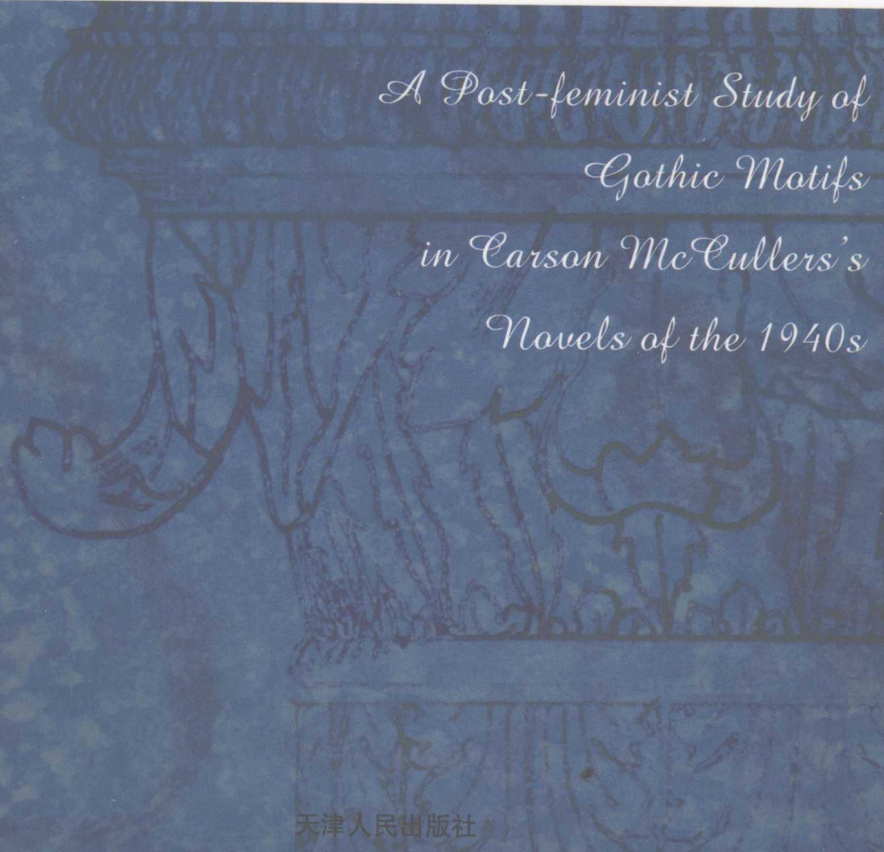


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卡森·麦卡勒斯四十年代小说  
哥特主题之后女性主义研究

林斌 著



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Novels of the 1940s*

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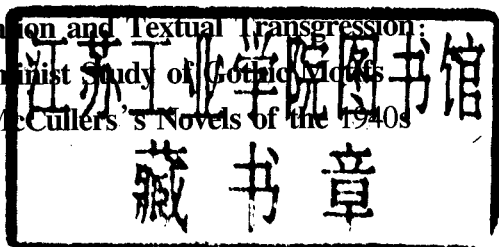
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## 内 容 提 要

在 20 世纪美国文学史上,卡森·麦卡勒斯(Carson McCullers 1917-1967)是一位成就突出的现代南方女作家,通常被看作“南方哥特流派”(Southern Gothic school of writing)的主要代表人物之一。1940 年,年仅 22 岁的麦卡勒斯因为第一部长篇小说《心灵是孤独的猎手》的出版而一举成名。随后,三部杰作《金眼睛里的映像》、《伤心咖啡馆之歌》和《婚礼的成员》相继问世。麦卡勒斯在 1967 年辞世时年仅 50 岁,身后留下了 5 部长篇小说、2 个剧本、20 个短篇小说、20 余篇散文和文学评论、1 部儿童诗集和若干零散的诗作以及一部未完成的自传。其中,诞生于 20 世纪 40 年代的四部主要小说先后被成功地改编成戏剧或电影;特别是剧作《婚礼的成员》于 1950 年在百老汇连续上演了 501 场,并获得了当年的若干戏剧奖项。这些成就为麦卡勒斯在文学史上赢得了一席之地。在后人看来,麦卡勒斯的名字在众多声名显赫、成就斐然的现代南方作家——如威廉·福克纳、凯瑟琳·安·波特、尤多拉·韦尔蒂、弗兰纳里·奥康纳、罗伯特·潘·沃伦、杜鲁门·卡波特等人——的行列之中多少显得有些黯淡。但是,单就作家本人来说,至少有一点是可以肯定的:继《心灵是孤独的猎手》发表后的十年是卡森·麦卡勒斯写作生涯中最为辉煌的时期,这期间发表的作品基本上决定了她在文学史上的声望和地位。可以说,她在 20 世纪 40 年代便完成了她一生中几乎所有的重要作品,就连 1961 年发表的《没有指针的钟》也是在这十年间开始酝酿成型的。

