sitting next to a charming old lady at a dinner in the Swiss Consulate General's residence. Her name was Mavis Thorpe-Clark. She had been invited to meet the Swiss writer Franz Hohler who had been invited by the Goethe-Institut to attend a Summer School for Australian Students and Teachers of German. Anyway, we were chatting away until we touched upon the topic of Australian Literature in German speaking countries: Have you seen any German translations of my books, she asked; I had to confess that I didn't - but I have done some research since then...

(and I found out that the following of her books had been published in Germany: The Min-Min (1969), Spark of Opal (1968), Iron Mountains (1970), Wildfire (1973)).

THE RECEPTION OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE IN GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRIES - revisited! (Volker Wolf, Goethe-Institut Melbourne)

Take 'reception' as the sum total of all traceable literary translations of Australian Literature into the German language and accept two separate chronological approaches (also due to personal time factors):

1. One is (comprehensively) historical, it involves a bibliographical check up of approximately 1100 Australian authors who lived between 1848 and 1980.
2. The other one is (superficially) contemporary, it involves a bibliographical check up of 290 authors and comprises the last 10 years.

ad 1:

Australian fictional literature has been published, translated and commented upon in German-speaking countries since the middle of the 19th century. Comprehensive bibliographical control with the names of 1135 writers who were born in Australia or were or are permanent residents in this country revealed that 879 titles by 248 authors had been published by 176 publishers between 1845 and 1980.

102 were English titles, while 777 were translations. Of the 879 titles, 273 were published in newspapers, magazines or anthologies, 58 being in English and 215 in German.

In the comparison of literary genres, 588 novels outweigh 205 short stories, 68 poems and 18 dramatic works. The most popular writers in terms of various types of publications are Catherine Gaskin, Morris West and James Aldridge; the best-selling titles were written by Morris West, Patrick White and Arthur Upfield.

The critical reception of Australian literature has its own history. Although its publication began in the 19th century at the same time as the publication of Australian texts, criticism was concentrated on different authors and titles, mainly due to the critics' Anglo-Australian views.

Between 1846 and 1980 about 60 lengthy critical comments were published on Australian literature (in general), along with about 90 critical contributions on single authors and about 400 book reviews.

Since the whole body of literary criticism cannot be divorced from the particular historical relations between the German-speaking countries and Australia, five phases can be distinguished:

1. Emigration to Australia in the middle of the 19th century.
2. Colonial ambitions of the German Reich in the Pacific region between the 1890s and the First World War.
3. The attempts of (German) English philologists in the 1920s and 1930s to integrate British colonial writings into Germany's own colonial ambitions.
4. The post-war reception of Australian literature in the former German Democratic Republic based on socialist principals and Russia's outlook on Australian writing
5. The post-war West German opening up to the world and the fundamental change of English philology which is now integrating the Commonwealth literatures of Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada into the traditional corpus of British and American literatures.

Ad 2. or 'back to the 90s!'

In order to get a basic list of contemporary Australian writers I checked the popular and easily accessible 'Good Reading Guide' which was compiled by Helen Daniel and published by MCPhee Gribble Publishers (1990).

The Good Reading Guide contains facts and figures on 290 writers. Their names were checked in the bibliography of currently obtainable books in German speaking countries. (VLB=BIP)

I found 67 odd titles of 25 authors. In addition to these (independently published titles) there are some anthologies of Australian Short Stories available which were published only recently:

1. Air Mail From Down Under. Published by the Australia Council in the Ozlit Collection. Ed. by Rudi Krausmann und Michael Wilding. 1990.
2. Australien erzählt. Ed. Volker Wolf. Fischer Verlag. 1990.
3. Frauen in Australien: Erzählungen. Ed. and transl. by Ursula Grawe. Dtv, 1992.
4. English Short Stories - Englische Kurzgeschichten: Australische Autoren. Dtv-zweisprachig 9298, 1992.

