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A Study of Tricksters in  
Louise Erdrich's North Dakota Quartet

# 厄德里克小说中的 千面人物研究

■ 李靓 著



对外经济贸易大学出版社

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王德威 著



清华大学出版社

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李 靓 著

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# 总 序

对外经济贸易大学出版社最新推出了大型外语学术专著系列——《当代外国语言文学学术文库》，请我为文库写序。借此机会，谈谈我个人对外国语言文学研究的一些认识和感受。

综观 21 世纪的外国语言文学，就其语言学研究而言，形式语言学理论和功能语言学理论继续对抗和对话，认知语言学理论和社会文化理论发展迅速，各种语言学的理论思潮试图从不同的角度解释语言事实；在应用方面，语言学更加广泛地与多学科交叉，运用和借鉴包括数理逻辑、计算机科学、心理学、神经科学、认知科学、生态科学、经济学等各学科在内的研究成果和方法，不断凸现语言学作为人文科学和自然科学交叉学科的地位。就其文学研究而言，英美文学研究受经济全球化浪潮的冲击，文学及文论研究都关注文化全球化与本土性的关系。文化全球化的研究引发了文学现代性、后现代性和后殖民性的思考，文学和语言学研究的相互影响和交融日益明显，文学研究越来越多地引入语言学研究的方法，如话语分析等，反之亦然。我国的外国语言文学研究在全球化和中国入世以后与国际学术界的交流更加密切，发展更加迅速。

同时，我们仍清楚地看到，国内的外国语言文学研究依然存在“三张皮”现象：第一张皮是“汉语与外语”研究的合作与交流不够；第二张皮是“语言与文学”研究的沟通与对话不够；第三张皮是“英语与其他外语”研究的来往和交叉不够。这“三张皮”极大地阻碍着外国语言文学学科的发展。

这套文库的设计体现了兼收并蓄、博采众长、学科融通的思想，是一

个开放和创新的学术平台，是各种研究的阵地和各方学者的家园，而进入文库的研究成果都经过精心挑选，出自学有专长的博士和学者。我衷心地祝愿这朵“原创的小花”在繁花似锦的学术花园里开得绚丽多姿，并愿有更多的学者去关心和呵护它。

对外经济贸易大学英语学院

教授、博士生导师

王立非

2013年6月1日于北京望京花园



## Abbreviations

<i>Love Medicine</i> (1984)	<i>LM</i>
<i>The Beet Queen</i> (1986)	<i>BQ</i>
<i>Tracks</i> (1988)	<i>T</i>
<i>The Bingo Palace</i> (1994)	<i>BP</i>

## 摘 要

路易斯·厄德里克是美国当代印第安文学中的重要作家，也是印第安文艺复兴第二次浪潮中的代表人物。她的主要文学成就是“北达科他四部曲”，包括《爱药》（1984）、《甜菜女王》（1986）、《痕迹》（1988）和《宾果宫》（1994）。厄德里克的四部曲受美国主流文学传统和印第安口头文学传统的共同影响，这些小说中的主要角色均带有齐佩瓦族的“千面人物”<sup>①</sup>形象的特征，但又各具特点。厄德里克对这一类型人物的运用不仅彰显了印第安文学和文化特色，也通过这一形象的多种变体改写了西方文学中印第安民族的消极模式化形象。四部作品中千面人物的故事为读者呈现出真实的当代印第安人形象，也为当代印第安人面对的文化、身份、经济等困境提出了解决方案。

千面人物形象在世界各国的文学作品中都有体现，但在印第安口头文学中这一形象最为独特，具有多面性和杂糅性。早期的人类学研究者将这一矛盾性看作对印第安人早期混沌的心理状态的反映，并将其看作印第安文化落后的证据。而厄德里克却对这一形象进行改写，使它的杂糅、矛盾性成为独特的视角来审视印第安文化与主流文化的冲突与融合。厄德里克将千面人物的矛盾特性运用在小说中，将他化身为具有不同特点的普通印第安人形象，打破了西方文化中印第安人千人一面的模式。厄德里克在其小说中还运用印第安民族的口头文学传统，由千面人物以讲故事的形式向下一代传递民族文化，重建口头文学在印第安文化中承载民族传统、文化