就麦卡勒斯的小说创作主题而言,评论界早在 20 世纪 50 年代初麦卡勒斯研究伊始就达成了一种奇特的共识:80 年代之前的

麦卡勒斯评论几乎为关于爱与孤独主题的探讨所垄断,“精神隔绝”(spiritual isolation)被看作贯穿麦卡勒斯全部作品的一条主要线索而成为人类普遍生存状态的抽象概括。这个概括性字眼最早由奥利弗·埃文斯于1952年首次提出,他在那篇题为《卡森·麦卡勒斯的精神隔绝主题》的评论文章中指出:人之孤独与爱之无能构成了贯穿麦卡勒斯所有主要作品的基本主题。这种说法很快得到麦卡勒斯本人首肯并在她的文章中得到呼应。她于1957年写道:“我想,我的中心主题是精神隔绝主题。当然,我总是感到孤独。”另外,她在1959年发表的散文《开花的梦:写作札记》中再次提到“精神隔绝是我的大多数创作主题的基础。我的第一部作品与此相关,几乎全部有关,此后的所有作品都以一种或另一种方式涉及到它。爱,特别是一个无力偿还或承受它的人的爱,是我选择作为表现对象的怪诞人物的关键所在——那些人身上的生理残疾象征着他们无法爱或被爱的精神残缺——亦即他们的精神隔绝”。此后,“精神隔绝”便往往作为关键词频频出现在麦卡勒斯评论中。评论家朱迪斯·吉布林·詹姆斯在《神童:卡森·麦卡勒斯的声誉》(1995)一书中将麦卡勒斯小说早期评论中出现的这种雷同现象称作“新批评共识”(New Critical Consensus),也就是说,这个现象是20世纪30至50年代间“新批评”兴盛时期的直接产物,体现了“新批评”从作品的形式出发强调整体性特征、注重提炼人文主义的抽象价值观的研究方法。其结果是不仅把麦卡勒斯的作品变成了一个主旋律的多个变奏体,使其创作主题范围显得狭窄单一,而且使作品超脱了特定的历史文化语境,成为普遍人性的象征和永恒真理的符码体系。

在“新批评”的影响下,早期评论家试图给麦卡勒斯贴上“次要作家”的标签,将其淹没在一阵负面评价的浪潮中。针对麦卡勒斯评论的狭窄视野,评论家卡尔在1987年曾表示“有必要重新界定麦卡勒斯的作品。尽管麦卡勒斯的多数作品都充斥着哥特和怪诞成分,但是评论家已经将这类研究重复到了叫人忍无可忍的地步。该采用新方法了,该对她的作品作出更多的女性主义和社会研究

以及结构主义和符号学阐释,把它们同其他文学 and 知识传统联系起来,同其他艺术形式作比较”。事实上,从70年代起,评论家就陆续开始对“新批评共识”提出了挑战,运用女性主义、美国黑人研究、新历史主义、后结构主义、酷儿理论等批评方法对麦卡勒斯的作品重新展开研究,或者将麦卡勒斯置于南方文学以外的其他美国文学传统中加以审视,比如妇女文学传统、浪漫主义文学和现代主义等文学传统。因而,麦卡勒斯研究领域至今已经初步呈现出一派多元化景象。其中特别值得一提的是20世纪80年代以来女性主义者在这个领域取得的突破性进展。早期“新批评共识”的一个明显特征是性别的缺席:作家的性别问题不仅没有引起评论界的关注,而且被看成作品局限性的根源所在。女性主义批评家对此作出了超越父权制文学的传统视角和审美标准以外的修正性解读。

