

王金娥 著

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论艾米莉·狄金森诗歌中的孤独意识

A Landscape in Solitude: On the Consciousness of  
Loneliness in Emily Dickinson's Poetry



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When I with thee  
Wild nights - should be

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Wild nights - Wild nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild nights should be  
Our loves;

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## 前言

作为被当今世界文坛所热衷的神秘人物,艾米莉·狄金森(1830~1886)因其传奇人生及独特创作在文学评论界经历了颇具戏剧性的沉浮:生前默默无闻,逝后则广受欢迎,且其盛名与日俱增。早在1924年,康拉德·艾肯便将狄金森的诗歌誉为“英语创作中最出色的女性诗歌”,此评价可谓一语中的。狄金森研究在美国已形成一个独特的学科:狄金森学。然而,国内的狄金森研究起步较晚,研究形式多为论文,著作性研究实属凤毛麟角。本书是作者在博士毕业论文基础上完善而成,以孤独意识为主线梳理了狄金森的诗歌思想,以期为读者展现狄金森不同层面的精神世界,从而为狄金森研究提供一个新的视角。

狄金森的一生扑朔迷离,而诗歌则大多晦涩难懂,这与她生前的隐逸生活不无关系,也是国内外狄金森研究愈演愈烈的重要因素。狄金森偏向内省、离群索居,然而,其诗歌想像中构建的世界却丰富多彩,并具有恢弘的感知空间。狄金森在家宅中孤独终老,虽困于二楼卧室的逼仄空间,但其诗歌却以全景式视角阐释宏大的主题,譬如宗教、自然、爱情、生死、永恒等。无论表达方式还是内在含义,狄金森的诗歌都不会给人以狭隘及单调之感。然而,在其诗歌世界中,狄金森也展示出内心强烈的孤独及痛苦。诚然,诗人弃绝正常的人际交往及社会活动、凌驾于尘世之上的孤寂生活



似乎是其孤独感的根源,但在细致审视之下,狄金森的孤独感超越了这种普通意义上的孤寂,进而被放大成为一种更深层次的内心体验,而这归根结底源自诗人在 19 世纪新英格兰浓重的宗教社会背景下及其在维多利亚时代父权制文化中的离经叛道。狄金森坚持认为,孤独是人之为人的固有特性,而人生注定是一场孤独的行程。此外,狄金森在人与自然的思考中获得了某种清醒的超然,认为天人合一无望实现,而人类在面对自然及宇宙时存在一种集体孤独感,这进一步增强了诗人的孤独意识。

狄金森在诗歌中阐释自己对宗教、自然、生死及永恒的观点,但其矛盾及多变性给读者的解读带来重重障碍,而诗人对传统诗歌格律、语法规则及措辞的背弃,其诗歌中诡异独特的意象,及其简洁多元的内涵加剧了其诗歌批评的复杂性及困难性。狄金森宣称,其诗歌中的言说者并非自己,而是“假想者”。尽管这预示了现代诗歌的创作观点——虚构叙述者,然而,狄金森的诗歌、书信及传记资料无一不在印证着同一个不可辩驳的事实:狄金森诗歌中的“我”为诗人自身说话。在狄金森研究中,经常出现鲁莽判断、简单化甚至是歪曲的解读,鉴于此,本书力求以文本细读为基础,并将狄金森置于相关历史与文化语境中,以期获取更为可靠的文本解读及观点论证。书中采用存在主义视角阐述狄金森的黯淡生死观及其对宗教、自然的哲学思考,而女性主义批评理论则被用来诠释诗人在 19 世纪父权制社会及父权诗学下的生存状态及作者身份焦虑。此外,本研究采用精神分析法对狄金森的内心世界进行探索和解析。

本书由六章组成。第一章为引言部分,首先对孤独进行定义,并确定孤独在文中的内涵及措辞。在陈述本研究的意义目的及分析方法之后,文献综述部分对中外狄金森研究的历史及现状进行梳理,为后文的论述奠定基础。第二章阐述狄金森因对 19 世纪新英格兰制度宗教的反叛而遭受孤独之苦,进而致力于其个人信仰

