



*Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman:
Dramatizing Female Identity*

女性身份的嬗变

—— 莉莲·海尔曼与玛莎·诺曼剧作研究

岑玮 著



山东大学出版社

**Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman:
Dramatizing Female Identity**

女性身份的嬗变
——莉莲·海尔曼与玛莎·诺曼剧作研究

岑 玮 著

山东大学出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

女性身份的嬗变:莉莲·海尔曼与玛莎·诺曼剧作研究/
岑玮著. —济南:山东大学出版社, 2009. 12
ISBN 978-7-5607-3986-1

I. 女...

II. 岑...

III. ①海尔曼, L. (1906~1984) — 妇女文学: 戏剧文学 — 文学研究

②诺曼, M. (1947~) — 妇女文学: 戏剧文学 — 文学研究

IV. I712.073

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 193417 号

山东大学出版社出版发行

(山东省济南市山大南路 27 号 邮政编码: 250100)

山东省新华书店经销

济南铁路印刷厂印刷

850×1168 毫米 1/32 8.75 印张 216 千字

2009 年 12 月第 1 版 2009 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

定价: 18.00 元

版权所有, 盗印必究

凡购本书, 如有缺页、倒页、脱页, 由本社营销部负责调换

前言

目前国内对美国女性戏剧的研究仍很薄弱,本书是作者对博士论文进行完善撰写而成,希望对女性戏剧的研究有所贡献。本研究以唯物女权主义和精神分析女权主义为理论支持,对美国女性剧作家莉莲·海尔曼和玛莎·诺曼的原创剧作进行解读,旨在透视作品中女性人物在社会伦理范畴、家庭生存环境和个人心理空间的存在状态,进而探索两位剧作家作品中女性身份由依附到独立的嬗变。全书由王亚平完成,第一章为引言,阐释了本选题的成因、研究意义和研究方法,简要介绍了与主体分析相关的背景信息,梳理了国内外已有的研究文献,分析了现实主义和女权主义的关系,为本书的主体分析奠定了基础;第二章聚焦于两位作家作品中展现的父权社会中女性在道德层面所处的弱势地位;第三章探讨了两位作家剧作中所表现的女性在生存空间中的无能为力和无所选择;第四章深入到她们作品中女性人物的心理层面,探讨她们深刻的失落感和危机感;第五章为结论。本书把对莉莲·海尔曼和玛莎·诺曼剧作的研究置于美国戏剧的整体框架之内,旨在彰显她们的经典之作给美国戏剧舞台注入的活力和对美国戏剧的发展做出的重要贡献,同时指出诺曼对海尔曼的继承和发展从一个侧面书写了美国女性戏剧的不断成长。

同其他文学体裁一样,戏剧总是在不断地发展,反映特定文化

背景下的人类社会的变化,美国戏剧的发展就有力地证明了这一点。20 世纪初期,当男性剧作家在美国戏剧舞台的中心大放异彩时,女性剧作家尚处于默默无闻的边缘地带。然而,20 世纪 30 年代以后,随着女性社会地位的改变,女性剧作家们开始崛起,其创作形成了美国戏剧界充满活力的一道风景。20 世纪 60 年代,女权运动的第二次高潮进一步推动了美国女性戏剧的发展,大批优秀的女性戏剧家脱颖而出。她们作品的共同特点是关注女性经验和 20 世纪美国社会背景下的女性生存状态,莉莲·海尔曼和玛莎·诺曼是其中两位杰出的代表。值得关注的是,诺曼将海尔曼奉为先驱,在访谈中数次谈及海尔曼对其创作的深刻影响。

莉莲·海尔曼是美国 20 世纪前半叶最重要的剧作家之一。作为第一位闯入男性作家主宰的戏剧世界的女性,海尔曼在长达三十年的时间里创作了极具影响力的作品,尤以 1939 年发表的《小狐狸》而垂名。虽然女权主义运动在当时尚未产生广泛的影响,海尔曼在其作品中却已经渗透了深刻的女性关怀。玛莎·诺曼因《晚安,妈妈》于 1983 年获得普利策戏剧奖,距离海尔曼的创作高峰近半个世纪。诺曼的作品不仅沿袭了海尔曼一贯坚持的现实主义手法,而且秉承、发展了海尔曼的女权主义思想。