关于麦卡勒斯在美国文学史上的地位问题,诸多评论家表现出不确定的态度:麦卡勒斯研究者、传记作家弗吉尼亚·斯潘塞·卡尔在1987年写道:“至于她是否算得上主要作家,评论家尚在争论这个问题。”到了1996年,莉萨·洛根仍然表达了几乎同样的意思:评论家“不能确定她是一名主要作家还是次要作家,现代主义作家还是乡土作家”。事实上,早在60年代,评论家埃文斯就曾经敏锐地察觉到评论界对麦卡勒斯的不友好态度,并在一篇文章中提出这样一个问题:麦卡勒斯为何不受评论家的欢迎?埃文斯本人对这个现象作出的解释是:她的作品多半是以寓言的形式来表现人类心灵之谜,提出的问题虽然具有现实性却令人感到不快。的确,麦卡勒斯的作品向世人揭示了某些令人不快的真理,然而,这些真理如同涌动的逆流潜藏在简单朴素的表象之下,似乎绝非“精神隔绝”一词能言以蔽之。另外,潘西娅·里德·布劳顿在评论《伤心咖啡馆之歌》时曾指出,“多数研究仅仅强调隔绝,它们似乎都忽视了这样一个事实,即孤独状态其实至少在一段时期里被打破”。的确,多数评论家在“新批评”的浪潮中不约而同地过分强调了“隔绝”主题,却往往忽略了作品中颠覆现实世界的乌托邦色彩,造成

了隔绝状态持久性的印象,这种误读不仅仅局限于《伤心咖啡馆之歌》这部作品。这些主流以外的声音微弱却富于洞见,不能不促使麦卡勒斯评论家在当代语境下对“精神隔绝”主题进行重新审视:埃文斯所提到的“某些令人不快的真理”到底是什么?既然布劳顿指出了长期占主导地位的“隔绝模型说”的片面性,那么应当对此作出怎样的修正呢?

本书以麦卡勒斯发表的40年代的四部代表作为研究对象,进一步对“精神隔绝”这一主题作语境化处理,把身份构建特别是性别身份构建作为切入点来挖掘文本中潜在的却被长期忽视的社会历史文化语境,以期重新发掘麦卡勒斯作品的意识形态层面,从而突出作家的反主流意识。基于上述问题,笔者在此提出麦卡勒斯作品的“隔绝—越界”模型,尝试对麦卡勒斯研究作出以下创新性贡献:

其一,在社会身份构建这一领域中探讨“精神隔绝”的成因,从而达到修正“精神隔绝”普遍价值说的目的。“精神隔绝”是一个典型的哥特主题,而麦卡勒斯作品的哥特性在形式上主要体现在怪诞手法的运用上,特别是怪诞人物的刻画,比如生理残疾人、社会畸零人以及具有反叛意识的青少年形象等。麦卡勒斯关注的是被主流意识形态放逐到边缘的“他者”个体,她笔下的人物多来自于各个弱势群体,分别在种族、性别、阶级、性取向乃至年龄等一个或多个方面处于劣势。从社会学意义来看,这种哥特性实质上可以从身份构成上得到解释,体现了弱势群体在身份形成的过程中受到的意识形态压迫。同时,“越界”冲动使“隔绝”状态暂时被打破,现实的身份等级体系被一种乌托邦理想秩序所代替;然而,现实秩序终究会重占上风,人物最终陷入更深的“隔绝”之中。这就是“隔绝—越界”(isolation/transgression)模型的内涵。

其二,从多元化女性主义视角审视身份形成和人际交往的过程,从而实现全方位地考察“隔绝”是如何在社会性别与社会身份的其他组成成分交叉互动的过程中得以形成并暂时消解的。自上个世纪60年代,女性主义文学批评为了达到特定的政治目的从一