When you look at the collection of names and titles on the following pages, you will notice that Australian children's books receive very much (even systematic) attention whereas books for adult readers are much more selectively chosen. Here are some reasons:

Firstly, foreign literatures don't sell too well in Germany -

RECLAM PUBLISHERS

"It becomes gradually clearer to us that literary experiments with first prints in the pocket book market are doomed to be unsuccessful." (Letter from the mid-eighties, transl.)

FISCHER PUBLISHERS

"You may know from your own experience that foreign literatures have difficulty in finding readers on the German Book Market. We should therefore be even more cautious in considering an anthology for publication which contains mainly unknown authors selected because of their common national origin." (Letter from the mid-eighties, transl.)

Secondly, Australian Literature is not as popular with Germans as is Australia herself (or the idea of her) :

DEUTSCHER TASCHENBUCH VERLAG

"Once we had a collection of Modern Canadian Stories in our publishing program, which didn't sell well. Mind you, the stories were as good as any American or British Short Stories, the

catchword 'Canada', however, was not quite appealing. Thus, if you would like to do something for the benefit of Australian Literature as such, you would have to mix it up with other English Literatures under a title such as 'English Short Stories from Australia and New Zealand'. This would allow you to include the famous names of Katherine Mansfield and Patrick White." (Letter from the mid-eighties, transl.)

- The latest version by the same publisher rendered in a letter of Nov 11, 1991 reads: "We have now included a collection of Australian short stories in our programme. The editor and translator is Elisabeth Schnack, she will adapt her selection of Australian Short Stories published in 1961 (sic!) by Walter Publishers." This is the bilingual edition mentioned above.

Thirdly, many German publishers focus on the German stereotype of Australia ("Australianess") :

When I offered Fischer Publishers the above mentioned collection of short stories they excluded all stories which dealt with city life, migrants, social problems, in short with contemporary Australian society.

A similar problem occurred when I suggested an Aboriginal Painting by Robert Campbell Junior for the front cover of the anthology: This was rejected because "the artist asked for the sum of \$ 3000" whereas the publisher would only be prepared to pay DM 300 (\$ 250); DM 300 was just enough to get the kangaroo printed on the cover page! (How much are you willing to pay for authenticity??)

Fourthly, German Publishers resort to their own (in house) translators :

Consequently there are quite a few "rubber trees" found to be populating the Australian bushland where Australians are used to seeing gum trees or eukalypts! The Australian flavour tends to be lost in an all German literary stew.

Alfabetical List of Translations into German

(Liste im deutschen Buchhandel erhältlichlicher australischer Literatur in Übersetzung. Zusammengestellt von Dr. Volker Wolf im Januar 1993)

- Carey, Peter. Bliss. Das Paradies umsonst. Drei Leben und der Typ von nebenan. Rowohlt, 1987.
- Illywhacker. Klett Cotta, 1990.
- Oscar und Lucinda. Klett Cotta, 1991.
- Carter, Robert. Die Zuckerfabrik (The Sugar Factory). Spectrum 1990.
- Cato, Nancy. Bitterer Ruhm. Goldmann, 1986.
- Delie und Brenton. Alle Flüsse fließen ins Meer. Goldmann, 1985, 1988.
- Der ewige Baum. Australien Saga. Blanvalet, 1988. Goldmann, 1990.
- Spuren im Eis. Goldmann, 1987.
- Tödliche Videos. Volk und Welt. o.J.
- Cleary, Jon. Ein Tropfen Liebe. Zsolnay, 1973.
- Corris, Peter. Ein mörderisches Weihnachtsgeschenk. Volk und Welt, 1991.
- Davison, Frank Dalby. Dusty. Hoch, 1988.
- Elliott, Sumner L. Pulsschlag des Lebens. Rowohlt, 1989.
- Warten auf die Kindheit. Scherz, 1989.
- Die Wasser unter der Brücke. Rowohlt, 1982, 1985.
- Grenville, Kate. Joan macht Geschichte. Rowohlt, 1991.
- Hall, Rodney. Gefangen (Captivity Captive). Fischer, 1990.
- Harding, Lee. Der weinende Himmel (The Frozen Sky). Heyne, 1988.
- Hooker, John. Wind und Sterne (Captain James Cook). Rowohlt, 1990.

