

CAPOD Funding Report

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Event /Course Title	Reading Chinese Book Review Network Residential Weekend
Date of event	11-12 November 2017

1. Brief description of Event (50-100 words):

With the support of AHRC and their publishing partners, Penguin Random House North Asia and Balestier Press, The Writing Chinese Team from University of Leeds has invited book reviewers and translators for a two-day residential weekend. Chinese author Sheng Keyi and Chinese film-maker Ou Ning respectively gave talks about women in China, and the changes in people's lives before 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The acclaimed translators of Chinese literature Nicky Harman, Andrea Lingenfelter and Helen Wang took part in panel discussions on translation and book reviewing. Book reviewers were divided into small groups for discussions of the four books that need to be reviewed by the end of December. There was also a film screening of Ou Ning's documentary *Meishi Jie* on Saturday, 11th November.

2. What were the benefits of attending and what did you gain from the experience in terms of transferable skills and knowledge.

Attending this residential weekend was an exciting and rewarding experience for me. I've laid the groundwork for some very promising future relationships in the areas of Chinese literature translation and reviewing. I met the Chinese author Sheng Keyi and film-maker Ou Ning, both of whom portray the aspects of Chinese life I am not familiar with as their compatriot. I've also met the acclaimed translators of Chinese literature and the newly emergent young translators. Their attention to contemporary Chinese literature has guided me to some changes and new dynamics in this field, of which as a researcher of English literature I have been ignorant. As a native mandarin speaker, I see the necessity for me to build on both my English-language and Chinese-language skills to be competent in an increasingly globalized literary arena. I hope by being a book reviewer in this network I can bring my own perspective as a language and literary mediator between two cultures to the understanding of Chinese-language literature.

3. What actions will you be taking as a result of attending or by making new networking contacts.

First of all, as one of the conditions to attend this event stipulates, I need to write reviews of the four books we discussed during the weekend by the end of December. Second of all, I intend to keep in touch with people involved in this event and continue to explore the field of Chinese literature translation and book reviewing. Last but not least, I am thinking about introducing more contemporary Chinese literary works to the Writing Chinese team in Leeds and to the translators, and also introducing the translated Chinese literature into the curriculum for English majors in Chinese universities.

4. Can you share any additional resources produced in connection with the event (e.g. feedback from participants, training resources, website links, and additional materials).

This is the first book review residential weekend organized by the Writing Chinese Team from University of Leeds. There should be another one in March 2018 featuring different authors and different themes. All relevant information can be found at <http://writingchinese.leeds.ac.uk>.

5. Tips/experience learned from the event

- 1) I was surprised to find that University of Leeds has such a strong Chinese language and literature program. It almost felt surreal to be surrounded by fluent Chinese speakers whose first language is English. I think this is one of the signs that show the increasing popularity of Chinese literature and culture in western societies.
- 2) During the discussions I found that some western readers seemed to consciously differentiate between mainland Chinese literature, and Hong Kong/Tai Wan literature. They tend to lower the aesthetic bar for the former and take the literary excellence of the latter for granted. I think one of the reasons is probably that western literary market intentionally seeks for potentially politically contentious or sensitive works from mainland China. I think this standard should be modelled to factor the literary value in, or the English-speaking readers will miss out on some good works from mainland China.
- 3) The traditional literary magazines in China are now losing their readers to new media magazines like "One is All" and "Fei Di". They usually focus on the literary merits and are willing to provide a platform for young or lesser known authors. Their works usually focus on the anxiety and absurdity in modern life, which might sound familiar to the western reader, but can still have distinctive Chinese features. During the conversations with the younger translator at the event, I found that she had discovered some amazing works written by young Chinese authors. So one might predict that in the future more diverse works will be translated into English and the complexity of the contemporary Chinese psyche will be given due attention.

6. Any additional comments or information regarding the event