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<sup>①</sup> 我国学界尚无对“Trickster”一词的统一译法。台湾中华书局1989出版的《简明大英百科全书》中将该词译为恶作剧者。学者邹惠玲于《徐州师范大学学报》2005年第6期上发表的《印第安恶作剧者多层次形象的再解读》一文也采用了这个译法。学者秦苏珏在《国外文学》2008年第3期发表的《〈他们眼望上苍〉中的恶作剧精灵意象解读》中将该词译为恶作剧精灵。华东师范大学周晓霞博士在其2007年的博士论文《颠覆与顺从：再读中国机智人物故事》中用该词指涉中国传统民间故事中的机智人物。笔者认为Trickster一词在厄德里克的五部曲中，主要强调其多面性、调和性和杂糅性，故而翻译时借鉴了神话学大师Joseph Campbell的著作《千面英雄》（*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*）的书名，在这部书中，Campbell几乎追溯了所有文化中的英雄历险和转化的故事（其中也包括Trickster形象），从中提炼出同一原型的英雄形象。考虑到印第安文化中Trickster的多面性及充当的多种角色（包括文化英雄的角色），该词可译为千面英雄，但厄德里克笔下的主人公（Tricksters）以普通人居多，又以黑色幽默为主要的语言、行为特色，具有平民化特征，故本文略去“英雄”二字，将Trickster译为千面人物。

的重要地位。四部曲中千面人物面对种族迫害、生活悲剧时体现出的幽默感也是面对强势文化的生存技巧。

一直以来,西方学者在收集千面人物的故事时的主观性和模式化的性别观念,使得该形象在目前已出版的故事集中皆为男性。与此不同,厄德里克在小说中试图恢复印第安民族由来已久的母系传统,塑造了独立、自主的女性千面人物,改写了主流文学中基于性别角色而塑造出的千面人物形象。改写西方的性别模式、对母系传统的强调是印第安民族和文化延续的重要方面。千面人物对于母性、爱和家庭的重视重塑了西方文学刻划出的缺乏感情的印第安人形象。

厄德里克小说中的人物基本都是白人和印第安人混血,不同于其他印第安作家笔下身世悲惨、命运多舛的混血人物。厄德里克笔下的混血形象具有千面人物调和各种冲突元素的特征,能成为两种文化的调和者,并为民族文化的延续提供了可能性。厄德里克处理混血人物的身份问题的方法不同其他族裔作家——让主人公完全抛弃现代社会,回归传统——而是提出保持现代生活方式同样可以坚持民族传统。针对文学作品中混血儿的身份困境,厄德里克认为千面人物可以通过与家庭、集体保持紧密联系而解决这一问题。

有别于强调种族压迫、歧视,以控诉白人罪行为主的写作方式,厄德里克主要通过千面人物改写西方文化塑造的印第安人的模式化形象,并通过强调对爱、家庭和集体的重视,将千面人物从原有的与社会对抗的边缘化地位中解放出来。此外,她赋予千面人物不同的特性,使这一形象不再是“原始的”类型角色,而能生动鲜活地反映当代印第安人的面貌。厄德里克的创作也体现出她本人作为少数族裔作家所具有的千面人物特点。通过聚焦千面人物,厄德里克获取评论界的关注和认可,从而使更多普通读者接触到她的作品。更为重要的是,她通过千面人物的变体关注普通人民生活,挖掘不同文化共有的主题,使作品具有跨越种族的艺术感染力,能引起不同文化背景的读者的共鸣,从而有效地传播印第安民族文化。