- Jolley, Elizabeth. *Foxy Baby*. Zsolnay, 1989. Goldmann, 1991.
- Eine Frau und eine Frau. Goldmann, 1990.
- Der Mann im Brunnen. Zsolnay, 1990.
- Milch und Honig. Goldmann, 1990.
- Jones, Rod. *Julias Paradies*. Klett, 1990.
- Koch, Christopher. *Ein Jahr in der Hölle (The Year of Living Dangerously)*. Klett, 1988.
- Lindsay, Norman. *Der Zauberpudding*. Hille, 1992.
- McCullough, Colleen. *Credo*. Bertelsmann, 1986. Heyne, 1988.
- Die Ladies von Missalonghi. Heyne, 1988, 1989.
- Dornenvögel. Heyne, 1980, 1987. Bertelsmann, 1982. Goldmann, 1991.
- Ein anderes Wort für Liebe. Goldmann, 1990
- Tim. Heyne, 1981. Goldmann, 1987.
- Malouf, David. *Das Wolfskind*. Greno, 1987.
- Die große Welt. Benziger, 1991.
- Verspieltes Land (Child's Play). Benziger, 1989.
- (Harland's Half Acre). Benziger, 1992?
- Morgan, Sally. *(My Place)*. Orlando, 1991.
- Park, Ruth. *Abigails Zeitreise*. Loewes, 1988.
- Schwester des Meeres. Loewes, 1989.
- Roberts, Beth. *Manganini*. Hammer, 1992. (Tasman. Aborigine)
- Thiele, Colin. *Danny hütet einen Schatz*. St. Gabriel, 1990.
- Der alte Leuchtturm. Ravensburger, 1989.
- Die Höhle. Bertelsmann, 1980. Ravensburger, 1990.
- Die Insel des Flötenvogels. St. Gabriel, 1976.

- Die letzte Fahrt der Blue Fin. Ravensburger, 1988.
- Die Spur in der Lagune. St. Gabriel, 1987.
- Pinquo. St. Gabriel, 1985. Ravensburger, 1989.
- Sturmboy. Ravensburger, 1990.
- Trezise, Percy and Dick Roughsey. Der Riese Turraamulli. Ein Märchen australischer Aborigines. Lamuv, 1990.
- Turner, George. Sommer im Treibhaus. Suhrkamp, 1991.
- West, Morris. Cassidy. Droemer Knaur, 1987, 1989.
- Das Meisterwerk. Econ, 1989.
- Der rote Wolf. Droemer Knaur, 1979.
- Der Salamander. Droemer Knaur, 1974.
- Der zweite Sieg. Droemer Knaur, 1980.
- Die Gaukler Gottes. Droemer Knaur, 1981, 1984.
- Die Konkubine. Droemer Knaur, 1977.
- Harlekin. Droemer Knaur, 1978.
- In den Schuhen des Fischer. Droemer Knaur, 1978.
- In einer Welt von Glas. Droemer Knaur, 1983, 1986.
- Insel der Seefahrer. Droemer Knaur, 1979, 1980.
- Lazarus. Econ, 1990.
- Nacktes Land. Die Stunde des Fremden. Die Konkubine. Droemer Knaur, 1985.
- Proteus. Droemer Knaur, 1979, 1980.
- White, Patrick. Der Lendenschurz. Piper, 1990.
- Der Maler. Piper, 1989.
- Die Twyborn Affäre. Claasen, 1986.

--- Dolly Formosa und die Auserwählten. Die Memoiren
der Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray. Claasen, 1988.

--- Down at the Dump. Drunten auf der Müllkippe.
Reclam, no year.

Wongar, Banumbir. Der Pfad nach Bralgu. Leipzig, 1981.

--- Die Seele. Lamuv, 1985.

Wrightson, Patricia. Wirrun zwischen Eis und Feuer. Oetinger, 1985.

(A list of translations covering the period from 1848 to 1980
can be found in Volker Wolf. Die Rezeption australischer Litera-
tur in deutschsprachigen Ländern von 1848 bis 1979. Narr/Stau-
fenberg).

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