的发展。第三章论述狄金森在对人类生存的思考中所产生的孤独感,主要体现在三个方面:自然中的孤独、生命中的孤独、死亡面前的孤独。第四章将狄金森置于19世纪新英格兰的历史语境中,解析诗人在维多利亚时代的父权制文化中所遭受的性别孤独。第五章深入探讨狄金森孤独意识的性质,并指出其双重性:孤独中的痛苦焦虑以及独处中的浪漫体验。第六章为结论部分。

狄金森在默默无闻中度过寂寥的一生,而孤独在其生命中挥之不去。狄金森坚持听从心智的呼唤,信守质朴的真理,从而拒绝了制度宗教。在看清上帝及天堂的虚伪面目之后,狄金森转而内省,坚持童真信仰,并在真理与美的不懈追寻中逐渐建立起自己的个人信仰。由于宗教观截然不同,狄金森与家人和朋友渐行渐远,在反叛中踽踽独行。从存在主义视角看,狄金森凭借其敏锐的观察力和思考获得了对人与自然关系的清醒认识,而人与自然的疏离成为诗人孤独意识的重要源泉。在其存在孤独感中,狄金森将人生看作一场孤独的行旅,充斥着死亡带来的分离与失去,而来世不过是虚妄。在19世纪的新英格兰,狄金森作为女性及女性作家在父权语境中备受偏见,遭受着性别带来的孤独感。她在追求文学创作的社会认可过程中备受创伤,其诗歌光芒被父权诗学的权威所遮蔽。在细读文本的基础上,本研究意在为狄金森的孤独正名:其孤独感无论在含义还是后果方面都具有双重性。除带给诗人痛苦、焦虑甚至恐惧之外,孤独在狄金森的诗歌中被部分转化为一种平和的慰藉力量,并成为其生存及诗歌创作的沃土。孤独带给狄金森必要的宁静生活及冥想空间,进而保存了其作品中的个性及独创性。狄金森在孤独中通过对生死及自然的审视获得了更为恢弘的视角,从而生出敏锐的洞察力及智慧的顿悟。狄金森在孤独中与自然和世界直接相遇,沉潜地观察并思考,而对繁杂的人间事物则保持了某种清醒的超然,颇有几分道家“独与天地精神相往来”的气概。狄金森遁出尘世,却并未与世隔绝。诗人通过将其

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沉默变为另一种言说及抗议,以迂回的方式实现了隐藏话语的表达。

狄金森的诗歌是其自我的直接投射。在仔细审视其诗歌世界的基础上,本书旨在洞悉狄金森的孤独意识,并希望以此阐明狄金森对美国个人主义精神及世界文学的贡献。同时,本研究力求展现一个可信的狄金森形象:弥漫在她生命及作品中的孤独,除却其腐蚀性外,已然上升到一种生存哲学的高度。对狄金森而言,孤独是一种彰显人的意志品质的生存状态,更是一种智慧的境界,她的诗歌也因此成为美国文学乃至世界文学中一方独特的风景。

本书的撰写受益于我的博士生导师郭继德教授的启发及悉心指导。学院领导、同事及家人对本课题研究提供了大力帮助。山东大学出版社对本书的出版给予了大力支持。在此一并表示诚挚的谢意。

作者虽时时不敢懈怠,但囿于水平,书中难免存有疏漏或谬误,敬请学界前辈及同行指正。

王金娥

2012年3月于济南

## Abstract

As a mysterious figure haunting the literary world nowadays, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) has experienced fairly dramatic ups and downs in critical reception with her legendary life and unique writing: an intense obscurity in lifetime and then an enormous popularity currently with an ever-increasing reputation. Conrad Aiken is fully justified when he, in 1924, acclaimed Dickinson's works to be "the finest poetry by a woman in the English Language".

