

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫成果報告

後殖民狀況下的男性建構：當代英國文本相關研究

Postcolonial Masculinities: A Study of Some Contemporary
British Texts

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主持人：朱偉誠 國立台灣大學外國語文學系

一、中文摘要

本研究計劃選定了一系列的當代英國文本來進行分析，以探討一般男性建構對於後殖民狀況下跨種族男性權力關係的反應型態。這些文本包括有奈波爾的中篇小說《在一個自由的國度》與長篇小說《游擊隊》；古雷希的電影劇本《豪華洗衣店》、《山米和羅希睡覺》與長篇小說《郊區佛陀》；毛翔青的《勇氣之多餘》；以及格林那威的電影《枕邊書》。之所以選定這些看似不甚相關的文本來一同探討，主要的原因是因為它們都有趣地在一個後殖民的情境中呈現了同性戀。不管那是發生在不同種族的兩個男人之間還是在一個非西方白種的男人身上。而在實際的閱讀分析之後發現，雖然這個呈現在不同的文本中有它們各自特定的表意功能，但是它們卻也有一些相似的特性，即：它們都是在一些個複雜的表意體系（我們或可更直接地稱之為“寓言”）的整體中，一個重要而且涵義豐富的符碼，因此必須透過不僅是性相政治學而是修辭符號學的觀點來加以解析。

關鍵詞：同性戀、後殖民、後石牆、奈波

爾、古雷希、毛翔青、格林那威

Abstract

This research project seeks to examine a group of contemporary British texts in order to learn something about masculinities in response to the cross-racial intra-male power dynamics that is involved in the postcolonial condition. These texts include V. S. Naipaul's "In a Free State" and *Guerrillas*; Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, and *The Buddha of Suburbia*; Timothy Mo's *The Redundancy of Courage*; and Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book*. These seemingly disparate texts are chosen and grouped together for analysis here because they all intriguingly figure homosexuality—either as a cross-racial relationship between a white man and his racially othered partner or simply in a man considered to be of other races—in a conspicuously postcolonial situation. And upon critical analysis, this intriguing presence, though its specific function differs slightly from text to text, is found to possess

a signifying valency that can be understood only when integrating it into the intricate system of significations (read: allegories) which each text forms.

Keywords: homosexuality, postcolonial, post-Stonewall, V. S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Timothy Mo, Peter Greenaway

二、緣由與目的

If we focus our attention on the intriguing figure of cross-racial same-sex intimacy in postcolonial and post-Stonewall literary representations, it is hard not to notice quite a few instances of its appearance in works which apparently are *not* concerned with representing such intimacy per se. Instead, most of these works entertain a rather conspicuous purpose of allegorical commentary on the various aspects of macro-politics in the postcolonial condition. For instance, V. S. Naipaul passes a rather early and harsh critique of Third World politics first in his award-winning novella “In a Free State” (1971) and then in his novel *Guerrillas* (1975), by positing one of his protagonists—an Englishman who acts as a local administrative officer in former and a native guerrilla leader who is of mixed ethnic origins in the latter—as either homosexual or engaging in same-sex activities. Hanif Kureishi’s works—such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985/86), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988), and *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1991)—are regularly abundant with homosexual characters who carry out their same sex affiliation across the racial divide,

while those works of his are generally regarded as counter-hegemonic envisioning of the Thatcherite Britain. Timothy Mo’s political novel on East Timor, *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991), also curiously chooses its protagonist to be a homosexual Chinese who is caught in and thus reflects through his lens on the excruciatingly complicated ethnic conflicts befalling the island. Last but not least, featured in the complicated cross-cultural allegory of avant-garde director Peter Greenaway’s film *The Pillow Book* (1995) is a sodomitical act between a Japanese publisher first with a Japanese author and then with a Caucasian one, thus unwittingly giving us a glimpse of the author’s own anxiety aroused by the situation of reversed power relation. Therefore this intriguing textual phenomenon is prevalent enough to warrant a critical examination which will attempt to explore its semiotic function by situating it within a greater mechanism of signification that is characteristically both postcolonial and post-Stonewall.

三、結果與討論

Since these texts are all political commentaries from which a certain message can be culled, they are in effect constructed as allegories, or at least fables, in which almost every character bear a metaphoric, or at least symbolic, significance. Thus a character who is homosexual or homosexuality in its abstract form in these texts must be treated as a sign in an integral system of signification and analysed for its specific function accordingly.

For example, in Naipaul's "In a Free State," Timothy F. Weiss easily pinpoints the protagonist Bobby as "represent[ing] liberal-minded cooperation" which is flawed by "a political naïveté, a masking of differences between Europeans and Africans, and a combination of condescension toward and romanticization of Africa" (174)—characteristics, according to my previous study (Chu), clearly shared by occidental homosexuals when facing the colonial condition. And in *Guerrillas*, Fawzia Mustafa as easily points out: "In the same way that Bobby's homosexuality in *In a Free State* was a symptom of an overdetermined British liberal paternalism towards 'black' Africa, so [the native protagonist] Jimmy's and Bryant's homosexual comfortings are cast as the aberrant basis of Jimmy's false consciousness bred during his sojourn in London" (127). Clearly, in these two works, Naipaul is mobilizing a certain conventional "wisdom" about as well as the more widely spread distaste for homosexuals and homosexuality to effect his target critique in a reinforcing way.

While the prevalent presence of homosexuality (or more appropriately gay life) in Kureishi's works may represent for him one of the undeniable facets of multicultural Britain despite New Right's disavowal, it also intriguingly figures as the most favored metaphor for the intricate relationship between a white man and his racial other from the perspective of the latter. Nevertheless, his use of homosexuality as a sign differs greatly from its mobilization in the other texts primarily as a "commonly agreed" stigma. Kureishi may seek to tap

the sign for its ability to articulate certain intimate dimensions in the cross-racial intra-male relationship that are possibly inexpressible otherwise.

As to the other two texts, I can only be brief here because of lack of space. Mo's *The Redundancy of Courage* may intentionally deploy its protagonist's homosexual identity to emphasize the marginal status of its narrating perspective, thus evincing "new ways of conceiving of nationhood and entrance into the social contract" (Hawley 106). In contrast, though structured as an intricate system of allegory whose aimed signification is of little relevance here, Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* rather unwittingly reveals the director/author's anxiety as an Occidental male when facing the "Oriental intrusion" that occurs during such an act of vigorous cross-cultural interbreeding, even if the act is initiated by himself.

四、計畫成果自評

This critical investigation of certain contemporary British texts that seem to form a group of its own does prove to be fruitful and yield interesting results. However, as the research project progressed, it was felt that the original formulation of the problematics central to this group of texts might require a slight revision or reorientation. For it has become rather clear that while "straight" masculinities (white as well as non-white) in the postcolonial condition may not differ very much from their colonial counterparts as regards their reaction to the cross-racial intra-male power

dynamics of domination/subordination, the rhetorical terms in which postcolonial masculinities envision it do present a picture rather different from the past. And this obviously has more to do with the release of homosexuality, along with its decriminalization, from the prison of unrepresentability in the late 1960s. However, this seemingly liberating emergence of homosexuality into the realm of representation, in the hands of the dominant, mostly lends itself to the dominant use which is based on conventional stigmatization, as is evidenced in most of the texts discussed here. Thus a slight turn from a critical approach which focuses on the *postcolonial* context to one on the *post-Stonewall* condition, on the one hand, and, on the other, from sexual politics to political rhetorics is called for.

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