**关键词:** 路易斯·厄德里克 千面人物 改写 模式化形象

## Abstract

Louise Erdrich is widely acclaimed as one of the most significant contemporary Native American writers in the second wave of the Native American Renaissance. Her literary accomplishment is best represented by her North Dakota Quartet, namely, *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988) and *The Bingo Palace* (1994). The Quartet, in which the trickster figures make a recurrent presence, is also under the influence of both the mainstream literary tradition and the Native American oral tradition. The narrative strategies of Erdrich's novels are characterized by the Native American oral tradition and the ever-present trickster figures. Tricksters revise the passive stereotype of Native Americans in the Western literature, presenting to the readers truthful images of the contemporary Native Americans, proposing wayout for the cultural, identity, and economic dilemma confronting the contemporary indigenous people.

The trickster can be found with different names in literary works around the world. However, it is in the Native American culture that the trickster manifests the most ambiguity and hybridity, which were considered as a reflection of the chaotic consciousness of the Native Americans in a primitive stage of development. In her novels, Erdrich makes an appropriate revision of the trickster, rendering his hybridity and ambiguity a unique perspective to observe the conflicts and integrations between the Native culture and the mainstream culture. Erdrich also incorporates the ambiguity of the trickster in her characterization, transforming the mythic figure into Native American commoners in an attempt to disrupt the faceless stereotype of Native Americans in the Western culture.

Erdrich draws heavily on the Native oral tradition, and the trickster figures assume the role as a storyteller, handing down the national culture, and restoring the essential position of the oral tradition in bearing the national tradition and culture. Erdrich also underscores the witty and humorous nature of trickster characters, which is a surviving strategy for Erdrich's trickster

characters in face of racial suppression and tragedies in life.

Influenced by the Western gender stereotype, scholars in the early period of trickster studies tended to accumulate only male trickster stories. In an attempt to revive the lost matrilineal tradition in the Chippewa society, Erdrich disrupts the gender stereotype by portraying independent female tricksters with intellectual sovereignty. The revision of the Western gender dichotomy is benign to a harmonious relationship between the male and the female, which provides a powerful counterattack against the stoic stereotype of the indigenous people in the Western literature.

Erdrich's stories center on lives of the mixed blood with Anglo and Native American ancestries. In contrast to the tragic mixed bloods trapped in the predicament of cultural conflicts, Erdrich delineates her half-blood tricksters as mediators between two cultures. Their adaptability ensures the continuance of the tribal culture and promises a secure future for the tribe. As to the problem of cultural identity, Erdrich does not offer a simplistic solution as to returning to the traditional way of living while relinquishing the modern life. On the contrary, she suggests that one can maintain a modern way of living while still keeping the tribal allegiance. Familial and communal ties are the key to building up a solid cultural identity.

Different from some indignant Native American writers who vehemently protest against the assimilations and injustices of the white society, Erdrich underlines universal themes like love, family and community through trickster stories to deflate the stereotypes of the Native Americans forged by the Western ideology. Moreover, the trickster's commitment to maternity, love and family also liberates him from a marginal and anti-social existence. In addition to the shared traits, Erdrich also attributes to tricksters unique individuality, transforming those once considered "primordial" mythic figures into vivid incarnations of complex and multi-facet contemporary Native Americans.

As a female ethnic writer, Erdrich also displays plenty of tricksterism when attempting to challenge the marginalized status of Native American literature. Her employment of trickster figures helps to gain the recognition of the academia, thereby winning a wide readership with the endorsement of the academia and important journals. Her stress on the universal themes shared by

assorted cultures accounts for the ever-lasting artistic appeals of her works to the non-Native readers whose empathy and identification are easily evoked by stories relating to familial and communal relationships, thus effectively spreading the Native culture to more readers of different ethnic groups.