Dickinson's intense reclusion partly accounts for her enigmatic life story and baffling poetic expression, and also underlies the increasingly intensified academic interest from scholars throughout the world. Being highly introspective, Dickinson lives in an insular world, but the world she builds in her poetic imagination is enriched and her perceptions are universal. Though living a lonely life confined in her bedroom upstairs in the Dickinson Homestead, Dickinson, from a panoramic perspective, dwells on such grand subjects in poetry as religion, nature, love, death and immortality. Dickinson's poetry does not give the impression of being narrow-minded or monotonous either in

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expression or connotation. However, in her poetic world, Dickinson also displays a strong sense of loneliness and the concomitant pain and suffering. It is true that her loneliness apparently originates from her solitary life over the mundane sphere for lack of normal interpersonal relationship and social involvement, but, when more closely examined, Dickinson's loneliness goes beyond the general state of being alone and gets enlarged into an experience more profound, which is essentially caused by her rebellion against the deeply established religion in the 19th-century New England and the patriarchally defined Victorian society. Dickinson insists that loneliness is an inherent fact of human existence and man's life is doomed to be a lonely journey. In addition, the poet's consciousness of loneliness is reinforced by Dickinson's sober detachment in the relationship between man and nature. The poet holds that, with the unity between self and nature impossible to achieve, human beings harbor a sense of collective loneliness in confrontation with nature and the cosmos.

Dickinson experiments with her attitudes towards religion, nature, life, death and immortality in her poetry, but her paradoxical attitudes and variable tones pose great difficulty in readers' interpretation and appreciation of her poetry, while her disregard for meters and rhymes, her unconventional and irregular grammar and diction, her weird imagery and unusually compressed connotation, all add to the complexity and difficulty in the criticism of her poetry. Although she anticipates the modern idea that poetry is usually equipped with a fictional speaker when she tells of the speaker in her poems as a "supposed person" instead of herself, a careful examination of her poems, letters and

biographical texts provides the eloquent testimony that "I" in her poetry speaks for the poet. Given the fact that quick judgments, simplification and even distortion frequent the Dickinson scholarship, this book is based on an intensive reading of Dickinson's texts and, by setting Dickinson in the proper historical and cultural contexts, it seeks to make more reliable the interpretation and analysis. Existentialist views are employed in this book to formulate Dickinson's bleak view of life and death, and her philosophical contemplation on religion and nature, while feminist criticism is adopted to illustrate Dickinson's living status and anxiety of authorship in the patriarchal society and patriarchal poetics of the 19th-century New England. Besides, the psychoanalytical approach is used to conduct the analysis of Dickinson's psyche and inner world.

The book consists of six chapters. Chapter One, the introduction part, defines loneliness, its connotation, and dictions. Following that, the significance and purpose of this study, and the analytical approaches this study employs are clarified. This part also conducts a literature review sorting out the past and current research studies, both abroad and in China, on Dickinson, which is the foundation of the ensuing argumentation.

Chapter Two formulates Dickinson's loneliness resulting from her rebellion against the institutional religion in the 19th-century New England. It is a demanding task to perceive Dickinson's view of religion, given the poet's hesitant and paradoxical attitudes. Living in the intensely Puritan context, Dickinson longs for God's identification and shelter in order to acquire a sense of belonging in terms of faith, but over such crucial reli-

gious questions as whether God saves and whether soul survives after death, Dickinson transfers into a skeptic from her early belief and aspiration, for she recognizes God's indifference, impotence, hypocrisy and cruelty. With the popularization and enlightenment of secular knowledge mainly brought by scientific and geological developments, Dickinson gets disenchanted in her worship for God and in her hope for future salvation. With the Civil War shattering her hope for God's mercy and blessing, Dickinson, under the influence of Emersonian Transcendentalism, turns to nature for spiritual attachment and comfort. She quits church-going and claims herself a confessed rebel. In the process of her rejecting the institutional religion, Dickinson is cut off from the religious community and feels further estranged from her family members and friends who successively convert. Along with it comes her loneliness of social dimension. Regardless of the ardent persuasion from her family and friends and the constant efforts on her part, Dickinson fails to claim her membership, for she couldn't escape her questioning obsession and disenchantment. However, she never ceases struggling between aspiration and rejection with vehemence in her whole life, while the hesitation and oscillation are, to a great extent, responsible for her stronger sense of estrangement and loneliness.