《儿童时间》和《出狱》分别是海尔曼和诺曼的处女作,都表现了女性在道德层面的困境。《儿童时间》讲述了公众基于一个孩子编造的有关同性恋的谎言对两位女教师进行迫害的故事。剧中的两位女教师最终被判定为有罪。海尔曼揭示了传统社会对未婚的职业女性的偏见和排斥,重申了她的一贯主题:在父权伦理的统治下,追求自主行为的女性受到社会舆论的排斥,没有生存的空间,难以立足于社会。剧中女性悲剧的根源不在于她们同性恋关系的真实与否,而在于她们创办学校、追求自主权力的行为违背了父权伦理对女性角色的定位。她们的行为对固有的社会道德和社会稳定形成了威胁,必然会招致迫害。本剧更大的悲剧在于男权社会

伦理道德的女性捍卫者的代代衍生,她们成为对两位女教师实施迫害的主力。

《出狱》中的主人公阿琳也是一位被父权法律制裁、受父权道德谴责的女性。诺曼借助于“分身法”,将阿琳的少年往事和成年经历在舞台上同时展示给观众,既追溯了女孩的成长过程中家庭、学校和监狱这些所谓的社会道德机构对女孩的堕落应该承担的责任,又揭露了这些机构对阿琳出狱后的生活产生的消极影响。出狱后的阿琳所面临的生活选择非常有限。如果她拒绝了仅能糊口的洗碗工的工作,就只能重操旧业做妓女。然而,现实虽然严酷,诺曼笔下的女主人公却并不放弃希望,最终找到了摆脱道德困境的出路,获得了寻求独立的社会身份的勇气和力量。

海尔曼最成功的作品《小狐狸》和诺曼的普利策奖获奖作品《晚安,妈妈》均以家庭为背景呈现女性的生存困境。《小狐狸》塑造了三代深陷家庭牢笼的南方女性。在本剧中,海尔曼将女性生存空间的局限性归结于经济原因。没有经济能力导致女性独立身份的缺失,以致她们的婚姻和前途都由家族中的男性掌控,成为男性成员获得利益的棋子。逃避是这部作品的一个中心主题。作品中的女性以幻想或怀旧等消极方式逃避现实,沉湎于宗教或者酒精进行自我麻痹。瑞金娜是本剧的核心人物,也是美国戏剧史上最强悍的女性人物形象之一。她一生的梦想就是逃离家庭的桎梏和落后的南方,到北方的大城市去谋求新生。她深知金钱的重要性,为击败家族中的男性,获取家族生意中的最大利益,她不惜一切代价,甚至丈夫的性命和女儿的信任。通过回顾哈伯德家族的发迹史,海尔曼试图说明:在瑞金娜扭曲的金钱贪欲背后恰恰反映了女性在经济上长期不能自主的现实。剧终落幕时的瑞金娜恐慌而孤独,这个看似成功的女性实际上是男权价值观的牺牲品。

《晚安,妈妈》的中女主人公杰茜因遗传父亲的癫痫症,被剥夺了工作的机会和与外部世界的接触,她的生活因此被限制在狭小

的家庭空间里。诺曼凸现了压抑的家庭关系,尤其是深受父权伦理影响的母亲对女儿的控制。作品深入地揭示了母女关系对杰茜独立意识形成的负面影响。当不能自主、毫无意义的生活注定不会带来变化和希望时,杰茜决定通过主动地结束生命获得控制自己命运的权利。诺曼强调本剧的重点不在于讨论自杀,而是肯定生命个体捍卫自主生活的权力,即使是以自杀为代价。

海尔曼的最后一部作品《阁楼上的玩偶》和诺曼的《洗衣房》中的女性人物有一个共同点,就是以与男性的关系来定义自己的社会身份,这种附属关系不可避免地导致了她们的心理失落。《阁楼上的玩偶》中的女性将家族中唯一的男性朱立安的幸福视为她们生活的唯一目标,满足于自己作为“朱立安的姐姐”或者“朱立安妻子”的身份。为维持这种身份,她们使朱立安长期在经济和情感上依附她们。而当朱立安突然宣布经济独立、不再需要她们的资助时,失落感和危机感随之而来,因为她们唯一的身份受到了冲击。为恢复原有的依存关系和生活状态,她们采取破坏性的手段粉碎了朱立安的发财梦,使他再一次变得身无分文。海尔曼揭示出,这些女性的爱之所以扭曲,根源在于以男性为中心的家庭关系使女性丧失了自我,对她们而言,只有维持与男性的关系才能找到存在的意义。