开始就将社会性别提升到中心位置,在挑战男权主流叙事权威、解构性别二元论的过程中忽略了社会身份的其他构成因素。这种着眼于单一主体特性的女性主义批评传统在注重“多元化”的当代语境中暴露出一定的片面性,往往给文本分析带来很大的局限性。本文借鉴了苏珊·S·弗里德曼提出的“社会身份疆界说”(Geographies of Identity),不仅从作家主体身份的多面性来理解麦卡勒斯以“隔绝—越界”为模型的社会身份观,而且在多重社会关系和情境中了解社会身份的其他构成元素与性别一同交互作用而在人物身上产生的综合效应。值得注意的是,麦卡勒斯笔下的怪诞人物常以“双性人”甚至“同性恋”为特征,这个性别隐喻表现了“越界”的概念,承载了消解社会等级界线、实现身份流动性的乌托邦理念。

其三,引入巴赫金的对话理论(dialogism)术语以便于描述身份组成元素间以及个体间相互作用的过程,如狂欢(carnival)、多声部(polyphony)和杂语(heteroglossia)等,同时将身份构建的过程分析扩展到话语层面。在笔者看来,巴赫金的狂欢化概念与女性主义和哥特在越界冲动上存在着契合点,因而具备了互文的前提条件。从本质上讲,狂欢所表现的恰好是一种越界的冲动,其效果在于打破常规秩序下的隔绝,实现身份等级体系的暂时消解。本文将“身份”概念表述为“哥特式的狂欢场所”(a Gothic site of carnival),并赋予“隔绝—越界”模型两个层面上的意义:在主题上,社会身份的乌托邦理想秩序包含着狂欢成分;在形式上,话语作为意识形态的载体参与了身份构建的狂欢化过程。文本的哥特性在身份边界的确立、消解和再确立的过程中得以体现;相应地,文本中弱势群体之间的对话及其与主流意识形态之间的对话反映了“自我”与“他者”之间的共生、对抗关系。个体最终获得社会身份的确定性,在文本中具体表现为身份边界的强化以及个体与主流话语的趋同。从这个意义来说,埃文斯所谓“某些令人不快的真理”指的就是权力这个幽灵以意识形态为媒介对个体生活特别是其身份构建过程的暗中操纵乃至暴力干预。

总之,不同时期的研究者一直都在以不同的方式破解麦卡勒



斯“精神隔绝”之谜,而后期评论家的贡献就在于不断超越“新批评共识”的局限性,在特定的意识形态领域里实现“精神隔绝”主题内涵的探索性解读。在这个过程中,不断更新的文化思潮和批评理念给麦卡勒斯的身份赋予了多重可能性。本书正是为探索这“多重可能性”所做的一次尝试,旨在特定历史语境(即三、四十年代的美国南方社会)与当代“多元化”语境之间的对话中揭示文本中潜在的“尚未言说的”(unspoken)以及“无法言说的”(unspeakable)真理。

## ABSTRACT

Almost from the beginning of her writing career, Carson McCullers' name has been closely associated with the Southern American Gothic school of writing. Under the influence of "New Criticism," McCullers' criticisms of the first thirty years are generally informed with a commonly shared view of "spiritual isolation" as an archetypal code that conveys some universal truth about modern human existence. To some extent, McCullers' studies since the mid-1970s mostly represent diverse critical efforts to retrieve the social cultural specificity lost in the "New Critical consensus" and resolve her myth of "spiritual isolation" in various ideological contexts. Accordingly, it is the aim of this study to further contextualize McCullers' "spiritual isolation" by placing the motif under scrutiny in Gothic contexts, especially the "Southern Gothic" and "Female Gothic" traditions. Incorporating Susan Stanford Friedman's "new geographies of identity" and Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, this post-feminist approach to McCullers is ultimately meant to reveal the ideological assumptions and contradictions of McCullers' works both in theme and in form; i.e., to sort out the centrifugal forces and the centripetal forces that divide the texts, in Bakhtinian terms.