In her despair of the established religion, Dickinson is devoted to developing a personal religion. In her pursuit of truth and beauty, she practices with her keen observation and profound meditation what Emerson advocates—to turn to nature for the discovery of truth and beauty with man's intuitional perception and cognition. Dickinson bears a cult of the child both phys-

ically and spiritually, which helps to preserve the untainted childlike perspective in her observation of the world and the articulation of her epiphany in a straight way. The child's faith in Dickinson produces novel lines in her poetry, but renders the poet, as a retarded adult, isolated in the actual world.

Chapter Three focuses on Dickinson's loneliness in her reflection on human existence, which mainly consists in three aspects: loneliness in nature, loneliness in life and loneliness in confrontation with death. During this process, Dickinson experiences a strong existential loneliness, or cosmic loneliness. Following Romanticist tradition and especially Emersonian doctrines, Dickinson believes that nature is the embodiment of beauty, and man derives pleasure both from his direct observation of natural scenery and his further meditation on nature. Nature in Dickinson's poetry is a highly personalized and internalized existence, projecting the poet's inner landscape. However, in her keen observation and intuitive perception, Dickinson identifies the other side of nature: cold, indifferent, and even destructive. Inheriting more of Emerson's skepticism, Dickinson develops a detached view of nature, which emphasizes its impermanence, unpredictability and inscrutability. To Dickinson, nature is an unattainable mystery following its inherent order, which, despite man's constant efforts and wishful thinking, is beyond man's perception and cognition. With the ultimate integration between man and nature impossible to realize, man's alienation from nature makes an obsessing proposition in Dickinson's ideology.

Although there are poems celebrating the ecstasy of living in



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her works, Dickinson, generally speaking, holds a pessimistic view of man's existence. Regarding man as a lonely pilgrim, Dickinson defines man's existence as a lonely journey, which is invariably accompanied by separations both in life and on death. Life being short and fleeting, Dickinson relies on friends to achieve a necessary emotional fulfillment in her seclusion, while their departure, for various reasons, renders the poet in a more isolated state. Meanwhile, Dickinson suffers from her remote relationship with her parents as a severely starving-thirsting child in the family. With a stern and remote father, and a subservient and unobtrusive mother, Dickinson is deprived of a healthy role model and an assisting force in her formative period of character and later maturation, which is responsible for the development of the poet's introverted nature and suppressed character. The sense of estrangement and loss resulting from her unfulfilled emotional aspiration gets deepened by her frustrations in love affairs. Though some critics hold that Dickinson's choice of celibacy, to a larger extent, results from her determination not to conform to the standard set for women by the Victorian society, which articulates her protest against the patriarchal culture, it is a stark reality that Dickinson spends her single life in her father's homestead, haunted by loneliness and pain.

In her poetry, Dickinson presents us with a death-haunted persona. She focuses on death as man's doom, while the survival of man's soul after death is evaluated as a precarious proposition. The confrontation with imminent death causes an essential loneliness in man's life, which is characterized by Dickinson's presentation of separation, loss and pain in her poetry. Man's life on

earth is threatened and made bleak by the shadow of death, but when she resorts to a future life where reunion can be ensured and happiness resumed, Dickinson displays strong doubt and uncertainty. However, the borderline between her doubt of afterlife and her longing for immortality is impossible to be clarified. She wavers between belief and disbelief in her conjecture of an afterlife, unable to settle for a single conclusion.

Chapter Four analyzes Dickinson's loneliness in gender by placing the poet in the historical context of the 19th-century New England characterized by the patriarchal culture in the Victorian era. Dickinson's loneliness stems from her inferior stance as a woman in the patriarchal society, and her anxiety of authorship as a woman writer in the patriarchal poetics. Being an alien to the 19th-century patriarchal context in New England, Dickinson is subjected to a loneliness of cultural dimension. Though she's entitled to a relatively systematic primary education due to the family's fortune and her father's asserted support of women's education, Dickinson is denied higher education and active public involvement largely because of her father's, characteristic of the society's, conviction that women are educated in order to be more marketable in marriage. Besides the familial chores, Dickinson undertakes a poetic writing with no family members paying attention to her poetic impulses or talents. Both at home and in the social context, Dickinson is ignored and lives in reticence.