独幕剧《洗衣房》讲述了两个陌生女人于静谧的午夜时分在公共洗衣房里相遇的故事。倾诉的渴望促成了她们之间深入的心灵交流,而这成为她们各自生活的重要转折。虽然出身、年龄和性情差异很大,她们却经历了相似的失落和对生活的失望。年轻的女性因为母亲的挑剔和漠视而痛苦,因为丈夫的不忠而愤怒。而年长者则生活在自我欺骗之中,不愿意面对丈夫已经辞世的现实。当双方袒露了隐秘的内心世界之后,她们充当了彼此的“母亲”角色。母性的关怀和启迪使她们获得了对自我、对生活的重新认识,走出了各自生活的阴霾。

前言

通过对两位剧作家原创作品的细读和分析,本研究得出如下结论:在秉承海尔曼现实主义的创作手段的同时,诺曼继承了海尔曼作品中对女性命运的关注,而且在女权主义运动第二次浪潮冲击下开始创作的诺曼在女权主义主题的传达上更明确,塑造了更积极的女性人物形象。海尔曼和诺曼都试图通过对女性个体生存困境的刻画来昭示20世纪美国社会女性整体的生存状态。受作者所处历史时代的影响,海尔曼作品中塑造的女性人物往往采取消极的方式面对自己在家庭和社会中被边缘化的现实,通过酒精或者宗教进行自我麻痹,她们缺乏自我意识,未能获得独立的女性身份。相反,诺曼赋予她的主人公更强烈的自主意识和更清醒的自我认识,她们能够采取积极的方式突破在道德和生存层面遭受的歧视和束缚,从而获取对生活的主宰权利,诺曼尤其强调女性群体之间的互相扶持对女性成长的积极作用。

本书的完成受益于我的导师郭继德教授的悉心指导和帮助。作者赴美国访学期间,纽约州立大学英语系教授Judith E. Barlow对本研究的选题和写作提供了建设性的意见,给予了热情的鼓励。本书的出版得到了山东师范大学出版基金的资助,山东大学出版社对本书的出版给予了大力支持,在此表示衷心的感谢。

虽然作者对书稿反复修改,书中仍难免存在失准、欠妥之处,敬请学界同行谅解、指正。

岑 玮

2009年11月于济南

Abstract

Drama, like all other literary genres, is in a constant state of flux, forever working to reflect human conditions in a certain cultural milieu, which finds a convincing proof in the development of the American drama. A retrospective look at the first two decades of the twentieth century finds that, while male playwrights claimed the strongest presence on the center American stage, their female counterparts remained marginalized or even invisible. However, since the 1930s, coinciding with the changing and enhancing roles of women in society, women playwrights have become a contributive and vital voice in the American theatre with an extraordinary production of works which signifies a new thrust in the dramatic world. The second wave of feminism in the 1960s sparked a more spectacular emergence of women playwrights. Their literary creations foreground their female experiences and extend their special concern to the reality of female existence. Among them, Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman are two remarkable representatives who have invigorated and influenced the American stage with their classic creations in which women are the main characters. Noticeably,

in both her articles and interviews, Norman acknowledges her indebtedness to Hellman and regards her as a precursor.

Lillian Hellman is widely claimed as one of the leading playwrights in the first half of the twentieth century. Being the first woman playwright that is admitted to the previously all-male space of the canon of American dramatic literature, Hellman keeps producing respected plays in a span covering three decades from the 1930s to the 1960s and she is best known for *The Little Foxes* staged in 1939. Although Hellman's generation writes for a theatre where feminism is not yet a common currency, it is evident that the issues concerning women's pursuit of power and gender equality keeps appearing in her works. Marsha Norman won the Pulitzer Prize for *'night, Mother* in 1983, almost half a century later than Hellman produced *The Little Foxes*. Norman adheres to Hellman's realistic mode of dramatic writing and expresses the same deep feminist concerns; what's more, Norman evolves Hellman's feminist ideas.

