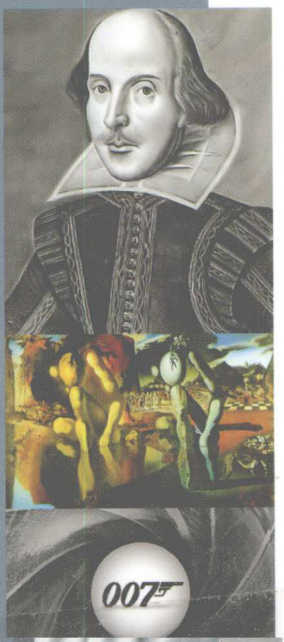
New Topics in Contemporary Cultural Studies

新论丛 当代文化研究

毛思慧 主编 MAO Sihui

文学、文化与后现代蜕变

——从莎士比亚到007的八个案例研究



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Literature, Culture and Postmodern Transformations: Eight Case Studies from William Shakespeare to James Bond

by Mao Sihui, Wang Hong and Chen Xiangyang

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Series Editor's Preface

Mao Sihui

The basic editorial strategy of the series New Topics in Contemporary Cultural Studies is to present a broad yet focused spectrum of thinking on contemporary literary/cultural studies and to challenge our conceptions of what postcolonial and feminist cultural studies in China and the West is and how we should think about it in the age of "glocalisation" — the dual process of globalisation and localisation. By presenting as many voices as possible, one of our major aims is to create a discursive space for (re)viewing and (re)writing about linguistic, literary and cultural texts in relation to our changing social, historical and ecological environment. Indeed, we want the series to open up our readers' mind about cultural studies beyond the confines of its linguistic and literary origins. This group of research projects reflects our concerted efforts in critiquing and combining certain insights of poststructuralism with certain insights of postmodernism, feminism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and postcolonialism.

Literature, Culture and Postmodern Transformations: Eight Case Studies from William Shakespeare to James Bond by Mao Sihui, Wang Hong and Chen Xiangyang serves as a general introductory project to this series, covering new studies of theatre, poetry, fiction and cinema, with two case studies on each genre. Part I "Theatre" looks at

Shakespearean transformations and mutations in the postmodern cultural context and the subversive nature of the postmodern stage in Ortonesque farce. Part II "Poetry" deals with the postmodern in British poetry in general and the world of the postmodern psychosomatic in Ted Hughes' narrative epic poem *Gaudete* in particular. Part III "Fiction" explores the importance of being paranoid while critiquing Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and also re-examines the colonial passions and betrayals from a postcolonial perspective in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom, A Triumph.* Part IV "Cinema" reflects on the representations of Chineseness in Wayne Wang's major films and decodes the semiotic empire of Hollywood with James Bond as a seductive symbol of British and American visual hegemony.

In *Representations of "Otherness" in Disney Animated Films*, Peng Baoliang argues that Disney cinema as a semiology can be a path for tracking down "Otherness", but the system should not be treated as an impersonal scientific structure. Rather, it is an artificial product, a social activity. Traditionally, a Disney film is invariably received as a purified and exorcized form of art which perpetuates and validates universal values and truths that transcend time and space, and the audience is eventually mandated to see it from a distance so that the authority established by the discourse remains safe and sound.

Looking at "Otherness" in relation to history, racism, sexism and mythology while closely reading Disney films such as *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, *Mulan*, and *Tarzan*, this book attempts to demonstrate that these animated films rationalise Western values and mindsets such as white supremacy, Eurocentrism, masculinity, imperialism which (un)consciously justify and windowdress inequity, inequality,

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repression, exploitation, prejudice, transgression, appropriation and hegemony that are pervasive of all the present social relations. Although these stories are of different cultural origins and of all geopolitical spaces such as Europe, the Middle East, China, and Latin America, once adapted and cast by Disney Studio, they serve unanimously the interest of the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" as bell hooks once put it.