**Key Words:** Louise Erdrich    Trickster    Revision    Stereotype

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# Introduction

## I. Louise Erdrich and the North Dakota Quartet

Louise Erdrich has been widely acclaimed as one of the most significant Native American writers in the second wave of what critic Kenneth Lincoln has called the Native American Renaissance<sup>①</sup>. A prolific writer in essays, poetry, fiction, and children's books, Erdrich is a "bright new Light—a courageous writer willing to break new narratological ground...confront the realities of Native American life in the twentieth century" (Beidler 2). A newly emerged ethnic woman writer, Erdrich has been awarded the American Academy of Poets Prize, the Nelson Algren Short Fiction Award, the National Award for Fiction, the 1985 National Book Critics Circle Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for best novel. Each of her novels received complimentary

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① The Native American Renaissance was a term originally coined by critic Kenneth Lincoln in his book of the same title in 1983. Lincoln's goal was to explore the explosion in production of literary works by Native Americans since N. Scott Momaday had won the Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for *House Made of Dawn*. Before that time, few Native Americans had published fiction. Lincoln pointed out that in the late-1960s and early-1970s, a generation of Native Americans was coming of age who were the first of their tribe to receive English-language education. Moreover, the project of historical revisionism which attempted to document the history of the invasion and colonization of the North American continent from a Native perspective had inspired a great deal of public interest in Native cultures. During this time of change, a group of Native writers emerged, both poets and novelists. At the same time, the setting up of Native American Studies departments at several universities led to the foundations of scholarly journals such as "SAIL" (*Studies in American Indian Literature*) and *Wičazo Ša Review*, and publishing imprints such as the Native American Publishing Program (Harper and Row), all of which further increased the public interest in Native American literature.



reviews from mainstream and scholarly journals like *The New York Times Book Review* and *Studies in American Indian Literature*—the latter even devoted an entire issue to the study of her first two novels.

Born on June 7, 1954, Louise Erdrich is a mixedblood of Chippewa and German ancestries and an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota near the Canadian border. Erdrich's mixed ancestries reflect a tribal reality for many contemporary Indians, and become a dominant theme and conflict in her works. Erdrich's parents taught in a school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The eldest among the seven children of the family, Erdrich spent her childhood in a closely knitted family circle and experienced the strong sense of community that emerges as a recurrent theme in her novels. The communal theme, as described by Kenneth Lincoln, is a literature of "homing" (Lincoln 209), in which a sense of belonging is lingering. To foreground the "homing" theme, Erdrich, in her novels, forms family sagas that weave around a multitude of characters and events, attempting to offer a whole picture of a family or a community where stories of different characters intersect, collide, and converge.

Chippewa<sup>①</sup> reservation and the people on it constitute the major background and events in Erdrich's North Dakota novels. Chippewa Indians preferred to call themselves Anishinaabeg (the singular is Anishinaabe); but after the contact with the white, they were renamed by the US government as the Ojibwa and Chippewa<sup>②</sup>. To maintain the tribal identity, many contemporary

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① The terms *Chippewa* and *Ojibwa* are interchangeable since both are European rendering of a Native word "Ojchipwe", the meaning of which is still controversial (Vizenor, *The People* 17-19). *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Ojibwa as a "Algonquian-speaking North American Indian tribe who lived in what are now Ontario and Manitoba, Can., and Minnesota and North Dakota, U.S... Their name for themselves means 'original people'" (Chisholm 467).

② Among the three names, Ojibwa and Chippewa are more preferable among the Western readers. Frances Densmore points out that the name "Chippewa is comparatively modern and is the only name under which the tribe has been designated by the government in treaties and other negotiations, but it has never been adopted by the older members of the tribe. They still refer to themselves as 'Ojibway' ..." or Anishinaabeg (*People Named* 16). Some critics propose that the primary distinction between the use of the three names (Chippewa, Ojibwa, Anishnaabeg) largely depends on the writer's origin. Canadian writers tend to use "Ojibwa", Americans "Chippewa" while Native writers prefer "Anishnaabeg" (Vizenor 13). In the book, I will consistently use Chippewa, as it is used by Erdrich in her North Dakota novels. This word can stand for both singular and plural form and can be used as an adjective.