This book, with the theoretical support of materialist feminism and psychoanalytic feminism, aims to make a comparative analysis of the original plays written by Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman, so as to explore women's existential state in the moral, physical and psychological spaces and its impact on the formation of the women's identity, and to trace further the evolution of the female identity embodied in the plays.

The book is composed of five chapters. Chapter One clarifies the origin, significance, and analytical approaches of the study, provides the necessary background information on the two playwrights, and makes a review of the scholarly research

that has already been conducted on them both abroad and at home. This part also justifies the compatibility of realism and feminism, which serves as a groundwork for the ensuing discussion.

Chapter Two focuses on the presentation of women's inferior status in the moral space by analyzing *The Children's Hour* by Hellman and *Getting Out* by Norman. *The Children's Hour* chronicles the moral turmoil of two women teachers due to a child's lie that they are lesbians. In it, Hellman reveals the hidden assumptions of people about unmarried women who seek independent careers. As is shown in the play, the lie fabricated by a child confirms people's suspicion of the "unnatural relationship" between the two teachers, and the astounding rapidity with which the slander is spread indicates the force of prejudice against professional women. The two women teachers end up being convicted by the patriarchal law. Thus, one of Hellman's recurrent themes is manifest in her first play: society definitely has no place for those women who dare to deviate from conformity to social expectations. In fact, the two women's guilt lies not in their lesbian relationship, but in their refusal to accept the traditional role designated by the paternal society. Their action of starting their own school and claiming autonomy is itself a menace to the established social order and security. Particularly, Lillian Hellman dramatizes in the play the cyclic regeneration of the women defenders of the patriarchal prescriptions who turn out to be the major force in the persecution. There exists no chance for the women teachers to struggle out of the web of slander. Hence, the last act of the play witnesses the bankruptcy of

the school, the suicide of one character and the collapse of the other.

Similarly, Marsha Norman commits herself to the moral issues in her debut, *Getting Out*. The play depicts the dilemma of a young woman named Arlene Holsclaw, who is legally convicted and morally condemned by the social norm. Norman, by employing the split-self technique, presents the adult Arlene and her teenager self Arlie simultaneously on the stage in order to look retrospectively at the girl's passage to adulthood and investigate the factors that lead the girl to prostitution, forgery and then murder. Norman exposes the consistent and cooperative parts that the seemingly moral institutions of society, like family, school and prison, have played in the girl's degeneration. Also, she lays bare the negative impacts these institutions exert on the girl even after she is released from prison. Being an ex-convict, Arlene is denied the freedom to make free choices. What she can choose is either to live an undignified life as a prostitute or a difficult and humble existence as a dishwasher. But different from Hellman's characters who withdraw from the grim reality, Arlene, with a strong desire to start a new and decent life, seems to have found ways out of her moral confusion. She has therefore gained the strength to establish a new identity as an independent, autonomous being.

Chapter Three features an in-depth analysis of the playwrights' exposure of women's entrapment in the physical space. Hellman's *The Little Foxes* and Norman's *'night, Mother* best illustrate women's confinement in the domestic context of family. In their plays, circumstances set women up as the victims of their own

Abstract

sexuality. *The Little Foxes* presents the avaricious Hubbard family as a cage and the women in it as encaged birds. Here, Hellman attributes women's subordinate position in the domestic sphere to their economic powerlessness. The Hubbard women, with no access to money, hence no independent identity, are traded via marriage by the male members of the family to satisfy their own selfish purpose of acquiring more wealth and power. Hellman shows that the stifled Hubbard women bear the same longing to escape. When their effort to escape ends in failure, they swerve from reality by retreating to fantasy or nostalgia for the past, burying themselves either in religion or in alcohol. Regina, one of the most formidable women figures in American drama, dreams all her life of fleeing her family and the uncultured South for Chicago. Regina knows well that, to fulfill her dream, she needs first of all to have money, so she determines to defeat her brothers and garner the lion's share in the family business at any cost, even the life of her husband and the trust of her daughter. The history of the Hubbard family reveals that the impulse behind Regina's money hunger is precisely her own belief in the inferiority of her social position. A seeming victor, Regina is actually a victim of patriarchal values, ending up in fear and loneliness when the curtain falls.