Structurally this book is divided into six chapters — semiology, gender/sexualisation, the way of reading (mythology), history writing, and the way of thinking (ideology) with the first chapter as an introduction. In this postcolonial feminist project, Peng Baoliang offers an excellent study of some of the semiotic activities within the Disney cinematic apparatus. Behind the complex structure of a society and all sorts of social relations and productive activities there lies a kind of momentum which, in the form of Disney animation, generates as well as constructs a whole set of "self-other" relationships. Whether it resides in racism, sexism, mythology or ideology, the momentum flows from the "Self" to the "Other".

Ding Shaoyan's book *The Construction of Meaning: A Cultural Study of Female Representation in American Magazine Advertising in 2002* is a three-faceted analysis of American advertising, the meaning of women, and American culture with ample texts from popular American magazine advertisements. Ding Shaoyan holds that after more than thirty years of vigorous feminist movement and with the rise of Cultural Studies in the 1990s, the female body in American advertising is now represented with plurality and sophistication, embodying complex power relationship in American society. As an interdisciplinary study, this book makes extensive use of Michel Foucault's theory of power and

knowledge and Stuart Hall's analysis of media representation. Other schools of thoughts such as feminism, neo-Marxism, postmodernism, postcolonialism are also drawn in combination with the theories of culture, in addition to the recent studies of popular culture: the theories of fashion, subculture, television, and the culture of consumption. Different languages/meanings constructed in advertising are measured in relation to race, gender and sexuality and identity. Three analyses are employed for more exact measurement of discourse: a content analysis, a qualitative analysis, and a semiotic analysis. One of the main findings of this project is that women in advertising are generally represented as white and heterosexual with exhibitionist sexual appeal. Female images other than this category are marginalised: they are characterised by fetishisation, sexualisation, fragmentation, objection, underrepresentation, trivialisation, negation, commercialisation, in addition to a racialised and gendered representation. Female representation in advertising is saturated with the power of domination by the social institutions which represent the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy of the United States that always attempts to maintain its social, cultural, economic and political power by fabricating and dominating the "Other". One particular strength in Ding's project is her deliberate complication of this "Self-Other" relationship. She holds that advertising is also a realm where multiple powers contest for existence. The voices of the oppressed and marginalised are also articulated in the representation of advertising. Not only are there changes in the representation of women, but there also appear new elements which represent resistance to the dominant discourse of women in advertising by the subculture images, lesbian images, transgender images as well as female images of multiple, ambivalent meanings, which are commercialised by capital in order to

magnify the market. Moreover, female audience are able to construct multiple levels of meanings in the process of consumption. Therefore, the social discourse of women is destabilised by the multiple articulations of the resistance as well as women when consuming these images. Power domination encounters power destabilisation in dialogic and dynamic relation. In addition, this characteristic of power politics in advertising illuminates the empowerment of women in consumer society as well as the resistance strategies to stereotypical representation of advertising. It is argued that more effective resistance is possible for women in everyday life and enlightening women through diverse representation and education is important for social transformation. Ding also argues that the identity of women represented in advertising is fragmented, not only because of the multiple identity of resistance politics but also due to the increasing power of the audience/consumers, who construct their own meanings/identity according to their needs, pleasure and social conditions in relation to race, gender, identity. Consumption becomes the crucial process for meaning construction, which offers the opportunity for the reconstruction of the meaning for individual woman in everyday life. Therefore, the female identity is more fluid than rigid.

In *Reconstructing Images of Chinese Peasantry: A Cultural and Linguistic Study of Zhao Benshan's Comic Sketches, 1995~2000*, Chen Kaiju makes innovative use of contemporary postcolonial theories in his detailed examination of Zhao Benshan's comic sketches in the reconstruction of images of Chinese peasantry, the cultural strategies, and the linguistic strategies adopted in Zhao's major comic sketches. The thesis of this project is that different from the traditional representations of peasantry in Chinese literary and cultural texts, there