The 19th-century America witnesses the rising of a group of female writers, but on the whole, female writing is encumbered and restrained in the patriarchally defined poetics. Suffering from the strictly gendered society, Dickinson is castigated by the

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Victorian aesthetic standard for her wayward writing. She professes a longing for public acknowledgement, but refuses to modify herself so as to cater to the conventional standard which has been established and guarded by men. She disregards regular meters and rhymes of traditional poetry, and even challenges the grammatical appropriacy, employing poetry as the natural catharsis of her psychological strains and crises. Well aware that her violation of convention sets the barrier on her way to reputation and fame, Dickinson nevertheless stays her course by refusing to make substantial changes. While being prepared to renounce social acknowledgement, Dickinson seeks to utter her voice with another textual strategy and a hidden face. By employing a "supposed" speaker and a masculine persona, Dickinson approximates what the feminists term as "androgyny", but, meanwhile, experiences a disintegration of her self, which brings about a loneliness of psychological dimension. Where she stands alone in religion, she now poses herself as a stubborn rebel in the patriarchal society, feeling utterly isolated and forsaken by the world.

Chapter Five conducts a strenuous analysis on the nature of Dickinson's loneliness, and clarifies its duality: great pain in loneliness, and romantic appreciation of solitude. In her rebellion against the established religion and the patriarchal society, Dickinson is cut off from the society and loses her sense of belonging, while her detachment in the reflection on man's relationship with nature initiates her in a metaphysical loneliness. Meanwhile, judging from an existentialist perspective, Dickinson derives a strong sense of estrangement and alienation in her con-

templation of life and death, while the illusory nature of heaven or afterlife makes life on earth more bleak and pressed. Dickinson's loneliness, whatever dimension it is, gives rise to the negative emotions she reiterates in her works: anxiety, pain and even terror. Her pain in loneliness progresses from an early sentimentality and melancholy to later crushing depression, which even renders enticing the idea of suicide. In her death poems, Dickinson has her speaker speaking the apparently unspeakable experience of dying from beyond death. In addition, she stages the detailed process of suicide in her poetry, holding the self-chosed ending of one's life to be necessary to escape the pains and sufferings in life.

While her poetry is permeated with the depressing pain of loneliness, there's another note which can't be ignored: the celebration of solitude. Dickinson derives an aesthetic satisfaction from solitude and appreciates her meditation in solitary moments. She practises Henry David Thoreau's conviction that solitude is one's best companion, which ensures Dickinson's authenticity in a room of her own. By retreating from the tumultuous world to a wider world of her poetic imagination, Dickinson pursues her personal religion in an unvarnished way, rejects the framework of patriarchal poetics, and succeeds in preserving her self and individuality, leaving the world a legacy of nearly 2,000 poems, which are original, novel, thought-laden and fresh with rain, dew and earth. Solitude becomes the source of her poetic inspiration and stimulus of her poetic potentials. Dickinson hasn't perished in her reticence; instead she turns this reticence into a "dialogic" one by conducting a profound contemplation and

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getting involved in the world with another textual strategy in a slant way. Solitude helps to fulfill the poet's self-examination and self-perfection, contributing substantially to the interpretation of American individualism. Confined in her bedroom, Dickinson nevertheless achieves a universal perspective and horizon in detachment, which accounts for the impression that Dickinson's poetry is highly personal yet does not suffer the least hint of monotonousness or restrictions.

The last chapter summarizes the explorations and main findings of this study, and presents the conclusion. With loneliness as an obsession, Dickinson's life has been spent in withdrawal and obscurity. Owing to her persistent adherence to authentic mentality and fundamental truth, Dickinson rejects the institutional belief. Recognizing God's hypocrisy and the illusiveness of heaven, Dickinson turns inwards for the development of a personal religion, sticking to her own way to seeking truth and beauty via clinging to a child's faith. In the religious divergence, Dickinson gets distanced from her family members and friends, standing alone in rebellion. Viewed from an existentialist perspective, Dickinson, from her keen observation and contemplation, acquires a detached perception of the relationship between man and nature, while man's alienation from nature constitutes an important source of the poet's loneliness. In her existential loneliness, Dickinson believes that life is a lonely journey frequented by separation and loss caused by death while the prospect of an afterlife is only a fantasy. Dickinson's sense of loneliness is reinforced by her gender in the 19th-century New England, where women suffer from their inferior status quo while