

早期印刷史解謎— 英國十八世紀印刷商約翰·懷特現存木雕版與相關印刷品

宋美瑩³²

摘要

約翰·懷特（John White, 1689–1769）是十八世紀英格蘭北部極具代表性的出版商與印刷商，其事業以新堡（Newcastle-upon-Tyne）為中心，印製與發行內容涵蓋民謠傳單、通俗小書（chapbooks）及兒童讀物等類型。更具研究意義的是，懷特工坊所使用的大量原始印刷木刻版（printing woodblocks）至今仍保存於世，主要分藏於美國洛杉磯杭廷頓圖書館與加拿大麥吉爾大學圖書館。本文旨在對這批極具歷史意義的物質遺產進行系統性研究，核心問題包括：這些木刻印版的真實性與流傳脈絡為何？它們在懷特的出版策略與視覺傳播中扮演了何種角色？懷特木刻版有何重要性？早期文獻中木雕版製作知識的缺口，為本研究重新檢視木雕版實物與其工藝角色提供重要切入點。本研究透過實地考察杭廷頓圖書館、大英圖書館與新堡市立圖書館，結合歷史考證與實物比對的方法，深入分析懷特印刷品與其對應木刻版之間的關聯。研究旨在凸顯實體文物（artefacts）於歷史學實證研究中的不可替代價值；特別是在數位虛擬資訊氾濫、真偽辨識日益困難的當下，物質性研究的實證意義更需被重新評估與重視。本文亦為國家科學及技術委員會多年期研究計畫的重要成果之一。

關鍵詞：約翰·懷特、新堡、印刷木刻版、民謠傳單、通俗小書

³² 佛光大學歷史系副教授。

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Solving the Mysteries of Early Printing History-

-Surviving woodblocks and their print of the 18th-century British printer John White

Mei-Ying Sung ¹

Abstract

John White (1689–1769) was a highly representative publisher and printer in northern England during the eighteenth century, operating primarily from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His enterprise encompassed the printing and distribution of broadsides, chapbooks, and children's books. Of particular significance is the survival of a large number of original printing woodblocks from White's workshop, now primarily preserved at the Huntington Library (Los Angeles, USA) and McGill University Library (Canada). This paper conducts a systematic study of this substantial body of material heritage, addressing key questions such as: What is the provenance and authenticity of these woodblocks? What roles did they play in White's publishing strategy and visual culture? Why have later collectors shown such intense interest and value appreciation toward these woodblocks, which appear "crude" in craftsmanship? Based on field research conducted at the Huntington Library, the British Library, and Newcastle City Library, this study employs historical verification and comparative analysis of material to examine the relationship between White's printed works and their corresponding woodblocks. It argues for the irreplaceable value of physical artefacts in empirical historical research—especially in an age dominated by digital information, where questions of authenticity have become increasingly complex. This study constitutes a significant outcome of a multi-year research project funded by the National Science and Technology Council.

Keywords: John White, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, printing woodblock, broadside ballad, chapbook

¹ History Department, FoGuang University, Taiwan.

² No.160, Linwei Rd., Jiaosi, Yilan County 262307, Taiwan (R.O.C.).

*Corresponding author (E-mail): maysung70@gmail.com

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