has appeared since 1990s a significant cultural phenomenon of Zhao Benshan and his series of comic sketches whereby new images of Chinese peasantry are represented with unprecedented sympathy, understanding and humour, offering a comprehensive balance between their positive and negative aspects. While the significant linguistic and cultural strategies used in Zhao's comic sketches are analyzed in detail in Chapters Two and Three, and related discussion on the power of representation and his effective articulation for the Chinese peasants are included in Chapters One and Four, pertinent background is reviewed in "Introduction", which looks at the representation of peasantry images in traditional Chinese cultural works, the related cultural and linguistic theories, the overview of Zhao himself and his representative comic sketches. Following the theory of Spivak's "Can the subaltern speak?", Chen Kaiju points out that the problem with the prejudiced images of Chinese peasantry constructed and circulated in traditional Chinese literary and cultural works lies in the very existence of "subalternity". The ultimate solution to the problem of prejudiced images depends on the eradication of inequality which fosters arrogance of the social privileged toward the peasants as the social subordinate and inferiority complex in the latter. It is in this sense that we claim the cultural credit in Zhao's reconstruction of images of Chinese peasantry — they are treated as "us" rather than "other". But the struggle against the traditional prejudiced representations has never been easy as various cultural and linguistic strategies have been tactfully used in the form of popular culture. Zhao's artistic career as a popular comedian has been so successful that he himself has risen to a status of national celebrity. However, as many of his works have been highly popular in the whole country, Zhao himself has become a hegemonic figure, at least in the

field of comic sketches. With the change of social status, Zhao's original role as a true spokesman for the Chinese peasants has gradually changed accordingly.

Li Yufeng's project *The Other Looks: Interrogating Chineseness in Hollywood Cinema 1980 ~ 1999* takes us from China back to Hollywood with her insightful examination of the cultural representations of Chineseness, the cinematic apparatus of Hollywood and her interrogation of such representations from early 1980s to late 1990s. By reviewing Chineseness as the "exotic", the "marginal", the "Other" in the Hollywood context, Li Yufeng seeks to find certain knowledge and also construct a set of critical discourses about the clashes, conflicts as well as confrontations between the two cultures in the world of cinema, thus providing us with the necessity and foundation for a dialogue between the two different cultures. Making use of different schools of thoughts and discourses such as postcolonial theories, feminist perspectives, Said's Orientalism, Stam and Shohat's critique of Eurocentrism, Metz's cine-semiology, Foucault's theory of power and knowledge, Bhabha's views on "Otherness", Mulvey's on spectacle and visual pleasure, and Kaplan's on "looking relations", this study is an interdisciplinary critique of some representations of Chineseness in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Li Yufeng argues that a fairly great portion of the images of the Chinese, as one part of the "unspeakable" minorities in the American mainstream culture, can be read as the representations of the "Other" to the Anglo-Americans, and such "Otherness" can be interpreted in relation to the issue of identity politics and power imbalance. The portrayals of the Chinese males in films such as Rob Cohen's *Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story* (1993), Brett Ratner's *Rush Hour* (1998), Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon*

(1985), Richard Donner's *The Lethal Weapon 4* (1998), and Antoine Fuqua's *The Replacement Killers* (1997) are often manipulated by the Hollywood hegemonic discourse into stereotypical imagery charged with mysticism, exoticism, irrationality, primitivism, fancifulness and/or malevolence, into the demonized, alienated, and marginalized "Other". For the part of the Chinese females in Hollywood films, such as Daryle Duke's *Taipan* (1986), Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon*, and David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly* (1993), one can see that they are positioned as the "Other of the Other", since they are not only the racial and ethnic Other, but also the sexual Other in the imperial and patriarchal contexts. While exploring how Chineseness has been perceived and represented in relation to power, racial politics, identity politics, occidental and oriental relations, visual spectacle and imperial gaze, centrality and marginality, Li Yufeng's project constantly refers to the Otherized Chineseness in her reading of theoretical as well as cinematic texts in order to demonstrate how Chineseness has been reproduced and exploited for historical, ideological, commercial and cultural reasons by the Hollywood narratives. One of her major objectives is to conduct fresh interrogations into the problematic construction of Chineseness as the mysterious, heathen and alien Other in Hollywood cinema. Representations of Chineseness as the object of spectacle and gaze, of exotic pleasure and alien threat in the Hollywood "Dream Factory" are fabricated with colonial discourse and power constellations, reiterating a need for a genuine understanding of Chineseness and its identity politics as an affirmed Otherness, an empowered minority discourse, for ideological, political, and cultural progress.