Norman, likewise, expresses her concern for women's physical circumscription, which finds its best expressions in her masterpiece, *'night, Mother*. Jessie Cates, the protagonist, is an inherited victim of her father's epilepsy. Jessie's bodily defect has deprived her of any job opportunities and her contact with the outside world; therefore, she is confined completely to the

limited and solitary domestic sphere. In the play, Norman foregrounds the smothery familial relationships, especially that between the mother and the daughter, which exerts great negative pressure on the formation of Jessie's independent self. Jessie can by no means control her own life course due to her epilepsy and her mother's domination. Expecting no hope or change in her restricted life, Jessie finally decides to claim herself master of her own life by resorting to suicide, which enables her to triumph over the external forces that attempt to control her. Norman asserts that the play is not a study of suicide, but of a search for autonomy and free choice. The play highlights that one owns the right to control one's life even to the point of suicide.

Chapter Four dwells on the playwrights' revelation of the psychological malaise of the women characters who are posited in restrictive social and familial circumstances. The characters in Hellman's *Toys in the Attic* and Norman's *The Laundromat* share a lot in common: they stick to their connection with men and thus establish their dependent identity. This submissive position inevitably leads to their strong sense of psychological loss. The women characters in *Toys in the Attic* willingly sacrifice their personal needs to satisfy the demands of Julian, the only male in the family, taking the happiness of this man as the exclusive purpose of their lives. They exist with no other identity than being "Julian's sister" or "Julian's wife". In order to maintain their connection with Julian, they keep him financially and emotionally dependent on them. With Julian's claiming economic independence, the women sense great loss and peril. To reinstate the original familial pattern and regain the sole meaning of their

existence, they even unite to smash Julian's plan of making a fortune and make him as penniless as before. What Hellman intends to demonstrate here is that the root of the women's destructive love lies in the patriarchal familial dynamics, in which men are the center pillar, while women are marginalized and have to cling to men for existence and survival.

Impressively, Norman also investigates women's deformed psychology in her play *The Laundromat*, in which she unfolds an intersection of two strangers. One midnight, in the traditionally female location of a laundromat, the intense need to have an audience to share their confusion soon leads to an authentic conversation and it turns out to be of vital importance in their respective lives. Beyond the big difference in class, age and temperament, the conversation reveals that these two women share the same sense of loss and disappointment. The younger woman is uncovered to have lived in agony and self-denial, due to the domination of a critical mother and the infidelity of an unfaithful husband; the elder one is known to have lived in distress and self-deception, unable to face the fact that her husband is already dead. To help the other recuperate from her loss and trauma, the two women take the roles of being "mother" to each other. The newly established connection enables them to gain the rapport and recognition that they have always been longing for. When they leave the laundromat and say good-bye to each other, they are women with higher self-esteem and a better knowledge of self. In this play, Norman stresses the functions that the female community plays in the regain of psychological wholeness and in the construction of an independent identity in her characters.

Chapter Five summarizes the findings of the study. With an informed reading and a comparative assessment of the original plays written by Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman, this book comes to the conclusion that: Marsha Norman not only inherits from Lillian Hellman her realistic mode and feminist concern, but also develops a much freer and more optimistic feminist expression, especially in the presentation of female identity.

Both Hellman and Norman have probed women's entrapment and transcend in their plays the plight of individual female to the general female condition in the twentieth-century American society. By demonstrating women's social inferiority, physical confinement and psychological loss, they drive home women's identity in a society which declares the characteristics of men as the norm. While Hellman explores women's inferior status and their existential dilemma, she fails to come up with any active solutions for her women characters to their problems. In her plays, the women characters yield to moral attack, retreat to the confined isolation, and resort to fantasy or self-deception for survival. They are presented either with no sense of self or with fragmented identity. In contrast, Marsha Norman endows her women characters with stronger desire for autonomy and a better knowledge of self. Her women characters are more determined to fight against social prejudice, to break free of physical limitations, even in a self-destructive way. They actively seek a way to exercise control over their own destinies and to exert their influence on those around them. Very often, with rapport and encouragement from the female community, they succeed in establishing an independent identity.

Abstract

This book, by examining the creations of Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman within the history of the American theatre, hopes to bring to light the considerable contributions made by these two playwrights to the vibrant American dramatic world. The inheritance and evolution embodied in their plays indisputably record and reflect the continuous growth of the American feminist drama.