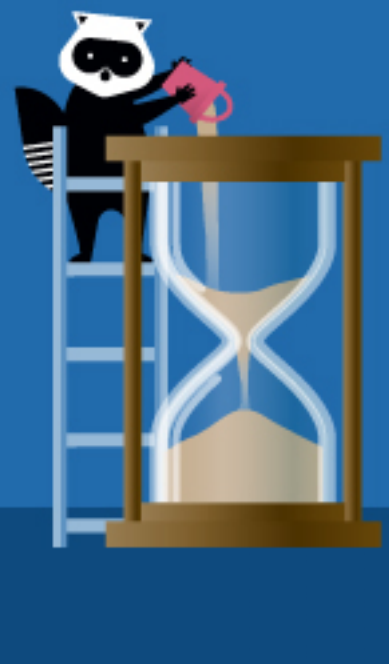


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‘The world is paying attention to S. Korean literature,’ says Barbara Zitwer

Posted July 27, 2021 08:08, Updated July 27, 2021 08:08

한국어



South Korean literature’s expansion into the global market is getting attention as South Korean writer Yun Ko-eun won the Crime Writers Association (CWA) Daggers Award, a prestigious crime fiction award in the U.K., on July 1 for her novel, “The Disaster Tourist.” She signed contracts to publish the novel in four countries, including France and Spain, and concluded a deal with a U.K. video production company for publication rights.

It was enough for South Korean literary works to be introduced to the overseas audience to draw attention in the past but commercial discussions to sell publication rights to foreign companies are actively carried out these days. The Dong-A Ilbo talked with literary agent Barbara Zitwer who is known to have introduced many South Korean literary works to the global market on July 20 to gauge the outlook for South Korean literature’s overseas expansion.

- Do you believe that South Korean literature can have international commercial success?

“South Korean literature is already recognized in the global market. With the series of success of countless literary works of the country, the level of recognition is getting higher. It is pretty much guaranteed already that South Korean writers will enjoy commercial success in the global market.”

- Unlike South Korean pop culture content, such as movies, there seems to be less attention on the country’s literary works.

“Things have changed. Thanks to the success of South Korean pop culture, more and more people hold South Korean literature in high regard. In particular, as South Korean movies ‘Parasite’ and ‘Minari’ made headlines at the Academy Awards, there is huge interest in the country’s literary works with more people in the U.K. and U.S. markets looking for them. Hollywood movie production companies are also showing interest in making TV shows or movies based on them.”

- What aspect of South Korean literature would work in the global market?

“There is something fatalistic about South Korean literature. The protagonists of Jeong Yu-jeong’s ‘The Origin of Species’ and Kim Un-su’s ‘The Plotters’ are born with the fate to be a serial killer and an assassin, respectively. They also have the desire to uncover truths. Even if characters in a story do not find truths in the end, many questions and thoughts linger in readers even after they finish a book. This is very attractive to readers in the U.K. and the U.S. who are used to a Hollywood-like clear ending.

- Which one does the overseas publishing industry prefer, South Korea’s pure or genre literature?

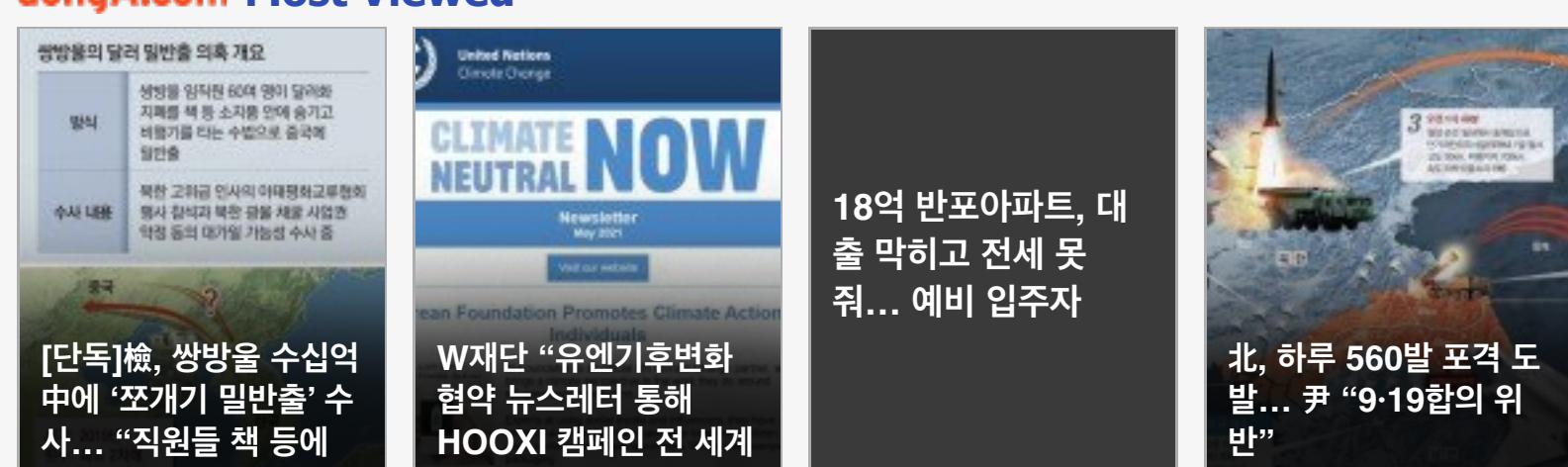
“There is no guarantee that a specific genre of works will have better commercial success. However, thriller, mystery, and Sci-Fi literary works written by South Korean writers have been commercially successful lately, thanks to their creative perspectives or materials. As there is a trend in the U.K. and U.S. markets for a more clear identity of a fiction, marketing and promotion for each work can decide 99 percent of its commercial success.”

- What strategy is needed to be successful in overseas markets?

“As South Korean writers often produce works of different genres on various topics, it will be more favorable for them to sign contracts with different publishers depending on their works, rather than selling publication rights to a single publisher. As publishers in the U.K. and U.S. markets are focusing more on social media-based marketing, writers who have active social media presence will have more opportunities to introduce themselves to the audience in the U.K. and U.S. markets.”


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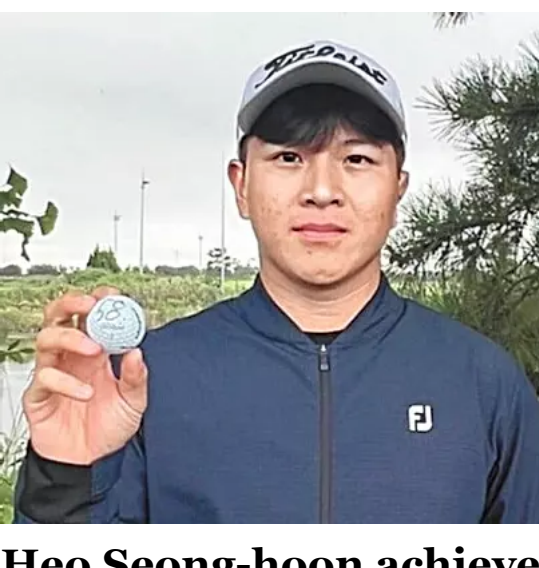
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