In the so called melting pot of multi-ethnic societies, racial

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relations in the United States have ever remained the most controversial issue in reality and a terrain of contestation in mass media. Sitcom, as the most popular and durable television drama in the United States, has been witness to the shifting politics of racial representations on the small screen. In the book *Representations of Ethnicity in American Sitcoms in the 1990s*, Peng Qigui makes an original exploration of how ethnic groups are represented in the American sitcoms. Building on the previous studies of sitcoms in relation to the issue of ethnicity, this study, combining both content and textual analysis, focuses its attention on the representations of ethnicity in sitcoms in the 1990s by examining some of the most influential and popular black, yellow and white sitcoms. Peng Qigui attempts to respond to the following specific questions: Which ethnic groups have been represented and how have they been represented in these popular shows? What are the features or trends that characterize the sitcoms in the 1990s in terms of racial or ethnic representation? How have these forms of representation contextualized themselves and what are the social, economic, political, and cultural intentions and implications behind these constructions of the images of the ethnic minorities? How has the genre of sitcom been employed and exploited to serve the purpose of conforming to and/or subverting the dominant WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) ideological hegemony in representing ethnicity? And what could be expected from future sitcoms in representing ethnicity? In Chapter One "The Making of Sitcom", the author introduces the genre of sitcom and discusses its characteristics and social ideology. Chapter Two "Representations of Ethnicity from 1950s to 1980s" examines the representations of ethnicity in sitcoms before the 1990s while Chapter Three "Representations of Ethnicity in Non-White Sitcoms in the

1990s" explores the representations of black Americans and Asian Americans in "black" and "yellow" sitcoms. In Chapter Four "Representations of Ethnicity in White Sitcoms in the 1990s", the focus of this study shifts to the representations of ethnicity in two of the most popular and influential sitcoms in the 1990s — *Seinfeld* and *Friends*. And the last chapter "Sitcom Situates Ethnicity" further looks into the relationship between comedy and ethnicity and concludes that sitcom, as an important part of televisual culture, challenges and even subverts dominant ideologies, thus empowering discourses of marginalised ethnicities.

When addressing the question of agency in *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994: 171), Homi K. Bhabha points out, "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives ... intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples." With these New Topics in Contemporary Cultural Studies, thanks to the vision and understanding of the editors at Sun Yat-sen University Press, especially Mr. Xiong Xiyuan and Mr. Chutian, we wish to present to our readers an opportunity to hear a variety of voices in postcolonial and feminist cultural studies, voices that explore the socio-cultural significance of different discourses and personal meanings of the act of literary and cultural critique in the age of glocalisation, the age of uncertainty and the age of transformation. Let me conclude this Preface with a quotation from the "Epilogue" of *Gaudete* (Faber, 1977:177–178) by the late British Poet Laureate Ted Hughes that still speaks

powerfully to us today:

At the top of my soul
A box of dolls.

In the middle of my soul
A circus of gods.

t the bottom of my soul
The usual mess of squabblers.

In front of me
A useful-looking world, a thrilling weapon.

Behind me
A cave.

Inside the cave, some female groaning
In labour —

Or in hunger —

Or in fear, or sick, or forsaken —

Or —

At this point, I feel the sun's strength.
I take a few still-aimless happy steps.

And I firmly believe that these postcolonial and feminist cultural projects will enable us to take some further steps towards a theory of cultural hybridity and polyvalence, thus ushering in a certain transformation in our "glocalised" understanding of social, geopolitical and cultural differences which would hopefully go beyond the polarities of Self and Other, Chinese and West.

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