By nature, McCullers' literary expressions of "spiritual isolation" are ultimately addressed to the writer's topmost concern with the issue of identity. As a Gothic theme, "spiritual isolation" seems to me to demonstrate the writer's sympathy or identification with the marginalized groups—the female, the working-class, the colored, the homosexual/sexually ambiguous and so on; and to the reader, it carries a voice raised to

speaking the unspoken and the unspeakable for the silenced. Accordingly, my critical contributions lie in the following three aspects: First, while the motif of isolation is conventionally emphasized in McCullers's portrayal of grotesqueries, I would like to put forward a model of isolation/transgression, which addresses the long neglected utopian idealism in McCullers's view of social identity. Second, whereas feminist critics have mostly devoted themselves to redressing the gender bias or gender blindness in early readings by foregrounding the gender issue in McCullers's works, I would argue for the examination of gender in the matrix of constituents of social identity, which may lead to a deeper understanding of McCullers's use of (homo) sexuality or bisexuality as a metaphor for the oppressed groups' common aspiration for the dissolution of social boundaries and the fluidity of identities. Third, Bakhtin's terms of dialogism, such as carnival, polyphony and heteroglossia, would be adopted to facilitate discussions of the isolation/transgression model with a view to reveal the shaping influence that Power exerts on identity formation through ideological intervention.

In sum, this study represents an attempt to explore the multiple possibilities of identity that current critical perspectives of pluralism may endow McCullers in the hope to reveal the writer's "unspoken" and "unspeakable" truths by effecting a dialogue between the past, i.e., the American South of the 1930s and 40s, and the present, i.e., the contemporary context of postmodern concerns.

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## Introduction

### Reading Carson McCullers: Resolving the Myth of "Spiritual Isolation"

*When we are lost what image tells?  
Nothing resembles nothing. Yet nothing  
Is not blank. It is configured Hell:  
Of noticed clocks on winter afternoons, malignant stars,  
Demanding furniture. All unrelated  
And with air between.*

*The terror. Is it of Space, of Time?  
Or the joined trickery of both conceptions?  
To the lost, transfixed among the self-inflicted ruins,  
All that is non-air (if this indeed is not deception)  
Is agony immobilized. While Time,  
The endless idiot, runs screaming round the world.  
—— Carson McCullers, "When We Are Lost"  
(Voices, September-December 1952)*

In the twentieth-century American literary history, Carson McCullers (1917 – 67) ranks with Catherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty as one of the most significant Southern women writers. As it is, since the 1940s, McCullers's name has been closely associated with the Southern American Gothic school of writing, which made its claim on public attention during the Southern Renaissance – a period of literary boom in the New South under the stress of widespread deprivation and



suffering.<sup>①</sup> While the fifty years of her troubled life was punctuated by three crippling strokes since thirty and her writing career finally cut short by an early death, McCullers's literary output was quite impressive: she left behind four novels and a novella, as well as two plays, dozens of short stories and essays, a few poems and a collection of children's verse. Besides, her unfinished autobiography entitled *Illumination and Night Glare* finally came out in 1999.

McCullers was an intuitive writer whose imagination soars above reality. It is her firm belief that "A writer's main asset is intuition; too many facts impede intuition" ("The Flowering Dream," *The Mortgaged Heart*<sup>②</sup> 181). She insists, "A writer needs to know so many things, but there are so many things he doesn't need to know – he needs to know human things even if they aren't 'wholesome,' as they call it" (182) – the latter part of the statement obviously made in response to accusations of "morbidity" that were commonly addressed to the Southern writers at that time. And in another context, she remarks to the same effect: "once a creative writer is convinced of his own intentions, he must protect his work from alien persuasion. It is often a solitary position" ("The Vision Shared," MH 269). Indeed, while McCullers endured plenty of solitude both in writing career and in personal life during her lifetime, her works display her unique and consistent vision, which is inspired by her intuitive understanding of the universal human condition of everlasting loneliness, as critics have generally acknowledged. In my view, to some extent, McCullers studies over the past fifty years or so mostly represent diverse critical efforts to resolve her myth of "spiritual isolation" – the hallmark theme of McCullers's works – in one way or another. Accordingly, it is the aim of this study to offer one more interpretation of McCullers's "spiritual isolation" by placing the motif under scrutiny in Gothic contexts, especially the "Southern Gothic" and the "Female Gothic" traditions. Incorporating Susan Stanford Friedman's "new geographies